VERBAL POLITENESS AND TREATMENT FORMULAS IN POSITIVE POLITENESS STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the relationship between verbal politeness and nominal formulas of address (NFA) in discourse. A lexicographic methodology was employed, based on which series of criteria were established to explain the process followed in collecting information, elaborating research instruments and systematization process and the pragmatic analysis of the NFA. This article demonstrates that the NFA cannot be pigeonholed into a single form of politeness, as the same NFA can appear in contexts of negative politeness, positive politeness and even in discourteous speech acts.

Keywords

Verbal politeness, nominal treatment formulas, speech act, positive politeness, negative politeness, utterance, pragmatics.

I. INTRODUCTION

Most languages have means of referring to three persons in speech: first person (the sender), second person (the addressee) and third person (the subject of discourse or referent). In Spanish, the second person is expressed mainly by pronouns and nouns and, in certain circumstances, by verbal endings. What is common to these forms of expression in second person is that, in all cases, they are used to attract the attention of interlocutor, the second person has an appellative function in Spanish discourse. The addressee’s speech shows the speakers ability to create terms and expressions that indicate different meanings according to the communicative contexts in which they occur and the types of relationships that speakers establish. These words and expressions, which serve to appeal to the people with whom the speakers establish different types of relations, are called formulas of address (FA).

To begin with, we define FAs as structures based on the combination of lexical and grammatical elements that speakers use to appeal to their interlocutors (Molina, 2002: 97). Likewise, it must be said that the system of treatment is composed of two subsystems: a pronominal and a nominal one. In this article, we are interested in the second one, the nominal formulas of address (NFA).

It should be clarified that this initial definition is very general, insofar as the FAs are defined from the point of view of the function they perform in discourse: to appeal. So, FAs are shown to be linguistic resources with which we refer to the second person, without their primary purpose being to communicate ideas, but rather to indicate, to point out the interlocutor, to give him or her a place in the discourse. From this point of view, the second person (addressee) is signalized not only by means of indicative expressions or pronouns, but also by resorting to various linguistic units ranging from common nouns to proper nouns. However, we consider that FAs are not exhausted in a mere deictic and appellative function, as they also provide other types of pragmatic and sociolinguistic information, insofar as they give an account of communicative strategies employed by speakers according to the type of relations they establish among themselves.

Thus, to the definition proposed by Molina, which serves to emphasize FAs linguistic structures with an appellative pragmatic purpose, it should be added that they are structures which provide sociolinguistic information and a series of values. In this sense, the nominal treatment formulas (NFA) reflect the type of relationship one has with the interlocutor and at the same time they convey a number of semantic-pragmatic
values which are related to the effect that one wants to produce on the interlocutor. Among the pragmatic values, it is worth noting the direct relationship between FA and verbal politeness strategies.

In terms of the above mentioned and considering what Escandell (1993) proposed when dealing with the subject of verbal politeness, it is worth mentioning that one of the aspects in the subject of verbal politeness, it is worth mentioning that one of the aspects in which the relationship between politeness and language use is most clearly seen is in FAs. Given, then, that FAs reflect to a large extent the relationship between language use and politeness, in this article we analyse the relationship between NFA and politeness.

It should be approved that, for the analysis of the relationship between politeness and NFAs, we have maintained the classification of NFAs into NFAs of positive politeness and NFAs of negative politeness. However, within the analysis we show examples in which an NFA, which in principle can be classified as a positive or negative politeness treatment, may perform a different type of politeness or may even appear to accompany discourteous acts.

For this purpose, in principle, we put forward some methodological considerations that we have followed in the study we have carried out, particularly those related to the pragmatic analysis of NFAs. Subsequently, we present the analysis of the relationship between positive politeness and NFAs, and negative politeness and NFAs, on the basis of the formulation of some examples of actual speech usage. Finally, we present some conclusions on the analysis carried out.

Main part

We define politeness as a set of conversational strategies aimed at avoiding or mitigating conflicts that may arise between interlocutors as a result of social factors such as age, social position, sex, gender, hierarchy, levels of education, etc. Thus, politeness should not be understood alone from the level of social norms, but also from the implications that has on the linguistic plane. In any case, when it comes to politeness as a set of conversational strategies we are emphasizing verbal politeness, a term proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978) and based on in concept image. A.F. Shamahmudova fairly insists “that language learning should pay attention to these differences and possible pragmatic errors, especially when there is a risk of cultural misunderstanding or evaluating other unfamiliar factors with the help of prejudices. For this, the communicants should be offered clear, pragmatic detailed information detailing the contexts of using the most important speech acts and the means of expression most appropriate to these contexts”

The relationship between NFA and politeness is established from the fact that one of the discursive uses that NFAs have is to serve as a means to convey courtesy (Edeso, 2005: 129).

