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**The Politeness Principle in Selected Advertisements in English**

**An extract from the MA thesis ‘A Pragmatic Study of Advertisements in English’ by**

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**Abstract**

This paper is a qualitative descriptive study of print advertisements in British and American magazines and newspapers within the framework of Leech's (1983) politeness principle.

This study tries to answer the following questions: (1) ‘How and why do advertisers observe or, otherwise, violate the politeness maxims?’ and (2) ‘To what extent do advertisers observe or, otherwise, violate the politeness maxims?’. The paper also aims to study the role of implicature and non-linguistic elements in advertisement. It is also one of the aims of this study to investigate Leech's (ibid) politeness maxims in advertisement so as to bring out the significance of the politeness principle in meaning construction in advertisements.

It is hypothesized here that advertisers sometimes observe or violate the politeness maxims in order to persuade customers to buy or accept certain products or services. It is also hypothesized that implicature and non-linguistic elements play a major role in making customers understand the message behind the advertisement. The last hypothesis is that politeness maxims are indispensable in meaning construction in advertisement.

The advertisements analyzed are selected purposively from 50 print advertisements in British and American magazines and newspapers between the years 2011 and 2015. The data collection technique is based on purposive sampling. Only advertisements exemplifying observance or violation of the politeness maxims have been selected as the data of this research.

Some of the prominent conclusions of the study are: (1) Advertisers observe or violate politeness maxims to promote the expressive effects of their advertisements, (2) all politeness maxims are observed in

advertisements, except the modesty maxim since it would not be in the advertiser's favor to do so, and (3) observing the tact maxim automatically entails observing the generosity maxim, and vice versa.

**Key Words:** pragmatics and advertisements, politeness principle, politeness maxims, the language of advertisements.

### 1. The Politeness Principle

Politeness refers to showing respect and accounting for the redressing of the affronts to face caused by face-threatening acts to the addressee. It restricts people to behave appropriately and take into account others' feelings (see Foley, 1997, p. 270; Fukushima, 2003, p. 27; Mills, 2003, p. 6). Lakoff (1979, as cited in Fraser 1990, p. 223) describes politeness as a device for reducing friction in personal interaction. Bussmann (1996, p. 916) regards politeness as an umbrella term for a combination of interpersonal considerations which is necessary for avoiding unwanted implications of impoliteness (see Escandell-Vidal, 1996, p. 644).

There are three determiners of politeness: (1) The social distance between the speaker and the listener, (2) the relative power between the speaker and the listener, and (3) the extent to which the speaker imposes on the listener (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 74; Grundy, 2000, p. 146). Leech (1983, p. 131) believes that politeness does not only concern the relationship between two participants; it also considers the existence of a third party, who may or may not be present in the conversation.

Politeness, as a social phenomenon, can be seen as strategic avoidance of conflict which plays a key role in keeping harmonious social relationships in human interaction. The politeness principle can be formulated as a series of maxims for explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. It is one of the fundamental pragmatic principles that one usually observes in communication. According to Leech (1983, op. cit., p. 81), it generally requires that one should minimize the expression of impolite beliefs and maximize the expression of polite beliefs. Leech's (1983) politeness principle can explain some phenomena that cannot be explained by Grice's (1975) cooperative principle (Lakoff & Ide, 2005, p. 178). Therefore, it can be said that the cooperative principle and the politeness principle complement each other. Furthermore, Beeching (2002, p. 140) asserts that to follow the politeness principle, the speaker tries to

minimize the forcefulness of what s/he wants to convey and thus tries to mitigate the imposition on the listener. Consider the following example from Leech (1983, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81), where the politeness principle rescues the cooperative principle:

(1) A: We'll all miss Bill and Agatha, won't we?

B: Well, we'll all miss Bill.

In (1), B flouts the quantity maxim since his/her reply is not informative enough and this leads to a conversational implicature - B's reply implicates that not all of them will miss Agatha. B could have observed the quantity maxim, for instance, by adding 'but not Agatha' but at the cost of being impolite to a third party. B has flouted the quantity maxim to uphold the politeness principle. It can be seen that the cooperative principle is rescued by the politeness principle.

## 2. The Politeness Maxims

Leech (1983, p. 132) assumes the politeness principle to be composed of six maxims: The tact maxim, the generosity maxim, the approbation maxim, the modesty maxim, the agreement maxim, and the sympathy maxim. These are going to be explained in the following subsections:

### 2.1 The Tact Maxim

According to Leech (*loc. cit.*), the tact maxim requires one to:

- a. Minimize cost to other.
- b. Maximize benefit to other.

The tact maxim is oriented towards the listener. According to Cruse (2000, p. 363), people use the tact maxim in the context of impositions, i.e. in trying to get the listener to do something. This includes ordering, requesting, advising, recommending, etc. The speaker will make his/her utterance in a form which mitigates the effect of the imposition. The following example from Meyer (2009, p. 66) is illustrative:

(2) Have another sandwich.

The speaker in (2) asks the listener to have another sandwich, which is beneficial to the listener. Here the speaker adheres to the tact maxim as s/he maximizes benefit to the listener.

Leech (*op. cit.*, p. 108) argues that an important basis of this maxim is indirectness. The more indirect an utterance is, the more polite the utterance tends to be, as evident in the following examples:

(3) Answer the phone. Polite	Direct = Less         ↓ Indirect = More
(4) I want you to answer the phone.	
(5) Can you answer the phone?	
(6) Could you possibly answer the phone?	
(7) Would you answer the phone, please? Polite	

## 2.2 The Generosity Maxim

Leech (op. cit., p. 132) points out that the generosity maxim can be defined as:

- a. Minimizing benefit to self.
- b. Maximizing cost to self.

Unlike the tact maxim, the generosity maxim is oriented towards the speaker and stresses that 'others' should take precedence over 'self'. Consider the following example that demonstrates abidance by this maxim:

(8) You relax and let me make the arrangements for the party.

Here, the speaker maximizes the cost and minimizes benefit to self. The benefit is to the listener and the cost is to the speaker.

## 2.3 The Approbation Maxim

Leech (loc. cit.) argues that the approbation maxim can be formulated as:

- a. Minimize dispraise of other
- b. Maximize praise of other.

