

**ЭКОНОМИКА И НАУКА В СОВРЕМЕННОМ МИРЕ.
РАЗВИТИЕ НОВЫХ ВОЗМОЖНОСТЕЙ**
**POLITENESS THEORY AND FACE-SAVING STRATEGIES IN ADDRESSING
TABOO WORDS**

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Taboo words, often linked to sensitive topics such as sexuality, religion, and bodily functions, pose unique challenges in communication. Their usage can threaten both the speaker's and listener's "face," a sociolinguistic concept referring to an individual's public self-image (Goffman, 1967). Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987) provides a framework for understanding how face-threatening acts (FTAs) are managed, emphasizing the importance of face-saving strategies in mitigating the potential harm caused by such language. This thesis investigates the intersection of politeness theory and taboo words, offering insights into how speakers navigate the tension between expressiveness and appropriateness in various sociocultural contexts.

Brown and Levinson's politeness theory is a cornerstone of sociolinguistics, offering a framework for understanding how individuals navigate potentially face-threatening acts (FTAs) in communication. According to this theory, individuals have two primary face needs: **positive face** and **negative face**. Positive face refers to the universal human desire to be liked, appreciated, and approved by others, while negative face emphasizes the need to be free from imposition or interference. Taboo words frequently threaten both types of face. For instance, the use of explicit language in a formal or professional setting can undermine the speaker's positive face by making them appear disrespectful, unrefined, or socially inappropriate. Simultaneously, such language may infringe upon the listener's negative face, causing discomfort, offense, or an unwelcome intrusion on their sense of decorum. Recognizing these dynamics, speakers often employ face-saving strategies to mitigate the potential harm caused by taboo words and maintain social harmony.

Key face-saving strategies include **euphemism**, **hedging**, and **apologies or disclaimers**. Euphemisms are used to replace offensive terms with softer, more indirect alternatives, such as saying "passed away" instead of "died" to address the sensitive topic of death without causing unnecessary emotional distress. Hedging involves using qualifiers to soften the impact of potentially offensive language, as in phrases like "I'm sorry to say this, but..." or "Excuse my language, but...". These linguistic devices allow the speaker to address sensitive topics while minimizing the potential for negative reactions. Apologies and disclaimers are also widely used to acknowledge the possible offense caused by taboo language, either before or after it is uttered. This strategy demonstrates awareness of the social norms being violated and serves to restore equilibrium in the interaction. Face-saving strategies are not universal; they are deeply influenced by cultural norms and values, which dictate how politeness and face management are perceived and enacted. In high-context cultures, such as Japan, indirectness and the use of euphemisms are highly valued, as they align with cultural expectations of subtlety and avoiding confrontation. For example, rather than explicitly refusing a request, speakers may use ambiguous phrases to politely decline without directly threatening the listener's positive or negative face. In contrast, low-context cultures, such as the United States, often tolerate more direct communication, especially in informal settings, where the emphasis may be on authenticity and efficiency rather than indirectness. This cultural divergence highlights the critical importance of cultural sensitivity when navigating interactions involving taboo words. Effective communication across linguistic and cultural

boundaries requires an understanding of how different societies approach politeness and face-saving strategies, ensuring that both the message and its delivery align with cultural expectations (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

The insights provided by politeness theory and face-saving strategies have significant practical implications in various fields, particularly those involving cross-cultural communication. In **translation and interpretation**, understanding how taboo words and sensitive language are perceived by different audiences is crucial for preserving the intended meaning of the source text while ensuring that the translation is culturally appropriate. A direct translation of taboo words may fail to convey the nuance of the original language or may even alienate the target audience, making the application of euphemisms or culturally relevant alternatives essential. Similarly, in **intercultural communication**, politeness strategies help facilitate smoother interactions by anticipating and addressing FTAs that might arise due to cultural differences. This is particularly important in diplomatic or business negotiations, where preserving mutual respect and avoiding misunderstandings are critical to achieving favorable outcomes. Additionally, **education and training programs** can benefit from incorporating these strategies to equip professionals, such as interpreters, diplomats, and negotiators, with the tools needed to manage sensitive language effectively. By applying politeness theory and face-saving strategies, individuals can navigate the complexities of taboo words with greater skill and cultural awareness, ultimately fostering more respectful and effective communication in diverse settings.

The use of politeness theory and face-saving strategies is essential in addressing taboo words, as it balances the need for expression with the maintenance of social harmony. By mitigating the negative impact of taboo language, these strategies enable effective communication while respecting the face needs of all parties involved. Future research should delve deeper into how technological advancements and shifting cultural norms influence the perception and management of taboo words in digital and globalized contexts.

References:

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