That is, NFAs may appear reinforcing polite speech acts (reinforcing acts of the positive image), or attenuating acts not polite (threatening acts of the negative image), through which conveys positive and negative politeness, respectively. However, we consider, in line with what is proposed by Blas Arroyo (1995), that the type of courtesy that can appear in a certain NFA depends to a large extent on the evaluations that the speakers make of the different situations they face and the relationships they establish with their interlocutors, where the context fulfills a relevant role especially in the processes of understanding and interpretation of the uses of NFAs. That is, an NFA is not necessarily determined by connotations or by conditions of formality or communicative informality, but that its appearance depends on the various sociocultural evaluations that make speakers, which does not always correspond to the expected behaviors for verbal politeness is determined by the specific character of the context and of the communicative situation (Haverkate, 1994: 109).

Positive politeness is represented by a series of strategies that have as a purpose to enhance the positive facets of the listener. To materialize this objective, speakers can include their listeners in their sphere of interest, which originates partial strategies such as showing a certain interest, exalting skills, etc., in which the use of certain treatment formulas is decisive (Pedroviejo Esteruelas, 2004: 247).

In this way, NFAs serve as markers of proximity or solidarity; thus, the use of a specific NFA takes into account the characteristics that define to the interlocutor. That is why NFAs do not only have a referential value but also have social and psychological meanings associated with the choice of a specific NFA. Below we analyze some examples in those that NFA participate in the manifestation of the positive courtesy; In some cases we consider the examples separately and in others we do a joint analysis of their group.
(1) **Mi amor, entonces ¿no sabes cuándo nos vemos?** (conversación espontánea).

(2) **Amor, amor, te estoy hablando, ¿qué me prometió ayer?** (conversación espontánea).

(3) *Es que a ella, amor, porque le falta disciplina, pero a esa vieja se le mete todo por ósmosis* (conversación espontánea).

In (1), (2) and (3) the speaker uses an abstract NFA indicating the psychological effect the listener produces on the speaker. In addition, the NFA amor expresses an exaltation of the speaker. Although the NFA amor expresses an exaltation of the speaker. To that extent, although the NFA accompanies an exhortative act as in (2), an interrogative act in (1) and an expressive act in (3), it locates the relationship between the interlocutors on the plane of affectivity (horizontal axis), which is which accounts for positive politeness.

(4) **Mamazota, mona, te adoro. Att: David** (graffiti).

(5) **Sí, mamita, en este momento yo necesito mucho más que eso** (conversación espontánea).

(6) *Mami, me fajé un viaje más bacano. Me fue muy bien* (conversación espontánea).

In (4), (5) and (6) the speaker takes NFAs from the realm of family relations and uses them in the realm of romantic relationships to express affection for his interlocutor. In this way, the NFA *mamazota* indicates exaltation of value, which is reflected in the use of the augmentative suffix; the NFA *mamita* and *mami* indicate protective value.

What is common to all these examples is that the use of NFAs pertaining to the field of love and family relationships indicates positive politeness. Similarly, most of the speech acts which are accompanied by these NFAs are expressive, which facilitate the emergence of a positive politeness strategy. It is worth mentioning that examples we have discussed are located within the framework of intimate relations. We consider these NFAs as formulas of intimate treatment to the extent that they are indicators of a very close and affectionate relationship.

The following examples reinforce this last statement; however, we also find some cases in which a positive politeness NFA serves as a manifestation of discourtesy, but also some cases in which a positive politeness NFA serves as a manifestation of discourtesy and others in which it makes some conversational implicatures. Let us look at the examples:

(7) a. **Mija, soy yo!!... es que llevo dos horas chupándome este aguacero!!!** (El Colombiano, 28-08-08).

b. ¡**Mija!, …llévate ese jarrón que es que veo flores y ahí mismo se me sube un guayabo ni el tenaz** (El Colombiano, 10-08-08).