This maxim is oriented towards the listener. The approbation maxim is used in utterances which have the function of expressing the speaker's feeling, such as expressions of joy, pleasure, praising, etc. The speaker needs to minimize dispraise and correspondingly maximize praise of the listener. Consider the following example:

(9) Jack, I know you are very clever - Would you help me to solve this math formula?

In (9), the speaker follows the approbation maxim by maximizing praise of the listener.

## 2.4 The Modesty Maxim

Leech (1983, p. 132) notes that the modesty maxim can be summarized as follows:

- a. Minimize praise of self.
- b. Maximize dispraise of self.

The modesty maxim is oriented towards the speaker. Consider the following examples (Watts, 2003, p. 67; Leech, op. cit., p. 136):

(10) Well done! What a wonderful performance! I wish I could sing as well as that.

(11) Please accept this large gift as a token of our esteem.

In (10), the speaker belittles his/her own ability in order to highlight the performance of the listener, i.e. s/he minimizes praise and maximizes dispraise of self. In contrast, in (11), the speaker describes his/her gift as being 'large', which maximizes praise of self and runs opposite to the first sub-maxim.

### 2.5 The Agreement Maxim

The agreement maxim requires that the speaker should (Leech, op. cit., p. 132):

a. Minimize disagreement between self and other.

b. Maximize agreement between self and other.

The following are representative examples:

(12) A: It was an exciting play, wasn't it?

B: Yes, definitely.

(13) A: It was an interesting discussion, wasn't it?

B: No, it was very boring.

In (12), B has observed the agreement maxim by maximizing agreement with A, whereas in (13), B has not followed the agreement maxim by maximizing disagreement with A.

### 2.6 The Sympathy Maxim

In observing the sympathy maxim, the speaker should do the following (Leech, loc. cit.):

a. Minimize antipathy between self and other

b. Maximize sympathy between self and other.

The sympathy maxim is related to both the speaker and the listener. This maxim includes acts such as congratulation, commiseration, and offering condolences (Cruse, 2000, p. 366). Consider the following examples:

(14) I am very sorry to hear about your son.

(15) I am very delighted to hear about your son.

Example (14) can be interpreted as a condolence and (15) as a congratulation. In both examples, the speaker has followed the sympathy maxim by maximizing sympathy and minimizing antipathy between self and other. The speaker may be seen as maximizing

antipathy and minimizing sympathy between self and other in (15) if something bad happens to the son.

Leech (1983, p. 123 ff) claims that the first four maxims go in pairs because they deal with bipolar scales. The tact maxim and the generosity maxim go in pair as they deal with a bipolar 'cost-benefit' scale. The approbation maxim and the modesty maxim go in pair as they also deal with a bipolar 'praise-dispraise' scale. The final two maxims do not form a pair. They deal with unipolar scales. The agreement maxim deals with the scale of agreement and the sympathy maxim deals with the scale of sympathy (see Bousfield, 2008, p. 48).

Leech (op. cit., p. 133) argues that the status of the six maxims is unequal. The tact maxim is more powerful than the generosity maxim and the approbation maxim than the modesty maxim. This demonstrates that 'other' is more important than 'self' in politeness. Moreover, within each maxim, the sub-maxim 'a' is more powerful than the sub-maxim 'b', which asserts that negative politeness, i.e. minimizing impoliteness, is more important than positive politeness, i.e. maximizing politeness. This can explain why speakers frequently choose not to be direct in conveying what they mean and choose not to observe the cooperative principle frequently (see Geyer, 2008, p. 14).

### 3. Advertisement

The word 'advertisement' comes from the Latin root 'advertere' which means to turn towards something. In addition to being a way of promoting commercial products, advertisements include the intention of improving public opinion about an individual, group, or organization (Goddard, 1998, pp. 6, 10). Cook (2001, p. 10) believes that advertisements are not only meant to persuade some target audience to buy a product or use a service since there are advertisements which do not sell anything, e.g. there are those that reflect political support, provide health advice, etc.

Richards and Curran (2002, p. 74) define an advertisement as 'a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action now or in the future'. McCabe (2009, p. 208) believes that it is a specific kind of marketing communications with the aim of providing customers with information about an organization, its products, and services (see Vilanilam & Varghese, 2004, p. 4).

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Advertisements can be viewed via various media such as newspapers, magazines, television, radio, mail, websites, text messages, etc. The aim of most advertisements is to attract the attention of customers, stimulate their interest by demonstrating advantages and benefits of a product or business, and then finally drive them to take the action of purchasing.

### 3.1 Types of Advertisement

Advertisements can be classified into two major types: Commercial and non-commercial. The commercial ones include consumer advertisements and corporation advertisements. Consumer advertisements are addressed to people who buy the products or services for their own use such as textiles, food, cosmetics, etc. Whereas corporation advertisements include advertisements that enhance people's attitudes towards an organization as a whole rather than to sell a specific product or service, i.e. the name and the positive image of the company are advertised rather than a product or a service (cf. Shams, 2007, p. 186).

In non-commercial advertisements, there is no selling and buying. Government agencies or organizations, for instance, disseminate a kind of concept or advocate a social ethic to the public which may be related to health advice as avoiding smoking, environmental issues such as avoiding pollution, political support such as motivating voters to vote in favor of a particular party in the elections, charity such as collecting donations or funds for victims of natural disasters, etc. Non-commercial advertisements aim to promote public welfare.

Advertisements can be classified on different bases; Cook (2001, pp. 14-16) provides four bases: Medium, product, technique, and consumer. Based on medium, there can be print, radio, television, and the internet advertisements. Both magazines and newspapers, for instance, are two different types of print advertisement media. Based on product or service, there are advertisements for luxury goods versus household necessities. Another categorization is by technique. There is a difference between reason and tickle advertisements. Reason advertisements suggest encouragement to purchase some product for a good reason, whereas tickle advertisements appeal to emotion and humor such as cigarette advertisements. Finally, the most important categorization of advertisements is by consumer. Advertisers try hard to categorize their target audience so as to

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accomplish their goals (for further details on classifications of advertisements, see Janoschka, 2004, p. 18).

