

EL4222 Stylistics and Drama: Session 7

1. In this session, we will deal with Leech's extension of the CP. In the next session, we will deal with another similar approach based on the notion of 'face' and perhaps some discussion on the work on impoliteness.

2. Leech suggests that a discussion of politeness can lead to insights as to the *motivation* for breaking of the CP maxims; in fact, the CP maxims might *clash* with some politeness maxim.

Notice in the Junior Common Room

These newspapers are for all the students, and not the privileged few who arrive first.

Notice at a very expensive gourmet restaurant in Britain

If you want to enjoy the full flavour of your food and drink you will, naturally, not smoke during this meal. Moreover, if you did smoke you would also be impairing the enjoyment of other guests.

3. The **Politeness Principle** (PP) states: 'Minimise (all things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs; maximise (all things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs.'

Old example: A is asking B about a mutual friend's new boyfriend.

A: Is he nice?

B: She seems to like him.

[Indirection to avoid: 'I don't like her boyfriend!']

Note: Leech is talking about the *expression* of beliefs. The PP does not deal with the beliefs themselves.

Elsewhere, Leech makes a distinction between *politeness* (to do with *expression* — *linguistic or other behaviour*) and *courtesy* (to do with goals and intentions).

For example, *thanking, promising, and congratulating* are inherently *courteous* speech acts; *requesting and ordering* are inherently *discourteous* speech acts. Normally, discourteous speech acts need to be more sensitively phrased. Therefore, an offer (inherently courteous) need not be worded indirectly – eg 'Have some more chocolate!' Compare this to 'Give me some more chocolate!'

4. The **tact maxim** states: *minimise the expression of beliefs which imply cost to the other; maximise the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other.*

Hang on! → Hang on a second!

Read this draft. → Could you please read this draft?

Give me some more chocolate. → Have you got any more chocolate?

5. The **generosity maxim** states: *minimise the expression of benefit to self; maximise the expression of cost to self.*

Can you help yourself to some food? → Do help yourself!

Come for dinner at our place. → You *must* come and have dinner with us.

6. The **approbation maxim** states: *minimise the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of other; maximise the expression of beliefs which express approval of other.*

A: Do you like my hairstyle? B: Well, ... [or silence]

I think your talk was badly presented. → [silence]

7. The **modesty maxim** states: *minimise the expression of praise of self; maximise the expression of dispraise of self.*

I am very good looking. → I suppose my looks are tolerable.

I am the wittiest writer of this century. → I have always been very interested in word play.

8. The **agreement maxim** states: *minimise the expression of disagreement between self and other; maximise the expression of agreement between self and other.*

Mr Sharma is the Indian-born father of Nehemulla, a pupil attending a school where Mrs Green (British) is the deputy headteacher. Mr Sharma wants Nehemulla do prepare for 'O' levels and not for CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education, roughly, like 'N' levels in Singapore).

Mr S I don't want my er daughter to do CSE I want her to do 'O' level

Mrs G Yes, but Mr Sharma I thought we resolved this on your last visit, and the situation hasn't changed. Nehemulla is ideally suited to the class she's in and this class will do CSE in two years' time

Mr S NO my dear, NO NO! It's it's wrong. She she she – if she does CSE, she's going to break the heart of the family.

Mrs G Yes, but just –

Mr S But but – excuse me, let me finish please – because er to me er Nehemulla is quite capable ...

9. The **irony principle** enables us to bypass politeness and promotes the 'antisocial' use of language (p. 142). The irony principle pays lip service to the PP.

That's all I wanted!

You're such a wonderful friend! [*when friend has fouled up the person's plans*]

10. While irony is an apparently friendly way of being offensive (mock-politeness), the type of verbal behaviour known as 'banter' is an offensive way of being friendly (mock-impoliteness). The **banter principle** states: *in order to show solidarity with other, say something which is (i) obviously untrue, and (ii) obviously impolite to other.*

11. Generally, the level of politeness depends on:

- (i) the *horizontal distance of hearer from speaker* (ie, goods friends, acquaintance, stranger?)
- (ii) the *authoritative status of hearer with respect to speaker* (ie equals, non-equals?)
- (iii) the *costliness of the action to hearer* (eg borrowing 10c versus borrowing \$1,000).