In examples (7a) and (7b), we see that the NFA *mija* reports an intimate relationship between the speaker and the listener; in both cases the husband addresses the wife. Thus, the conditions of power and distance between the interlocutors are not so clear since, due to the type of relationship between them, these conditions are minimised to a large extent. Also, despite the fact that the weight of the speech act is different in both examples, since in (7a) we are dealing with an affirmative act and in (7b) with an exhortative one, the NFA used has the function of attenuation, which is present above all in example (7a). However, this NFA cannot be classified as a treatment specific to intimate relations, since it can also appear in situations where solidarity is present, as can be seen in example c; however, it is obvious that what is common in 7a, 7b and 7c is that NFAs are enunciated within a positive politeness.

(7) c. A: **qué hubo mija, ¿cómo empezaron el año?**

B: **con una lluvia de sobres...el sobre con la factura de los servicios, el de la tarjeta de crédito, el de los celulares, el de la aseguradora, el de...** (El Colombiano, 03-01-08).

On the other hand, it should be noted that the NFA is generally used in sentences that express positive politeness; however, it can also appear in other discourteous utterances, as can be seen in the following conversation.

(7) d. A: **Q’hubo mija, ¿no cabe o qué?**
B: No, mija, ¿por qué?, le molestó...

A: Sí. B: Ah, de malas, mija, pa’ que está en la mitad (conversación espontánea).

(7d) is a very different case, because unlike 7a, 7b and 7c, which correspond to a positive politeness, the NFAF mija used in this communication situation does not communicate politeness, as the speaker does not communicate politeness, since speaker A makes a complaint and the reply to this, by speaker B, is a B, is a challenge, which marks a situation of discourtesy. In this sense, this situation can be typified as a case of conflict. In order to determine more precisely the type of interaction that is taking place, it is necessary to know what link there is (or is not) between A and B; information about the physical space and location of the interlocutors must also be taken into account. Thus, it can be said that A and B correspond to (unknown) passengers of a public service bus who are standing because the seats on the bus are occupied by other passengers. Thus, when B tries to move towards the exit door, he pushes A without intending to attack her; however, A reacts to the contact and asks a rhetorical question: "What are you trying to do? A, however, reacts to the contact and asks a rhetorical question: "Is there no room or what? is to express his disagreement with what B has just done. From this point on, A and B's utterances are intended to challenge the interlocutor:

Why, did it bother you..., Did it bother you..., Yes...?

Finally, B, by means of a discourteous speech act, attributes the responsibility for the conflict to A: Ah, de malas, mija, pa' que está en la mitad. In view of the above, we see that the use of the NFA mija in no way mitigates the discourteous acts, but rather, just like the discourteous acts uttered, the NFA manifests a derogatory meaning.

We have also identified some situations that would initially correspond to non-courteous or even discourteous speech acts, but that the fact of using a positive politeness NFA can help us to understand the meaning of these acts, may lead us to interpret them as attempts by the speaker to establish bonds of trust with his interlocutor. Intention can or can not have a satisfactory result. In the examples we have considered for this part of the analysis, we can highlight several intentions which are added to intention establishing bonds of solidarity between the interlocutors. Let us consider the following examples to explain each additional effect.

(8) Hijo, me deja en la esquina, por favor (conversación espontánea).

(9) A: - ¿Cuánto vale? B: - Son mil pesitos, vecino (conversación espontánea).

(10) A: - ¿Usted pasa por la clínica vida? B: - Sí, mi amor (conversación espontánea).

(11) A: Niña ¿qué va a llevar? B: Dos arepas y una leche (conversación espontánea).

(12) A: Buenas noches, niña ¿en qué le puedo servir? B: Me da un pan de mil, por favor (conversación espontánea).

In (8), (9), (12) the speakers abide by the third politeness maxim established by Lakoff (1975): be nice. It must be said that these NFAs who express solidarity appear in the framework of direct speech acts; however, it is not intended to mitigate negative courtesy, insofar as the communicative situations exemplified correspond to routine situations where the presence of direct acts is the expected behavior, which does not mean that such acts threaten the image of the interlocutor. In (8), for example, it corresponds to a relationship of passenger and public service bus driver, where if the passenger intends to get off at the place he has established, he must ask the bus driver to stop and must do so directly, which is not rude. In (9) Generally, when the bus stop is requested, it is not verbally requested, but rather uses the bell assigned for that function. This reaffirms that asking to stop the bus directly is not rude. Something similar to the previous situation happens, because in this there is a relationship between a customer (A) and a seller (B), where the seller, when faced with a direct question from the customer, also responds directly and additionally uses an NFA of neighbor solidarity to indicate kindness or make the listener feel good about the attention of your speaker. In (11) and (12) the NFAs are used to show a positive politeness to the listener, in this case to be polite, since the framework of the relationship assumes that the listener has the intention of requesting something (buying something), so which the speaker does not need to use any kind of strategy to persuade the listener to buy. Therefore, the questions asked by the speakers are questions that request information and are asked directly. In the establishment of bonds of trust between unknown interlocutors, we see that the use of NFAs creates the effect of exalting the listener, for which affectionate NFAs are used that, in principle, correspond to intimate relationships.
(13) Juan, lindo, ¿bien o no? (programa radial).