Print advertisement, which is our concern here, is one of the oldest conventional forms of advertisements and it can still be regarded as one of the most powerful media for disseminating advertisements. It can mostly be seen in newspapers, magazines, journals, billboards, flyers, posters, hoardings, advertorials, and other printed forms. According to Janoschka (op. cit., p. 20), the two most common forms of print advertisement are newspapers and magazines.

Print advertisements should be eye-catching; therefore, placing the print advertisement is very important. In newspapers, for instance, it can be placed on different areas on the page, but it is better to be positioned in a place that can be easily seen by the viewers and attract their attention. The cost of print advertisement is directly related to the size of the advertisement. Generally, the larger the advertisement, the more it costs.

### 3.2 Functions of Advertisement

Generally, advertisements have four main functions which can be summarized in the acronym AIDA, i.e. attention, interest, desire, and action (see Bowdery, 2008, p. 91; Breuer, Naphine, & O'Shea, 2008, p. 2; Janoschka, 2004, p.19, but cf. Shimp, 2007, pp. 246-249).

The main function of advertisements is to attract the attention of customers to the advertised product or service. Without gaining their attention, it is difficult to persuade the customers to purchase the product or service.

Advertisements need to hold customers' interest long enough to tell them about the product or service. Advertisers can raise customers' interest, for example, by focusing on customers' needs and trying to make them feel that they are about to get something really special.

Advertisements attempt to stimulate customers' desire to buy a product or service and make them realize that this product or service will satisfy their needs. Advertisers can achieve building customers' desire, for instance, by linking features and benefits.

If an advertisement has attracted attention, built interest, and created desire, it is time to persuade customers to purchase the product or service. Advertisements evoke customers towards persuasion and taking the action of purchasing. Often this is done by creating a sense of urgency, for example, by indicating that having the advertised product or service will improve or enhance the customers' lives.

### 3.3 Sign and Symbol in Advertisement

A sign is an object, action, event, or entity that indicates something else. A comma, for instance, signifies a pause in a sentence. Malmkjær (2010, p. 477) defines sign as a meaningful unit which stands for something other than itself. According to Johansen and Larsen (2002, p. 25), one of the characteristics of signs is that they provoke people to infer something that is not evident.

Signs fall into three types: Iconic, indexical, and symbolic (Dyer, 1982, pp. 98-99). An iconic sign resembles its object in some way; it looks or sounds like it. The Roman numeral II, for instance, is iconic, having in its form a clear indication of duality. Indexical sign is directly connected in some way to its object as in the case of smoke being an index of fire. In symbolic sign, there is no resemblance between the sign and its object. A symbol's connection with its object is a matter of convention. For example, red in traffic lights means 'stop' (also see Akmajian, Demers, Farmer, & Harnish, 2010, pp. 587-588, 598; Collinge, 1990, p. 76; Cruse, 2000, p. 7; Cruse, 2006, p. 16; Johansen & Larsen, op. cit., p. 217; MacRury, 2009, p. 197).

Also, signs can be natural and conventional. Natural signs derive their meaning from their normal antecedents, and their interpretation requires only knowledge of the natural world. Smoke, for instance, is a sign of fire. Conventional signs derive their meaning from social agreement, and they have to be specially learned, e.g., traffic signs (see Baker & Ellece, 2011, p. 131; Collinge, op. cit., p. 76; Cruse, 2000, p. 8; Cruse, 2006, p. 116).

In advertisements, signs are used to display information regarding a product or service. They have a vital role in catching the attention of the target audience and they may change their attitude accordingly. Also, they can perform a persuasive function and make an advertisement more memorable in the mind of the target audience. Signs should have a connection, in some way, to some message(s) so that the customer can get the meaning from the signs and take action according to that message. As Albayati (2013, p. 5) argues, the male cowboy, for instance, in the Marlboro cigarette advertisement (the red packet), could be the sign of masculinity and virility. It can, therefore, appeal to the male customers, i.e. the advertisement wants to attract the attention of male customers more than female ones.

A symbol is a representation of an idea or concept that acquires a widely agreed upon meaning through common usage. For example,

the heart symbolizes love and a dove peace. A symbol's connection with its object is a matter of culturally agreed conventions between the users. It is possible that in another culture the heart, for instance, could represent death.

In advertisements, symbols are very useful as they give customers a sense of belonging and recognition (Goddard, 1998, p. 116). Advertisers capitalize greatly on using symbols to sell products and services and to meet their commercial objectives. Also, advertisers use symbols to influence the target audience since the symbols can linger on in the customer's memory and leave a lasting impression on him/her.

### 3.4 The Language of Advertisement

Language is an indispensable part in advertisements as it plays a vital role in the success and effectiveness of an advertisement. So often a good advertisement is supported by a good language. The language of advertisement contributes a great deal to exploring in advertisements the interrelation among the reader, the advertiser, and culture (cf. Goddard, *op. cit.*, p. 1).

The language of advertisement is very different from the common language. It has its own features at lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels. Generally speaking, the use of simple, attractive, and expressive spoken words is highly preferred in advertisements since they are smooth to read, easy to understand and memorize, and can attract customers' attention.

Nouns are widely used as brand names in advertisements to help the customers remember the products or services. Also, adjectives and verbs occur in high frequency in advertisements. Verbs are mostly used in the imperative form where customers are told to try something for instance 'Try it!'

Short and simple sentences are preferred in advertisements because customers will get bored and frustrated with reading or listening to too difficult sentence structures or complex sentences. Some of the short sentences are elliptical sentences as they can spare space, and hence money (Cook, 2001, p. 171; Janoschka, 2004, p. 125).