	<i>More politeness necessary</i>	<i>Less politeness necessary</i>
(i)	Great horizontal distance	Minimal horizontal distance
(ii)	Hearer of higher status	Hearer of lower status
(iii)	Costly to hearer	Not costly to hearer

Activity (30 mins)

Examine the beginning of Stoppard's *Night and Day* (1978). The setting is Kambawe, a fictitious former British Colony in Africa. Ruth is married to Geoffrey Carson who runs the business side of the local mining industry. Ruth has just returned to find Guthrie installed in her house; he is an internationally celebrated press photographer and has come to the house to meet the journalist Dick Wagner. (At this point in the play, the audience won't know that Ruth, whilst picking up her son from a prep school a few days earlier, had slept with Wagner in a hotel in London.) 'Ruth' (in inverted commas) represents Ruth's inner voice or thoughts. Jeddu is the capital of Kambawe and KC is Kambawe City.

(FRANCIS *re-enters with a tea-tray.*)

RUTH (1) Thank you, Francis. (2) Has the house been opened to the public? ←

FRANCIS (3) What's that, Mrs Carson?

(*This gets through to GUTHRIE.*)

GUTHRIE (4) Oh – God – I'm terribly sorry.

RUTH (5) I shouldn't get up; you look awful. ← (*To FRANCIS who is leaving.*) (6) Another cup.

(*RUTH's manner is easy-going. GUTHRIE gets up.*)

GUTHRIE (7) No – I'm fine. (8) Sleeping on planes – you know. (9) Ruins the complexion. (10) From the inside.

(11) My name's Guthrie – George Guthrie.

RUTH (12) How do you do? (13) I'm Ruth Carson. (14) Would you care for some tea?

GUTHRIE (15) Wouldn't say no. (16) Thanks.

(*RUTH is pouring tea for GUTHRIE into the only cup.*)

RUTH (17) Do you take sugar?

GUTHRIE (18) No thanks.

(*Meanwhile FRANCIS comes in with another cup.*)

RUTH (*To FRANCIS*) (19) Thank you. (20) Would you take those parcels, Francis?

(*GUTHRIE is looking for something — saccharin tablets — in his bag. FRANCIS leaves with the packages.*)

(21) I'm sorry I wasn't here to greet you Mr ... Guthrie. (22) I had to go into Jeddu to pick up some things. ←

GUTHRIE (23) The boy said it was okay to wait in the garden. Is that all right?

RUTH (24) Of course. (25) But I'm afraid I have no idea what time Geoffrey will be home. (26) He's been in Malakuangazi — I'm expecting him this afternoon.

GUTHRIE (27) I've come to meet Dick Wagner. (*The name has the English form — Wag-ner. He has found the saccharin and is coming back to the table. RUTH remains perfectly still. GUTHRIE comes casually back to the table and sits down. RUTH waits until he looks at her.*)

RUTH (28) What are you talking about, Mr Guthrie? ←

GUTHRIE (29) Dick Wagner. (30) Do you know him?
(*Pause*)

RUTH (31) Is he a composer? ←

GUTHRIE (32) No. (33) He's a reporter. (34) Writes for the *Sunday Globe*, in London. (35) I take the pictures. (36) The pictures, as you know, are worth a thousand words. (37) In the case of Wagner, two thousand. (38) He was supposed to be at KC to meet me.

RUTH (39) Why in God's name do you expect to meet him at my house? ←

GUTHRIE (40) He told me. (41) He left a message at the airport.

RUTH (42) He told you to meet him *at my house*? ←
(*GUTHRIE sipping tea, catches her tone for the first time, and hesitates.*)

GUTHRIE (43) Well, he didn't mention you.

'RUTH' (44) Help.

GUTHRIE (45) Just the house. (46) The boy said to sit in the garden till Wagner comes. (47) Is that all right?

'RUTH' (48) Is that all right? (49) Oh yes – bloody marvellous. (50) Just what you needed, Ruth, and serve you right. (51) Nothing is for free, you always pay, and Guthrie has brought the bill. (52) Silly woman!

GUTHRIE (53) Mrs Carson?

'RUTH' (54) Oh God, get me out of this before Guthrie's friend arrives. (55) I don't feel up to being witty today.

GUTHRIE (56) Penny for your thoughts?

RUTH (57) Sorry?

GUTHRIE (58) You were miles away.

RUTH (59) Alas, no.

GUTHRIE (60) Sorry?
(*Pause*)

RUTH (61) What kind of camera do you use? ←

GUTHRIE (62) Do you know anything about cameras?

