

# The Application of Leech's Politeness Maxims in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*

**Mahmood K. M. Eshreteh and Huda Badran**

Hebron University

e-mail: maltel2006@yahoo.com

correspondence: maltel2006@yahoo.com

<https://doi.org/10.24071/ijels.v6i2.1091>

received: 7 May 2018; accepted: 12 August 2020

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* in light of the application of Leech's politeness maxims. The study uses a qualitative method in analyzing the utterances of the major characters in the play; Shylock, Antonio and Bassanio, since most of the events within the play focus on their demands, personalities and behaviors. The purpose of this study is to reveal the degree of politeness reflected in the characters' speeches. 17 extracts from Act 1 scene 3 (a street in Venice) and 6 extracts from Act 4 scene 1 (the court scene) are explored due to their importance in the plot development. In light of the analysis, some of the factors are highlighted according to their significant role in determining the use of politeness or impoliteness strategies. These factors are power, psychological aspects, personal values, irony principle, social status and religion. The study also examines the way in which the six maxims are employed in the extracts. To conclude, politeness strategies can be used to reveal much about people's identities, values and psychology.

**Keywords:** comity, politeness, power, Shakespeare, identity

## INTRODUCTION

Language is what distinguishes us as human beings. We can communicate with each other through language and other things such as signs. Thus language can reveal much more about personality, intentions and our way of thinking. We can interpret others' feelings and actions through contemplating their language. This is not easy for sure since we need to be aware of certain things in addition to the language such as, background, religion, social relations and status.

Politeness has become one of the major concerns in linguistics. Thus many analysts depend on it to interpret the speeches of others. Many cultures have studied this concept for many years, yet Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory and Leech's (1983) model have become very influential. Brown and Levinson's theory is concerned with the concept of face which is the self-image that a person has and expect others' to recognize. On the other hand, Leech defines politeness as forms of behaviors that represent "comity". He argues that in our speech, we should care more about the "other" rather than the "self".

Language is one of the most striking features of Shakespeare. Actually, he has enriched the English language with many words and phrases which were written down by him for the

first time in his plays and poetry. One of the most important literary works done by Shakespeare in which we can notice his creation using language is *The Merchant of Venice*.

Shylock, Antonio and Bassanio are major characters in that play and thus the analysis of the utterances produced by them would be so important for the understanding of the whole play, their characters and intentions. Shylock, a Jewish moneylender, is the most dominant character in this play. He is the person who makes the play. Most of the events rely on him especially the court scene. His hatred to Antonio is what pushes him towards his unfortunate destiny. First, he is viewed as a villain; a wicked person. Later on, he is viewed as a human being who has lost his daughter, his property and most important, his religion. In the play, Shylock loans people money with interests. He is being disliked from the people surrounding him, even from his daughter.

So, the researcher is going to analyze some of these characters' utterances through the application of Leech's (1983) model of politeness. When we first read the conversations between him and the two Christians; Antonio and Bassanio, we can recognize dissimilar degree of politeness from the start of the story until the end. Thus, his interaction with Antonio in the first place, and sometimes with Bassanio, is going to reveal the difference in the usage of politeness strategies. The study will show that tact maxim would be only restricted to politeness contrary to the other maxims which can be used for both politeness and impoliteness. Moreover, it is going to discover some of the factors that may affect politeness such as power, social status, psychology and religion.

Dealing with politeness as part of interaction and communication, analysts should take into consideration both linguistic and sociological aspects. Observing politeness in any utterance should be done through the social study of language since there is a related relationship between language and society (Lestari, 2013). Because of the importance of politeness, many scholars studied politeness in many cultures and that resulted in having many theories regarding this field. Some of these theories are Brown and Levinson's (1987) model and Leech's (1983) politeness principle.

### **Politeness**

Leech's model: Geoffrey Leech (1983) has introduced a model similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory in which he classifies the politeness principle as a series of maxims to explain how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. He defines politeness as a set of behaviors between participants that show feelings of comity. So, politeness, for Leech, "is about strategic conflict avoidance and showing regard for others" (Terkourafi, 2015, p 957). In other words, this model cares more about the other rather than the self.