Rhetorical devices are frequently used for making advertisements more noticeable, more memorable, more impressive, and more interesting (Brierley, 1995, p. 173). Consider the following examples from Pinker (2013, pp. 1-5):

(16) Breakfast without Orange Juice is like a day without sunshine.  
(Florida Orange Juice)

(17) It may be your car, but it's still our baby. (Ford Quality-Care)

(18) Red Bull gives you wings. (Red Bull Company)

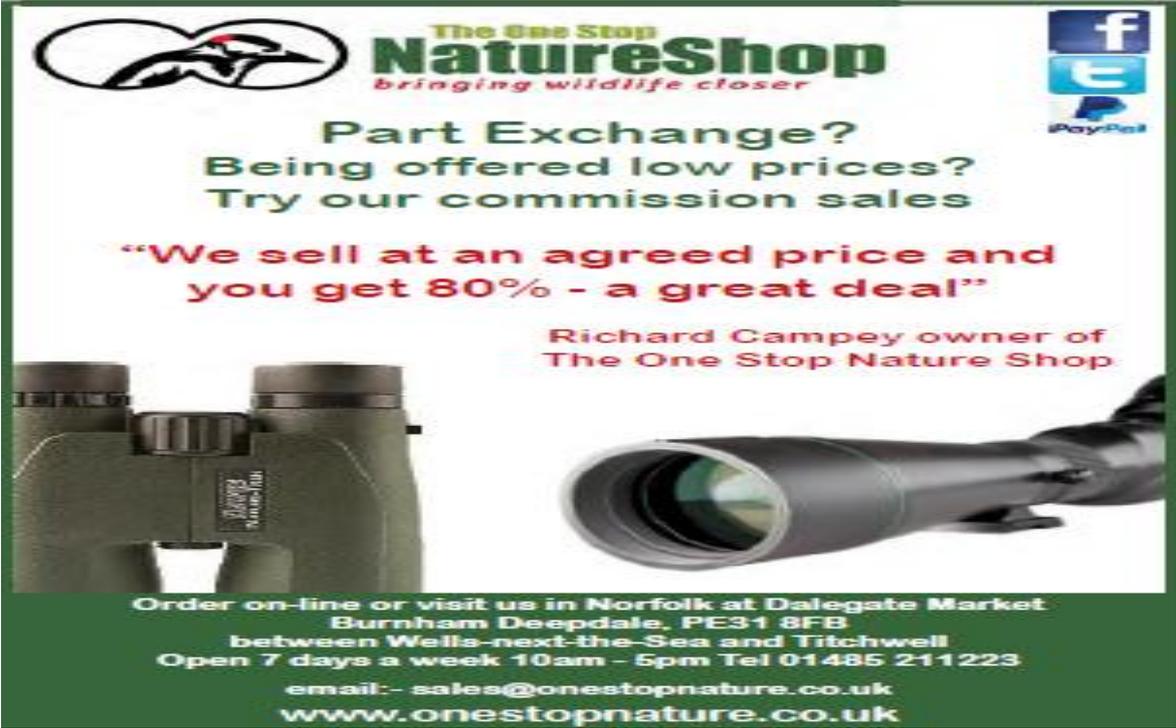
Example (16) is a case of simile where the advertiser compares breakfast without orange juice to a day without sunshine using the word 'like'. In (17), personification is used as car is said to be taken care of like a baby. People treat babies kindly and lovely; therefore, Ford Quality-Care workers want to show that they love, care, and do their best for Ford cars as much as they do to their own children. In (18), hyperbole is there as the effect of the energy drink is exaggerated; it may have a positive effect on your body and make you energized, but it is not possible for any energy drink, no matter what the brand is, to give you wings.

#### 4. The Politeness Principle in Advertisements

##### 4.1 Observance of the Politeness Principle

###### 4.1.1 The Tact Maxim

###### (19) The One Stop Nature Shop



The advertisement for 'The One Stop Nature Shop' features a green border and a white background. At the top left is a logo of a bird in flight. The shop's name 'The One Stop NatureShop' is prominently displayed in green and black, with the tagline 'bringing wildlife closer' in red below it. In the top right corner, there are icons for Facebook, Twitter, and PayPal. The main text in the center asks 'Part Exchange? Being offered low prices? Try our commission sales' in green. Below this, a quote in red reads: '“We sell at an agreed price and you get 80% - a great deal”'. To the right of the quote, it says 'Richard Campey owner of The One Stop Nature Shop' in red. The bottom half of the ad shows a pair of green binoculars on the left and a black telescope on the right. At the very bottom, in white text on a green background, are the contact details: 'Order on-line or visit us in Norfolk at Dalegate Market Burnham Deepdale, PE31 8FB between Wells-next-the-Sea and Titchwell Open 7 days a week 10am - 5pm Tel 01485 211223 email: - sales@onestopnature.co.uk www.onestopnature.co.uk'.

Birdwatch: Issue 269, November 2014, p. 42

This is an advertisement of The One Stop Nature Shop, a shop for selling binoculars, telescopes, optics, microscopes, etc. The phrase 'part exchange' shows observance of the tact maxim as giving one's old thing as part of the payment for buying a new one minimizes cost and maximizes benefit to customers. The same holds true for the

phrase ‘low prices’ since offering low prices minimizes cost and maximizes benefit to other.

The statement ‘you get 80% - a great deal’ goes with the tact maxim since getting a discount of 80% maximizes benefit to customers.

The word PayPal with its symbol indicates that customers can pay online which minimizes cost to them.

(20) Value City Furniture

**AUGUST mattress sale!**  
**50% off & more**  
 EVERY Sealy, Sealy Posturepedic, and Stearns & Foster Mattress!  
 FREE next day delivery!  
 FREE removal of your old bedding!  
 FREE in-home set-up!  
 no MINIMUM PURCHASE  
 no DOWN PAYMENT  
 no INTEREST CHARGES FOR  
**50 MONTHS!**  
 SEALY POSTURE FIRM 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
 REGULAR \$899 NOW ONLY **\$399**  
 SAVE 56%  
 \*TWIN \$349 • FULL \$379 • KING \$699  
 Posturepedic COMFORT FIRM TIGHT TOP 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
 REGULAR \$1499 NOW ONLY **\$599**  
 SAVE 60%  
 \*TWIN \$499 • FULL \$579 • KING \$999  
 Posturepedic PLUSH OR FIRM EURO TOP 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
 REGULAR \$1899 NOW ONLY **\$799**  
 SAVE 58%  
 \*TWIN \$699 • FULL \$779 • KING \$1199  
 Posturepedic GEL SERIES FIRM OR PLUSH PILLOW TOP 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
 REGULAR \$999 NOW ONLY **\$999**  
 SAVE 60%  
 \*TWIN \$899 • FULL \$979 • KING \$1399  
 OPTIMUM Posturepedic 2" Memory Foam with Gel 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
**\$1299**  
 XL TWIN \$859 • FULL \$1059 • KING \$1299  
 Posturepedic HYBRID Half Foam / Half Springs 2-PC. QUEEN SIZE MATTRESS SET  
**\$1299**  
 XL TWIN \$859 • FULL \$1059 • KING \$1299  
 VALUE CITY FURNITURE