RUTH (63) No. (*Pause*) By the way, we don't call them boy any more. The idea is, if we don't call them boy they won't chop us with their machetes. (*Brief smile.*) Small point. ←
(*GUTHRIE holds his arm out, palm to the ground.*)

GUTHRIE (64) Boy about this high, fair hair, your mouth, knows about cameras, has a Kodak himself; said I could wait in the garden. ←
(*RUTH acknowledges her mistake, but GUTHRIE pushes it.*)
(65) His name's Alastair.
(*He has pushed it too far and she snaps at him.*)

RUTH (66) I know his bloody name.

GUTHRIE (*Olive branch*) (67) The one I use mainly is a motorised F2 Nikon. (*Sips tea.*) (68) Lovely.

RUTH (*Smiles*) (69) Would you like a proper drink?

GUTHRIE (*Relaxes; shakes his head*) (70) The sambo gave me a lime squash. (*Winces*) (71) Sorry. (*His hand chops the air twice.*) (72) Chop-chop. ←

1. There are three parties in the extract: Guthrie, Ruth and Francis.

(a) Describe the relationship between Ruth and Francis. What *linguistic* evidence is there to support this?

(b) Describe the relationship between Guthrie and Ruth. What *linguistic* evidence is there to support this?

2. Leech suggests that certain speech acts are inherently polite (eg compliments and offers) and certain speech acts are inherently impolite (eg criticisms of the other party, orders and commands). Run through the passage and list out some of these.

Are there any problems in the categorisation? Are there many ambiguous speech acts or multi-layered speech acts? Are there many politeness-neutral speech acts?

Is there any correlation between (im)polite speech acts and the characters?

3. Leech claims that it is the impolite speech acts that need mitigation (different linguists use different terms; others include *hedging* and *modalisation*). Pick out examples of speech acts that are conventionally mitigated and those that are more indirect (eg use of hints).

Linguistic choices are often available in most interactions. Try out other ways of performing the speech acts mentioned. Would this convey a different picture of the characters?

Are there any examples of the opposite happening – ie impolite speech acts made even more impolite in expression?

4. Provide a definition of sarcasm. Find examples in the text and try to relate them to Leech's categories.

5. How does teasing and banter fit into the theory of politeness? Are there any examples in the text?

6. How important is this kind of analysis to characterisation?

Further passages for examination

A. The beginning of Shaw's *You never can tell*. Background: Valentine, a young dentist, has just set up practice at a seaside resort. He meets the Clandon family, consisting of Mrs Clandon (a strong supporter of women's rights), and her three children, Gloria, Dolly and Philip (the latter two are twins). Mrs Clandon has long left a dictatorial husband, and has brought up her children in Madeira under a different name than their father's. (See also: Geoffrey Leech, 'Pragmatic principles in Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*', in Michael Toolan (ed.), *Language, Text and Context* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.257–278.)

1 THE YOUNG LADY [*handing him the glass*] Thank you. [*In spite of the biscuit complexion she has not the slightest foreign accent*].

2 THE DENTIST [*putting it down on the ledge of his cabinet of instruments*] That was my first tooth.

3 THE YOUNG LADY [*aghasf*] Your first! Do you mean to say that you began practising on me?

4 THE DENTIST. Every dentist has to begin with somebody.

5 THE YOUNG LADY. Yes: somebody in a hospital, not people who pay.

6 THE DENTIST [*laughing*] Oh, the hospital doesn't count. I only meant my first tooth in private practice. Why didn't you let me give you gas?

7 THE YOUNG LADY. Because you said it would be five shillings extra.

8 THE DENTIST [*shocked*] Oh, don't say that. It makes me feel as if I had hurt you for the sake of five shillings.

9 THE YOUNG LADY [*with cool insolence*] Well, so you have. [*She gets up*] Why shouldn't you? It's your business to hurt people. [*It amuses him to be treated in this fashion: he chuckles secretly as he proceeds to clean and replace his instruments. She shakes her dress into order: looks inquisitively about her; and goes to the broad window*]. You have a good view of the sea from your rooms! Are they expensive?

10 THE DENTIST. Yes

11 THE YOUNG LADY. You don't own the whole house, do you?

12 THE DENTIST. No.

13 THE YOUNG LADY. I thought not. [*Tilting the chair which stands at the writing-table and looking critically at it as she spins it round on one leg*] Your furniture isn't quite the latest thing, is it?

14 THE DENTIST. It's my landlord's.

15 THE YOUNG LADY. Does he own the toothache chair [*pointing to the operating chair*]

16 THE DENTIST. No: I have that on the hire-purchase system.

17 THE YOUNG LADY [*disparagingly*] I thought so. [*Looking about in search of further conclusions*] I suppose you haven't been here long?