According to Leech, the politeness principle is divided into six maxims. Nurdianingsih (2006) discussed in his study the five scales for each maxim that show the degree of politeness.

#### 1) The Cost-benefit Scale

In this scale, the cost and the benefit refer to the addressee. So, if the benefit is higher to the addressee than the cost, then it seems to be politer. On contrary, if the cost is higher to the addressee than the benefit, then it seems to be less polite.

#### 2) The Optionality Scale

Giving options is usually there in indirect utterances used by the speaker when requesting or giving a command. So, whenever the speaker gives an option to the addressee to choose, that will show more politeness.

#### 3) Indirectness Scale

Being indirect means an increase in the degree of politeness. This is similar to Brown and Levinson's off-record strategy. For example, when someone asks another person to close the door by simply saying *close the door*, in this case he is direct in his request, so he is considered to be impolite. While if he rather says *will you close the door?*, he is asking him in a polite way. Saying *Could you possibly close the door?* will be considered as politer than the

previous utterances. We assume that the more indirect the utterance will be, the politer it will be.

4) Authority Scale

This scale represents the social status among people. The utterances we use while interacting with people show whether the addressee is a superior, a subordinate or the same. For example, an employee would call his boss *Sir*, while a friend would call his friend with his name. A person with a high social status would have more authority than a person with low social status.

5) Social Distance Scale

This scale shows the degree of familiarity among people. It is clear that close friends will be less polite in their utterances and show high solidarity with each other in comparison with people with distant relationships.

6) Leech's Maxims

Leech has divided his politeness principle into six maxims which are tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim and sympathy maxim. Each maxim is related to a specific speech act as proposed by Searle. One of Leech's arguments is that negative politeness is more important than positive politeness. The maxims will be discussed below as presented by Nurdianingsih (2006).

1) Tact Maxim

It is the first and the most important maxim since it cares more about the other rather than the self. It requires the speakers to minimize cost to other and maximize benefit to other. It is used in directives/impossitives and commissives. A directive means an utterance that is used to command something directly or indirectly such as, requesting, advising, ordering, etc. While a commissive means an utterance that is used to declare a promise or offer something.

2) Generosity Maxim

Generosity maxim requires the speaker to minimize benefit to self and maximize cost to self. It is used in directives and commissives like the tact maxim, but it is self-centered.

3) Approbation Maxim

It requires the speaker to minimize dispraise to other and maximize praise to other. It is used in expressives and assertives. The expressive is an utterance that is used to express the speaker's psychological attitude toward a situation such as thanking, congratulating, welcoming, apologizing, praising, etc. The assertive is an utterance commonly used to declare the truth proposition that is expressed such as giving opinions, comments, suggestion, complain, etc.

4) Modesty Maxim

This maxim requires the speaker to minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self. It is also expressed by the expressive and assertive utterances like the approbation maxim.

5) Agreement Maxim

It requires the speaker to minimize disagreement between self and other, and maximize agreement between self and other. It is expressed in representatives. The hearer should totally or partially show agreement with the speaker. If he shows disagreement, his speech would be impolite.

6) Sympathy Maxim

It requires the speaker to minimize antipathy between self and other, and maximize sympathy between self and other. It is also expressed through representatives. For example, if one lost somebody and the hearer felt sorry for that, in this case he is showing sympathy to the speaker and the utterances would employ the sympathy maxim.

### **Brown and Levinson's Politeness Model**

The early eighteenth century was the first start of politeness age. Leech alongside Robin Lakoff (1973) and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978, 1987) were all the founders

of the field. Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory deals with three concepts: face, face threatening acts (FTAs) and politeness strategies.

a. Face

This concept was brought from Chinese to English in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was first discussed by Erving Goffman who introduced the term "face". Following Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1987) related politeness to face which is defined as one's self image that he seeks for himself and tries to protect it when interacting with others. So, in any social interaction, people try to save the face of each other. Brown and Levinson (1987) classified face into two categories:

- 1) Positive face: the self-image that a person desire to be approved of.
- 2) Negative face: the person's desire not to imposed on or not to lose freedom.