Daily News: Sunday, July 28, 2013, p.37

This is an advertisement of a home furnishings company. The advertisement contains many phrases that show observance of the tact maxim since they minimize cost and maximize benefit to the customers. The following are examples of such phrase:

1. ‘50% off & more’.
2. ‘FREE next day delivery’.
3. ‘FREE removal of your old bedding’.
4. ‘FREE in-home set-up’.
5. ‘no MINIMUM PURCHASE’.
6. ‘no DOWN PAYMENT’.
8. ‘save 56 %’.
9. ‘save 58%’.
10. ‘save 60 %’.
11. ‘REGULAR \$899, NOW ONLY \$399’.
12. ‘REGULAR \$1499, NOW ONLY \$599’.
13. ‘REGULAR \$1899, NOW ONLY \$799’.

7. 'no INTEREST CHARGES FOR 50 MONTHS'. 14. 'REGULAR \$2499, NOW ONLY \$999'.

#### 4.1.2 The Generosity Maxim

##### (21) BBC Focus Magazine

BBC Focus: Issue 225, February 2011, p. 39

This is an advertisement of BBC Focus Magazine. The advertiser observes the generosity maxim as evident in the following:

The clause 'save over £1' minimizes benefit to self, i.e. owner of the magazine, and maximizes benefit to other. The statements 'Every issue delivered to your door for FREE in the UK' and 'Gain FREE access to digital issues through the new iPad app!' minimize benefit and maximize cost to self. Also, the lowering price of an issue from £3.80 to £2.66 minimizes benefit to self.

##### (22) Kitchens Plus

**MASSIVE JANUARY SAVINGS**

UP TO **50% OFF** on all products at... **kitchensplus** COMPLETE HOME REMODELING

**KITCHEN UNITS**

**BUY NOW PAY 2015**

**FREE HOME DESIGN SERVICE**  
CALL OUR FREEPHONE NUMBER NOW!

**Plus BATHROOMS FULLY FITTED FROM £2495**

**Plus FREE APPLIANCES**

<b>FREE DISHWASHER</b>	<b>WC140</b> WAS £254 NOW FREE	<b>CDA ECH61SS</b> WAS £111 NOW £25	<b>CDA HCG501</b> WAS £147 NOW £35	<b>CDA SC222</b> WAS £298 NOW £50
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**We'll BEAT ANY QUOTE**

OPEN TIMES:  
Monday - Saturday 10am - 5pm  
OPEN SUNDAY at Team Valley 10am - 4pm

19, Greenway North Team Valley, Gateshead (Next to 12, Lanes) Tel: 0191 4914916

12, Sea Road Sunderland (Next to Lloyds Bank) Tel: 0191 549 4499

42, Caldwell Lane Monkseaton, Whitley Bay (Formerly CMC AMSTRONG) Tel: 0191 2971017

[www.kitchensplusne.com](http://www.kitchensplusne.com)

**FREEPHONE: 0800 1114445**

Sunday Sun: January 12, 2014, p. 20

This is an advertisement of a company for designing kitchens, manufacturing kitchen units, and installing kitchen and bathroom units. The advertisement shows abundance by the generosity maxim as there are statements and phrases that reflect minimizing benefit to the seller as clear in the following:

1. 'up to 50% OFF'
2. 'BUY NOW PAY 2015'
3. 'We'll BEAT ANY QUOTE'
4. 'CDA ECH61SS WAS £111 NOW £25'
5. 'CDA HCG501 WAS £147 NOW £35'
6. 'CDA SC222 WAS £298 NOW £50'

Also, the advertisement contains some other phrases that show abundance by the generosity maxim since they maximize cost to the seller as in the following:

1. 'FREE HOME DESIGN SERVICE'
2. 'Plus FREE APPLIANCES'
3. 'FREE DISH WASHER'
4. 'WC 140 WAS £254 NOW FREE'

Nonetheless, it is worth noting here that the statement ‘We’ll BEAT ANY QUOTE’ violates the modesty maxim since the seller maximizes praise of himself/herself by stating that s/he will beat any other offer.

This advertisement can be said to exemplify a clash of politeness maxims since it contains observance of the generosity maxim and at the same time violation of the modesty maxim.

#### 4.1.3 The Approbation Maxim

##### (23) Warren Henry Auto Group

**Warren Henry**  
AUTO GROUP  
ALWAYS.

**NOW WITH MORE MORE.**  
At Warren Henry, we're ALWAYS looking for new ways to give our customers more. The three new ADVANTAGES in The Warren Henry ADVANTAGE mean that now you'll get a total of 9 tremendous benefits every time you buy or lease a vehicle from us. You deserve more, and we've got it for you!

**ADVANTAGE here**

9 ADVANTAGES to give you more value from your vehicle

5 DEALERSHIPS voted the Best Dealership to work for by Automotive News

6 LUXURY BRANDS to choose from across the IT-county

JAGUAR LAND ROVER INFINITI CATERHAM

WHADVANTAGE.COM 888 832 2198

Think: Volume 7, Issue 10, December 2014, p.35

This is an advertisement of Warren Henry Auto Group. The statement ‘You deserve more’ reflects observance of the approbation maxim since the company maximizes praise of customers by saying that they deserve so many things to be offered. Also, the phrase ‘for you’ in ‘we’ve got it for you’ shows that the company pays special attention to its customers, which again maximizes praise of the customer.

The statement ‘you’ll get a total of 9 tremendous benefits every time you buy or lease a vehicle from us’ embodies observance of the tact maxim since it maximizes benefit to customers.