18 THE DENTIST. Six weeks. Is there anything else you would like to know?

19 THE YOUNG LADY [*the hint quite lost on her*] Any family?

20 THE DENTIST. I am not married.

21 THE YOUNG LADY. Of course not: anybody can see that. I meant sisters and mother and that sort of thing.

22 THE DENTIST. Not on the premises.

23 THE YOUNG LADY. Hm! If you've been here six weeks, and mine was your first tooth, the practice can't be very large, can it?

24 THE DENTIST. Not as yet. [*He shuts the cabinet, having tidied up everything*].

25 THE YOUNG LADY. Well, good luck! [*She takes out her purse*]. Five shillings, you said it would be?

26 THE DENTIST. Five shillings.

27 THE YOUNG LADY [*producing a crown¹ piece*] Do you charge five shillings for everything?

28 THE DENTIST. Yes.

29 THE YOUNG LADY. Why?

30 THE DENTIST. It's my system. I'm what's called a five-shilling dentist.

31 THE YOUNG LADY. How nice! Well, here! [*holding up the crown piece*] a nice new five-shilling piece! your first fee! Make a hole in it with the thing you drill people's teeth with; and wear it on your watch-chain.

32 THE DENTIST. Thank you

B. The beginning of *Pygmalion*

Covent Garden at 11.15 p.m. Torrents of heavy summer rain. Cab whistles blowing frantically in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter into the market and under the portico of St Paul's Church, where there are already several people, among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. They are all peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, who seems wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is writing busily.

The church clock strikes the first quarter.

1 THE DAUGHTER [*in the space between the central pillars, close to the one on her left*] I'm getting chilled to the bone. What can Freddy be doing all this time? He's been gone twenty minutes.

2 THE MOTHER [*On her DAUGHTER's right*] Not so long. But he ought to have got us a cab by this.

3 A BYSTANDER [*on the lady's right*] He wont get no cab not until half-past eleven, missus, when they come back after dropping their theatre fares.

4 THE MOTHER. But we must have a cab. We can't stand here until half-past eleven. It's too bad.

5 THE BYSTANDER. Well, it ain't my fault, missus.

6 THE DAUGHTER. If Freddy had a bit of gumption, he would have got one at the theatre door.

7 THE MOTHER. What could he have done, poor boy?

8 THE DAUGHTER. Other people got cabs. Why couldn't he?

FREDDY rushes in out of the rain from the Southampton Street side, and comes between them closing a dripping umbrella. He is a young man of twenty, in evening dress, very wet around the ankles.

9 THE DAUGHTER. Well, haven't you got a cab?

10 FREDDY. There's not one to be had for love or money.

11 THE MOTHER. Oh, Freddy, there must be one. You can't have tried.

12 THE DAUGHTER. It's too tiresome. Do you expect us to go and get one ourselves?

13 FREDDY. I tell you they're all engaged. The rain was so sudden: nobody was prepared; and everybody had to take a cab. I've been to Charing Cross one way and nearly to Ludgate Circus the other; and they were all engaged.

14 THE MOTHER. Did you try Trafalgar Square?

15 FREDDY. There wasn't one at Trafalgar Square.

16 THE DAUGHTER. Did you try?

17 FREDDY. I tried as far as Charing Cross Station. Did you expect me to walk to Hammersmith?

18 THE DAUGHTER. You haven't tried at all.

19 THE MOTHER. You really are very helpless, Freddy. Go again; and don't come back until you have found a cab.

20 FREDDY. I shall simply get soaked for nothing.

[1] In pre-decimalisation (1971) British currency, 12 pence (written 12d) make 1 shilling (written 1s or 1/-) and 20s make £1. A crown is the informal name for 5s, and half a crown is 2/6.