Within interaction, a speaker tries to preserve both faces for himself and for the hearer he interacts with. In order to avoid misunderstandings and develop good atmosphere through interaction, Brown and Levinson (1987) suggested the idea of previous negotiation for the participants' needs so as to assure preserving both faces.

b. Face Threatening Acts (FTAs)

Brown and Levinson (1987) argued that each speech act in our daily life, such as request, order, promise, etc., might have an element of risk. That is because some of these speech acts may threaten our "face image" and don't satisfy either the speaker or the hearer. Thus, any speech act that might interrupt the negative or positive face is called a face threatening act. For example, when a person asks someone for a loan of his car or book, in this case, he is threatening the negative face of the hearer since the speaker is imposing and limiting the hearer's freedom. Requesting in this situation is considered as a face threatening act (as cited in Bouchara, 1996).

c. Politeness Strategies

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four politeness strategies that are used to minimize or avoid the face-threatening acts that are capable of damaging other people's face. To carry out an FTA, a speaker may select one of the four following strategies that are discussed briefly from most to least threatening.

- 1) On record: this strategy does nothing to reduce the threat to the hearer's face. The speaker in this case is direct in his speech. It is used in urgency, welcoming, offering situations. As mentioned by Bouchara (1996), this strategy conforms with Grice's maxims which are maxims of quality, quantity, manner and relevance. He cited Grice in his study to clarify the cooperative principle which is similar to the on-record strategy.
- 2) Positive politeness: this strategy is used as a way to make close relationship with the hearer. Lakoff (1973) argued that the relationship involved here is similar to the relationship between friends. So, the speaker cares about the hearer as he cares about himself. (as cited in Bouchara, 1996).
- 3) Negative politeness: this strategy is a non-imposing one. In this case, there is a social distance between the interactants, so they speak formally with each other. For example, someone might be requested to pass the salt as follow: *Could you please pass the salt?* By using *could you please*, the speaker is minimizing the imposition on the hearer and as a result he redresses the hearer's negative face.
- 4) Off-record: this strategy uses indirect language and relies totally on implications. Strategies used within off record may lead to the violation of Grice's maxims (as cited in Bouchara, 1996). For example, when a speaker says *it's hot here* that will lead the hearer to find some implicature for the intended message which might be a request to open the window or the door.

## d. The Social Context: Power, Distance, and Ranked Extremity

Brown and Levinson (1987) highlighted three sociological factors that affect the choice of politeness strategy and the seriousness of the face threatening action. These factors are power, distance and degree of imposition involved in the FTA (Jucker, 2016). Jucker (2016), who was interested in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, illustrated how the three dimensions affect our analysis of the politeness strategies used. In the case of power, if speaker A is more powerful than B, then A should use less politeness strategies than B to perform a specific face threatening act. In the case of distance, the speaker and the hearer should be politer in the strategies used if they are socially distant. And finally, the speaker should use more politeness strategies for a more serious face-threatening act than for a less serious act.

Many researchers have applied Brown and Levinson's theory in Shakespeare's literary texts rather than Leech's model. Kopytko (1993, 1995) studied the four comedies by Shakespeare (*The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*) following Brown and Levinson's model in order to examine the number of positive and negative politeness strategies. He concluded that positive strategies were more than the negative ones in all the four plays (as cited in Jucker, 2016).

Leech's tact and approbation maxims were discussed through the analysis of a conversation within a movie named *Maid in Manhattan* (Nurdianingsih, 2006). The study explored the application of both maxims in relation to politeness situations. The findings highlighted the impact of the authority scale and the social distance scale. His study examined the high degree of politeness delivered in the speech of high solidary persons. However, the researcher noticed less polite utterances produced by a lower status person to a person of a high status (Nurdianingsih, 2006).