##### (24) Chelsea Building Society



The Times: No. 71379, Saturday, December 13, 2014, p.64

This is an advertisement of a British company working in the field of banking and financial services. The statement ‘Without you, it’s like Christmas without the tree’ can serve as an example of abidance by the approbation maxim since the company maximizes praise of customers. The advertiser uses simile, which is introduced by the word ‘like’, to compare the customers to Christmas tree. It is clear that the Christmas tree has become a symbol of Christmas and without the tree Christmas is incomplete. The importance of the tree is indicated non-linguistically in the picture; the child enjoys the Christmas tree. Thus, the advertiser maximizes praise of customers by indicating that without customers, things are incomplete.

Also, the statement ‘You make us who we are’ reflects observance of the approbation maxim as the company maximizes praise of customers by saying that it is ‘you’, i.e. the customers, who make us what we are now.

At the same time, the statement ‘Without you, it’s like Christmas without the tree’ could have a different interpretation; these might be the words of the customers, so ‘without you’ means ‘without this company’. In this case, the company will be praising itself, not the customers and it can be regarded as an example of violation of the modesty maxim. It is worth noting that this double interpretation of the statement is the outcome of the vague use of the pronoun ‘you’.

#### 4.1.4 The Agreement Maxim (25) TJI JOISTS



**CLIENT WANTS TO BEEF UP THE FLOOR?**

**BUT TRIM DOWN THE BUDGET?**

**LET'S TALK.**

Balancing performance with cost is never easy. But with the TJ-Pro-Ratings System, your Trus Joist® Territory Manager can help you and your dealer design the perfect floor. One that meets or exceeds customer expectations and stays on budget. Let's sit down and figure this out together. Call 800.438.1427 or go to [www.tj-letstalkbusiness.com](http://www.tj-letstalkbusiness.com) to find your Territory Manager and closest Trus Joist dealer.

Circle no. 421

*Trus Joist* | TJI JOISTS  
A Weyerhaeuser Company

Builder: Volume 37, No. 11, November, 2014, p.31

This is an advertisement of a company for making wooden floor and roof joist. The advertiser observes the agreement maxim. The advertiser, first, provides the two questions ‘CLIENT WANTS TO BEEF UP THE FLOOR?’ and ‘BUT TRIM DOWN THE BUDGHET?’, then, in ‘LET’S TALK’, invites the customers to get involved in a talk that brings them into common ground, which maximizes agreement and minimizes disagreement between the company and the client.

Also, the sentence ‘let’s sit down and figure this out together’ shows the company’s readiness to reach an agreement with the client. The word ‘together’ gives a sense of accompaniment, hence agreement between the two sides.

The clause ‘let’s’, which is used twice in the advertisement, is usually used when one party offers or invites another party to do something together, which again implies some sort of agreements.

## (26) First Bank



**Bank Anywhere,  
Anytime**

[www.firstbankvmobile.com](http://www.firstbankvmobile.com)

**Free 24/7 Mobile Banking**

**Free Bill Pay**

**1 First Bank**

Together we are one

Member FDIC, Bill Payment Service is only offered to Retail Checking Accounts, Other terms, conditions and restrictions may apply. FirstBank Virgin Islands is a division of FirstBank Puerto Rico.

ST. John Trade Winds: August 11-24, 2014, p.1

This is an advertisement of First Bank. The statement ‘Together we are one’ shows observance of agreement maxim as the words ‘together’, ‘we’, and ‘one’ make customers feel that there is no gap between the bank and customers, which in turn maximizes agreement and minimizes disagreement between the bank and the customers.

It is evident that one of the most difficult types of banking service is the one offered to customers in an airplane. The picture of the man is an emphasis of the phrase ‘Bank Anywhere, Anytime’ which indicates that the bank will be with its customers everywhere and anytime; i.e. time and place will not stand as an obstacle between the bank and its customers. The phrase ‘Free 24/7 Mobile Banking’ emphasizes the previous idea.

#### 4.1.5 The Sympathy Maxim

##### (27) Gooch and Company



Heartland: Volume 2, Issue 2, March - April 2014, p. 15

This is an advertisement of a company specialized in painting, tiling, carpeting, etc. In the sentence 'let us help you fall in love with your home all over again', the word 'us' shows sympathy with customers on the part of the company because the company cares about customers' home. Also, the advertiser observes the sympathy maxim when s/he uses 'help you' which minimizes antipathy and maximizes sympathy between the company and customers. When somebody cares for you to fall in love with your home again, it means s/he cares and shows sympathy for you.

The statement 'help you fall in love with your home all over again' asserts that the client needs sympathy since helping somebody to fall in love again indicates that s/he has fallen in love before, but his/her situation is not good now. The company wants to convey a sense of concern, sorrow, and sympathy for the customers who are parted from their beloved. The word 'again' indicates that people have a passion for their homes and this dies out in the course of time. What the company offers is that they renew their customers' passion for their home.

The personification 'falling in love with you home' is used by the advertiser to amuse the customers and make them be impressed. The company treats the owner of the home as a lover and the home as a beloved and it offers to help the lover to fall in love with the beloved again, which reflects a great deal of sympathy and concern. The word

‘us’, in ‘let us’, shows that the company has a design team to renovate customers’ once loved home.

(28) First Class Learning



**Attention Britons!**

**First Class Learning**

**Want to ensure your child has the same high standard of Education as they would receive in the UK?**

First Class Learning is a British company with about 200 centers in the UK. Recently it established its first location in Venice, CA. We help children with Math and English for as little as \$150/month.

Our Math and English curricula are set within the frameworks of the National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the 5-14 Guidelines (Curriculum for Excellence) in Scotland.

**Mention this ad for 50% Off Registration**  
(A \$25 value) Expires October 31, 2012.

Venice@firstclasslearning.com • (310) 736-6575

[www.firstclasslearning.com](http://www.firstclasslearning.com)

The British Weekly: Saturday, September 22, 2012, p.3

This is an advertisement of a British company for teaching Math and English. The question ‘Want to ensure your child has the same high standard of Education as they would receive in the UK?’ shows observance of sympathy maxim as the word ‘ensure’ implies caring for customers’ child. It presupposes that high standard of education is not first and last to all teaching centers, but it is through this center that your child can get a high standard education. This part of the advertisement is given non-linguistic emphasis, namely the dark color and the larger font size, which gives it a good deal of importance here. The advertiser refers to ‘UK’ to imply that the UK is worldwide known for its high standard education. Thus, it minimizes antipathy and maximizes sympathy between the company and the customers as the company wants to offer the customers high quality education.