(14) Javier, mi amor, ¿bien o no?, mamor, ¿por qué canción vas a votar? (programa radial).

(15) Nenita, ¿qué canción vas a programar? (programa radial).

(13), (14) and (15) can be considered polite acts to the extent that the verbal cost to the speaker of fulfilling the speaker's intention is minimal. In addition, the relationship established between the interlocutors (speaker: broadcaster of a radio program, listener: listeners to the program) means that the speech act made by speaker are considered routine utterances, insofar as they are part of verbal interactions.

The routine utterance in (13) corresponds to the greeting "¿bien o no?". In (14) the routine fact has to do with the fact that in radio programs there are contests in which listeners choose the song of their preference, and in (15) the routine situation is represented by the fact that one of the expected behaviors in the context of radio programs is that listeners call in to request a song they want to listen to.

In view of above considerations, we can say that in the context of the proposed verbal interactions proposed in some radio programs (announcers and listeners of the program), NFAs are used to make the listener feel good and important, so that he/she feels and important, so that the listener continues to listen and participate in the radio program. It should be noted that the use of these NFAs, which try to please the listener through exaltation, convey a persuasive strategy: to make the listener keep listening to the radio programme on a daily basis.

We can conclude this part of the analysis by affirming that the examples of NFAs that attempt to establish bonds of trust occur mainly when the speaker demands something from the listener or has received a benefit. Thus, for example, when there is a request, this form of positive politeness appears, which, as we can see in the examples, is also taken up by the media. However, the scope of the politeness strategy is not limited to the request. In analyzed examples, we have identified at least three additional intentions in addition to the intention to establish a bond of trust:

1. The speaker tries to please or exalt the listener, as seen in (13), (14) and (15);
2. The speaker abides by three Lakoff's politeness maxims: to be polite with the interlocutor, as in (8), (9), (10), (11) and (12);
3. The speaker tries to mitigate the ungracious act, as in other cases.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the analysis of the aspects related to politeness and NFAs, we have tried to show the different forms of relationship that can be established between politeness and NFAs. In that sense, between FTP and NFAs there has been a generalized tendency, at the level of the address pronouns, to classify them on the basis of exclusive relations or oppositions; thus, the form Usted has been considered as the polite form of address par excellence, while Tú is pigeonholed as a treatment of confidence. However, as has been shown, both pronouns of treatment are involved in politeness, the difference that could be established points more to the type of politeness they involve.

With regard to NFAs we observe that the pigeonholing into negative politeness NFAs or positive politeness, in many cases, is not so clear, since the same NFA establishes relations with both negative politeness speech act and positive politeness utterances, as well as with positive politeness, and also with discourteous utterances. What is evident is that at the level of NFAs, politeness is directly related to linguistic and contextual conditions in which they are uttered. That is to say, politeness is the product of the communicative contract that is established between the interlocutors in a specific communication situation.

The use of an NFA in the context of a non-polite speech act, or between speakers who have a significant social distance, is a product of the conversational contract between the speaker and the listener in a specific communication situation who have a significant social distance, is intended to create a symbolic solidarity with the hearer by erasing the social distance that separates them. In the establishment of bonds of trust between unknown interlocutors we see that the use of NFAs creates the effect of exalting the listener, for which
affectionate NFAs are used which, in principle, correspond to relations of intimacy. It should be also added that the use of these NFAs, which try to please the listener by means of exaltation, convey a strategy of persuasion. Not surprising that some of the NFAs do exalt the listener, but unlike the exaltation in the politeness strategies, some of the NFAs are exaltation in positive politeness strategies, the one performed in negative politeness marks the distance between the interlocutors.

REFERENCES