Being polite throughout the whole play wasn't the case in Shakespeare's plays. Impoliteness may be considered as an important element in turning out the events and moving to the plot development of the literary text.

The previous idea is going to be investigated in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* within this study. However, it has been discussed by Culpeper (1996, cited in Jucker, 2016) in his survey of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. He declared that Macbeth and his wife moves from being polite to be impolite to re-establish and maintain a situation of stability because it was threatened by the appearance of the ghost. Lady Macbeth uses impoliteness towards her husband not to insult him but to provoke his manliness and push him into action. She asks him: "Are you a man?". By saying that, she violates Grice's maxim of quality. An analyst may interpret that she is trying to say that he lacks some certain manly characteristics.

The issue of impoliteness was less researched in comparison with politeness strategies. Therefore, Kuntsi (2012) has conducted a study to examine impoliteness in correlation with power. The study investigated the lawyers' speech in a courtroom that shows politeness or impoliteness. The findings revealed the use of both strategies inside the courtroom. Regarding this issue, previous studies were mentioned in his study to support the argument that impoliteness is connected with power. Some studies such as Culpeper (1996) has stated that persons with high-power positions can only speak impolitely freely. However, Bousfield's (2008) study has found out that powerful persons use not only impoliteness strategies, but also politeness ones (cited in Kuntsi, 2012).

Through investigating politeness in their sociolinguistic view, sociolinguists examined how people behave in certain ways and why. To get logical answers, they analyzed things in respect of person's identity, power and socialization. They found that all these aspects are interrelated with people's linguistic choices (cited in Wardhaugh, 2006).

Moreover, Lomax (2010) has found out that power is an essential element in constructing the relationship between linguistic use and social structure. He gives an example of Searle's speech act theory by saying that if you have the authority to do something, then you

can give an order. This is the case in Shakespeare's *The merchant of Venice*. Power is discussed throughout the play through analyzing Shylock's character and speech.

Anti-Semitism has aroused in the 16th century and most of the works done in that period has dealt with this issue. Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is one of them. Brown (1961) has stated that in the decade during which *The Merchant of Venice* was written, Jews were not a people to fear; they lack power in England at that time. Fletcher (1938, p.158) also highlighted a controversial issue in *The Merchant of Venice* which is Jews-Christians relationship. He stated that Shakespeare has created the character of Shylock in relation to the relationship found between the Jews and Christians in the 16th century during the Elizabethan decade. Thus, the religious aspect might have an impact on politeness level.

Again, it has been noted that an analyst doesn't investigate the text itself, but the attitudes and behaviors of the characteristics in a literary work (Andreas, 2016). Thus the psychological aspects are going to be concerned through the analysis of the major characters in the play since they steer all the events towards the plot development.

Irony is one of the principles that are used by speakers to show certain implicatures. It is used by the speakers to indicate impoliteness through being polite (Leech, 1983, cited in Kasper, 1990). Nurdianingsih's study (2006) has also indicated that the use of ironic utterances is far from the concept of politeness principles through the analysis of the maid's speech when she says her opinion about the suitable clothes to be worn by a high status person.

## METHOD

The recent study uses a qualitative methodology that depends on searching, selecting, analyzing the data and concluding as a final step. The researcher follows Leech's (1983) theory of politeness through the implementation of his maxims in the play. The maxims of tact, generosity, approbation, agreement, sympathy and modesty were all examined to discover the strategies that are used by the characters.

This study concerns with the analysis of the most important acts in *The Merchant of Venice* that help in the plot development throughout the play. The first act is Act 1 scene 3 which includes a street in Venice where Bassanio requests money from Shylock and then an agreement is made between the major characters. The second one is Act 4 scene 1 which includes the court scene that summarizes Shylock's end. The study examined 17 extracts from Act 1 scene 3 and 6 extracts from Act 4 scene 1.