The statement ‘We help children with Math and English’ goes with the sympathy maxim since helping customers’ children minimizes antipathy and maximizes sympathy between the company and the customers.

While the advertiser talks about the curriculum, s/he mentions England, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, which presupposes

that these areas are excellent in curriculum design, i.e. the company wants to assure its high standard education for customers' children. By using the phrase 'as little as \$150/ month', the advertiser wants to emphasize how small the amount of money that has to be paid in return for the type of service they offer is. Most importantly, the advertiser wants to state that educating customers' children is the most important thing for this institution, not money.

The picture of the child on the upper right-hand side can be of a pupil of First Class Learning. He grips the pencil correctly and looks serious, which might suggest that he has got a high standard education. The faint smile on the child's face can reflect his satisfaction with First Class Learning. The ball-shaped picture may symbolize the earth. The analogy between the earth and this center could be in terms of internationality. Since the earth includes all countries of the world, so this center is an international one that can educate children from all over the world. The tick mark may mean choosing the First Class Learning for educating your children is the correct and convenient decision. All these non-linguistic elements assert the observation of the sympathy maxim.

## 4.2 Non-Observance of the Politeness Principle

### 4.2.1 The Modesty Maxim

(29) bareMinerals

**THE WORLD'S  
BEST CONCEALER  
YOU'VE NEVER SEEN.**

A master of disguise, bareMinerals Correcting Concealer glides on seamlessly, blending into skin to hide every imperfection. More than a concealer, our luxuriously creamy, skin-caring formula contains Lemon Peel Extract, a botanical skin brightener, to correct the appearance of dark spots and discolorations for a radiant, even-toned complexion.

Not seeing is believing: try it today at participating retailers.

**bareMinerals**  
bareMinerals boutiques | Sephora | Ulta | Impulse Beauty at Macy's | Nordstrom | Dillard's | QVC  
bareMinerals.com

MarieClaire: Volume 20, Issue 10, October 2013, p. 221

This is an advertisement of a cosmetic material. The statement 'THE WORLD'S BEST CONCEALER YOU'VE NEVER SEEN' violates the modesty maxim as the producer maximizes praise of

himself/herself by saying that the product is the best in the world. In doing so, the advertiser uses hyperbole since s/he exaggerates in describing the product.

Also, the phrases ‘A master of disguise’, ‘to hide every imperfection’, and ‘More than a concealer’ violate the modesty maxim because the producer maximizes praise of his/her product, and hence of himself/herself.

### (30) Revitalift Miracle Blur

INSTANT SKIN SMOOTHER  
ERASES THE LOOK OF LINES, PORES  
AND WRINKLES IN SECONDS.

BECAUSE YOU'RE WORTH IT.™

L'ORÉAL  
PARIS

REVITALIFT  
MIRACLE  
BLUR  
INSTANT SKIN SMOOTHER

VISIBLELY ERASES WRINKLES,  
LINES AND PORES

THE ONE AND ONLY  
ORIGINAL MIRACLE BLUR

- NOT A MOISTURIZER. MORE THAN A PRIMER.
- USE AFTER MOISTURIZER FOR A PERFECTING, VELVETY-MATTE FINISH.

BEFORE & AFTER  
UNRETOUCHED  
RESULTS

LEARN MORE AT [MIRACLEBLUR.COM](http://MIRACLEBLUR.COM)

#1 L'ORÉAL  
PARIS  
WORLDWIDE

©2015 L'ORÉAL USA, INC. MILLION YEARFOURTE AUGUST 2014 IN WOMEN FACE CARE IN MASS MARKET

Essence: Volume 45, No. 11, March 2015, p. 90

This is an advertisement of Revitalift Miracle Blur, a product of L'Oréal Company. The phrase ‘INSTANT SKIN SMOOTHER’ violates the modesty maxim as it maximizes praise of the company as it says that Revitalift Miracle Blur is a cream that smoothes the skin instantly.

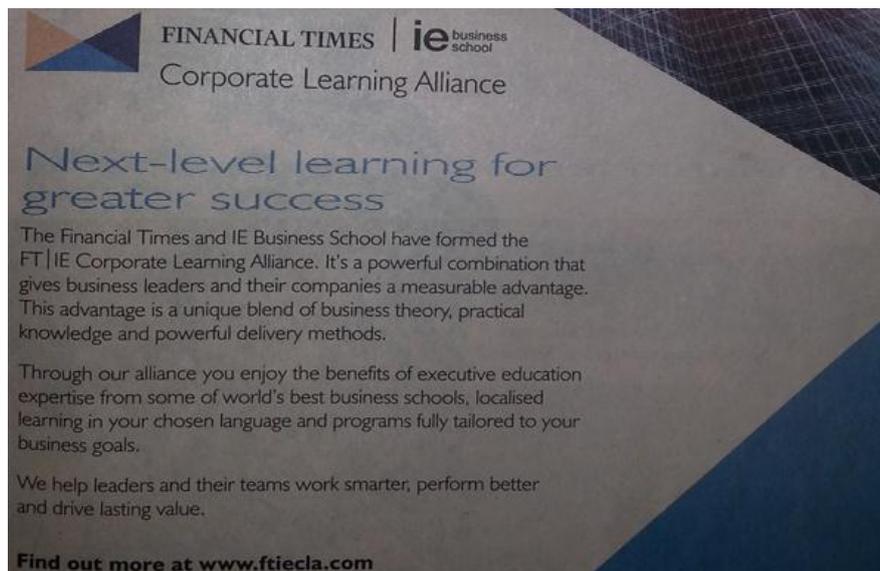
Also, the phrase ‘ERASES THE LOOK OF LINES, PORES AND WRINKLES IN SECONDS’ violates the modesty maxim because it maximizes praise of the company due to the hyperbole that the product is formulated in a way that erases lines, wrinkles, pores, and uneven texture in second.