21 THE DAUGHTER. And what about us? Are we to stay here all night in this draught, with next to nothing on.

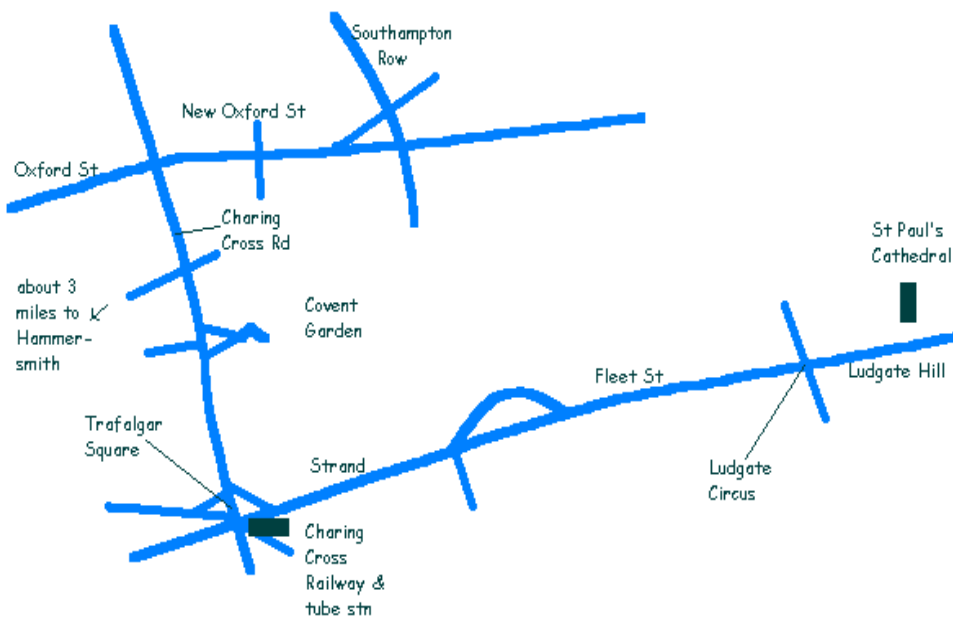
You selfish pig –

22 FREDDY. Oh, very well: I'll go, I'll go. [*He opens his umbrella and dashes off Strand-wards, but comes into collision with a flower girl, who is hurrying in for shelter, knocking her basket out of her hands. A blinding flash of lightning, followed instantly by a rattling peal of thunder, orchestrates the incident.*]

23 THE FLOWER GIRL. Nah then, Freddy: look wh' y' gowin, deah.²

24 FREDDY. Sorry [*he rushes off*].

25 THE FLOWER GIRL [*picking up her scattered flowers and replacing them in the basket*] There's manners f' yer! Te-oo bunches o' voylets trod into the mad.³ [*She sits down on the plinth of the column, sorting her flowers, on the lady's right. She is not at all an attractive person. She is perhaps eighteen, perhaps twenty, hardly older. She wears a little sailor hat of black straw that has long been exposed to the dust and soot of London and has seldom if ever been brushed. Her hair needs washing rather badly: its mousy colour can hardly be natural. She wears a shoddy black coat that reaches nearly to her knees and is shaped to her waist. She has a brown skirt with a coarse apron. Her boots are much the worse for wear. She is no doubt as clean as she can afford to be; but compared to the ladies she is very dirty. Her features are no worse than theirs; but their condition leaves something to be desired; and she needs the services of a dentist.*]



26 THE MOTHER. How do you know that my son's name is Freddy, pray?

27 THE FLOWER GIRL. Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them?⁴ [*Here, with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London.*]

28 THE DAUGHTER. Do nothing of the sort, mother. The idea!

29 THE MOTHER. Please allow me, Clara. Have you any pennies?

30 THE DAUGHTER. No. I've nothing smaller than sixpence.

31 THE FLOWER GIRL [*hopefully*] I can give you change for a tanner,⁵ kind lady.

32 THE MOTHER [*to CLARA*] Give it to me. [*CLARA parts reluctantly*]. Now [*to the girl*] This is for your flowers.

33 THE FLOWER GIRL. Thank you kindly, lady.

34 THE DAUGHTER. Make her give you the change. These things are only a penny a bunch.

35 THE MOTHER. Do hold your tongue, Clara. [*To the girl*]. You can keep the change.

36 THE FLOWER GIRL. Oh, thank you, lady.

37 THE MOTHER. Now tell me how you know that young gentleman's name.

38 THE FLOWER GIRL. I didn't.

39 THE MOTHER. I heard you call him by it. Don't try to deceive me.

40 THE FLOWER GIRL [*protesting*] Who's trying to deceive you? I called him Freddy or Charlie same as you might yourself if you was talking to a stranger and wished to be pleasant. [*She sits down beside her basket*].

41 THE DAUGHTER. Sixpence thrown away! Really, mamma, you might have spared Freddy that. [*She retreats in disgust behind the pillar*].

[2] Now then, Freddy: look where you're going, dear.

[3] There's manners for you! Two bunches of violets trod into the mud.

[4] Oh, he's your son, is he? Well, if you'd done your duty by him as a mother should, he'd know better than to spoil a poor girl's flowers and then run away without paying. Will you pay me for them?

[5] *tanner*: colloquial for sixpence