The study investigates the conversations between Shylock, Bassanio and Antonio, who are the three persons involved in the loan issue. Shylock is a Jew merchant who is a resident in a Christian society, Venice. Antonio is a wealthy Christian merchant in Venice who has friendship with Bassanio, the person who is in need of money to get admired by his beloved Portia.

This qualitative study aims to discover the situations where Leech maxims are followed or violated and as a result to reveal whether each maxim is used to show politeness, impoliteness or both; to investigate the factors that affect the three characters' use of politeness strategies; to examine the character's personality through the application of politeness theory, since politeness can reveal much about one's identity. This research seeks to answer the following questions, how are the maxims employed in some of Shylock's, Bassanio's and Antonio's conversations within *The Merchant of Venice*? and what aspects make the utterances of the three characters less polite or politer in relation to Leech's politeness principles?

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the researcher will analyze the utterances said by the major characters in the most important acts that help in the plot development of the play (*a street in Venice scene*

and *the court scene*). The analysis of each utterance consists of a description of the context of situation and then followed by an interpretation of the utterances in relation to Leech's maxims.

***Analysis of Act I. Scene Iii. Venice. A Public Place.***

**SHYLOCK** Three thousand ducats; well.

**BASSANIO** Ay, sir, for three months.

**SHYLOCK** For three months; well.

**BASSANIO** For the which, as I told you, Antonio shall be bound.

Context of situation: Shylock, who is the most prominent character in the play, first appears in Act 1 scene 3 in which he is having a conversation with Bassanio in a street in Venice. Bassanio, Antonio's friend and a noble man, needs 3,000 ducats to be supported financially to earn admiration of the beautiful and wealthy Portia: the heiress of Belmont. He asks Shylock for a loan since his friend Antonio couldn't help him because all his trade ships are in the sea and he doesn't have cash money. He tells Bassanio to find a lender and he will be the guarantee. In his first speech, Shylock is repeating what is said by Bassanio in a way that reveals his internal thinking.

Analysis: From the conversation above, it can be seen that in delivering a request, Bassanio employs tact maxim since he minimizes cost of Shylock. Bassanio's request, which is a directive speech act, sounds less imposing since the speaker is being tactful in delivering his utterances. He offers Antonio as a guarantee of the loan so that it will be less imposing. Moreover, Bassanio is aware of the different social status between him and Shylock. Bassanio's usage of the word *sir* shows Shylock as a superior and Bassanio as a subordinate. The authority scale indicates a degree of politeness in Bassanio's speech.

**BASSANIO** May you stead me? will you pleasure me? shall I know your answer?

**SHYLOCK** Three thousand ducats for three months and Antonio bound.

Context: Bassanio is waiting Shylock to answer his request, whereas Shylock seems to be still thinking of the request.

Analysis: Again, there is a directive speech act in the form of request. Bassanio employs tact maxim since he minimizes cost of Shylock. He is trying to give options to Shylock. When he says "Shall I know your answer?", then he isn't imposing him to agree. He is waiting an answer from Shylock, which maybe a yes or no to the request. In most cases, when the speaker gives an option to the addressee to choose, then he is less imposing on him and that will increase the degree of politeness.

In the conversation above, the use of the modals *shall* and *will* is significant. These two modals are used to make indirect request. Being indirect is also a negative politeness strategy according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. The speaker tends to be indirect so as to avoid the loss of the hearer's freedom. Leech also believes that negative politeness is more important than the positive one since the speaker tries not to impose something on the hearer and as a result to save the negative face of the hearer. To conclude, we can find that the two theories of politeness are interrelated in their aspects.

**BASSANI** Your answer to that.

**SHYLOCK** Antonio is a good man.

Context of situation: Bassanio is seeking for the answer. Yet, instead of giving the answer, Shylock describes Antonio as a good man. Here, he is ironic since he explains later that Antonio isn't good for his own personality, but for he is sufficient to pay the loan.