The clause ‘BECAUSE YOU’RE WORTH IT’ violates the modesty maxim as the advertiser indicates that the product is something valuable and you deserve it, which maximizes praise of the company.

Also, the phrase ‘THE ONE AND ONLY, ORIGINAL MIRACLE BLUR’ violates the modesty maxim as it maximizes praise of the company stating that Revitalift Miracle Blur is the only one of its kind.

The phrase ‘MORE THAN A PRIMER’ implies that this is more than a cosmetic material, which maximizes praise of the company, and thus violates the modesty maxim.

(31) Financial Times and IE Business School Corporate Learning Alliance



Financial Times: No. 38729, Tuesday, December 16, 2014, p.4

This is an advertisement of Financial Times and IE Business School Corporate Learning Alliance (FTIESCLA), an executive education provider.

The phrases ‘greater success’ and ‘powerful combination’ exemplify violation of the modesty maxim as it maximizes praise of self, i.e. FTIESCLA; the advertisement says that this institution offers greater success than any other education provider can, and that it represents a powerful combination of two institutions.

Also, the word ‘unique’ hurts the modesty maxim as it implies the product advertised is the only one of its type.

The statement ‘Through our alliance you enjoy the benefits’ exemplifies non-observance of the modesty maxim because it maximizes praise of self as it indicates that FTIESCLA makes customers enjoy the benefits.

Nonetheless, the advertiser observes the sympathy maxim by using the word 'help', which maximizes sympathy between FTIESCLA and customers.

This is an example of clash of politeness maxims since there is violation of the modesty maxim and observance of the sympathy maxim.

## 5. Conclusions

The conclusions that can be drawn from the analyses above are:

1. The language of advertisement, as a special mode of language use, has its own features at the lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical levels.
2. In order to grab customers' attention, stimulate their curiosity, and persuade them to buy/accept certain products/services, advertisers observe or violate one or more of the politeness maxims. In other words, observing and/or violating Leech's (1983) politeness principle promote(s) the expressive effect of print advertisements and provoke(s) the customers to think, meditate, and eventually get the product or service advertised. This validates the first hypothesis.
3. Non-linguistic elements and implicature are of great importance and indispensable in advertisements since they have a great role in making customers easily and clearly understand the message behind an advertisement. Also, they play a significant role in determining the overall texture of an advertisement and its effectiveness. This validates the second hypothesis.
4. The politeness principle plays a great role in meaning construction in terms of better production and comprehension of the language of advertisement. This validates the third hypothesis.
5. Observance of all of the politeness maxims proposed by Leech (1983) is common in English advertisements, but an exception is the modesty maxim since observing this maxim is not in the advertiser's favor, i.e. if the advertiser observes the modesty maxim, s/he will devalue the product or service.
6. In advertisements, observing the tact maxim automatically entails observing the generosity maxim, and vice versa (see example 20).
7. Advertisers usually prefer to praise themselves, not customers, therefore, not many examples of abidance by the approbation maxim can be identified in advertisements.
8. Sometimes one advertisement shows observance of more than one politeness maxim (see example 20 and 23).

9. As in the conversational maxims, one may come across a situation wherein an advertisement violates one of the politeness maxims but observes another. This can be termed a 'clash' of politeness maxims (see examples 22 and 31).

10. Using indexical expressions in advertisements may cause vagueness and ambiguity, especially when the referent of the indexical expression is absent or presented non-linguistically in a picture or figure. This would engender some controversy or uncertainty over the advertisement being an instance of observance or violation of a certain politeness maxim (see example 24).

### مبدأ التأدب في إعلانات إنكليزية مختارة

البحث مستل من رسالة ماجستير

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية والاعلانات، مبدأ التأدب، معايير التأدب، لغة الاعلانات

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### المستخلص

هذا البحث دراسة وصفية نوعية للإعلانات المطبوعة في المجلات والصحف البريطانية والأمريكية في إطار مبدأ التأدب الذي وضعه Leech (1983). تهدف الدراسة إلى إجابة الأسئلة الآتية: (١) كيف ولم يلتزم أوليترم المعلنون بمعايير التأدب؟ (٢) ما مدى التزام أعدم التزام المعلنين بمعايير التأدب؟ وتهدف الدراسة أيضا إلى تحليل دور التضمين والعناصر غير اللغوية في الإعلانات. فالدراسة بمجملها بحث في معايير التأدب في الإعلانات لبيان أهميتها في صياغة المعنى في هذا المجال.

تفترض الدراسة أن السبب من وراء التزام المعلنين بمعايير التأدب وعدم التزامهم بها هو دفع الزبون إلى شراء بضاعة ما أو الحصول على خدمة معينة يقدمها المعلن. وتفترض الدراسة أن التضمين والعناصر غير اللغوية يلعبان دورا رئيسا في إفهام الزبون الرسالة المتضمنة في

الإعلان. اما الفرضية الأخيرة، فهي أنه لا مناص من الالتزام بمعايير التأدب في صياغة المعنى في الإعلانات.

اختيرت الإعلانات التي تم تحليلها من مجموع ٥٠ إعلانا في مجلات وصحف بريطانية وأمريكية صدرت بين العامين ٢٠١١ و ٢٠١٥. أما التقنية المستخدمة في جمع البيانات فكانت التصنيف الهادف. تمثل مادة البحث حصراً للإعلانات المحتوية على التزام واضح بمعايير التأدب أو خرق واضح لها.

لعل من أبرز نتائج البحث ما يأتي: (١) إن المعلنين يبدون التزاما بمعايير التأدب أو خرقا لها بغية الارتقاء بالتأثير التعبيري لإعلاناتهم. (٢) معايير التأدب كلها يتم الالتزام بها في الإعلانات، ماعدا معيار التواضع الذي لا يصب الالتزام به في مصلحة المعلن. (٣) الالتزام بمعايير الذوق أو اللباقة يؤدي تلقائياً إلى الالتزام بمعايير الكرم، والعكس صحيح.

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