Analysis: By using the utterance *Antonio is a good man*, Shylock employs and follows the approbation maxim, used with expressives, since Shylock is maximizing praise of other. He praises Antonio by saying that he has good characteristics. He is showing politeness, yet he implies something different. His internal thinking will be more obvious in the following utterances.

**BASSANIO** Have you heard any imputation to the contrary?

**SHYLOCK** Oh, no, no, no, no: my meaning in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is

sufficient.....there be land-rats

and water-rats, water-thieves and land-thieves, I

mean pirates, and then there is the peril of waters,

winds and rocks. The man is, notwithstanding,

sufficient. Three thousand ducats; I think I may take his bond.

Context of situation: Bassanio asks Shylock if he has heard anything bad about Antonio. Shylock replies by saying he is sufficient and he has lots of trade ships in the sea. Then he mentions the risks of the trade in the sea. By saying that, he shows the internal hate feeling toward Antonio's trade.

Analysis: In this case, Shylock violates the generosity maxim by maximizing benefit to self and minimizing benefit to other (Antonio). He implies that Antonio isn't good for his personality, yet for he is sufficient financially by saying "in saying he is a good man is to have you understand me that he is sufficient". He is a rich prominent merchant in Venice and thus he is suitable for a guarantee. Shylock, in this case, is thinking of his interests rather than the benefit of Antonio. Moreover, through mentioning the trade risks in the sea, one may interpret that he doesn't wish good for Antonio. Violating the maxim of generosity indicates that the speaker (Shylock) is impolite in his speech.

**SHYLOCK** I will be assured I may; and, that I may be assured,

I will bethink me. May I speak with Antonio?

**BASSANIO** If it please you to dine with us.

**SHYLOCK** Yes, to smell pork; to eat of the habitation which

your prophet the Nazarite conjured the devil into. I

will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you,

walk with you, and so following, but I will not eat

with you, drink with you, nor pray with you.

Analysis: "May I speak with Antonio?" is a directive speech events in the form of request. According to Leech's indirectness scale, having indirect kinds of illocution indicates the degree of politeness. The more indirect the utterance we use, the politer it will be. In the utterances above, Shylock asks Bassanio in an indirect way "May I speak with Antonio?" instead of saying directly "call Antonio". By saying that, Shylock is being tactful and is not imposing on him talking with Antonio.

Moreover, Bassanio uses an indirect illocution when he says "If it please you to dine with us" which is a directive act in the form of invitation. In delivering an invitation to Shylock, Bassanio is being both tactful and generous. He employs tact maxim since he minimizes cost of Shylock by giving him the option to accept the invitation or not. He also maximizes benefit to other (Shylock); he is not asking Shylock to do anything except accepting the invitation and having dinner without making any effort. In addition, he employs generosity maxim because he minimizes benefit to self and maximize cost to self. That is, when Bassanio invites Shylock, he is going to make physical and financial efforts in preparing the dinner.



Suddenly, Shylock moves from being polite to being impolite through the use of representative speech acts. Shylock, a Jew, violates the maxim of approbation by saying “but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you”. He is stating and asserting the Jewish religious prohibitions. He maximizes dispraise of other (Christians) since he shows himself as an extremist Jew who can’t share food and prayer with the Christians (Antonio and Bassanio) and refuses the invitation of Bassanio. By doing that, I think Shylock also employs the tact maxim since he minimizes the cost of other (Bassanio); that is the one who is going to be benefited is Bassanio because he isn’t going to cost himself and prepare anything for the dinner.

**BASSANIO** This is Signior Antonio.

Context of situation: Now, enters Antonio; Shylock’s enemy, and Bassanio introduces him to Shylock although he knows him before.

Analysis: Bassanio is showing approbation in presenting his friend Antonio in which he uses the word *signior* to refer him as a refined person. He uses an expressive speech act to show his psychological state towards his friend. He maximizes praise of Antonio and presents him politely, maybe, because he wants to show Shylock that Antonio is an appropriate person for the loan guarantee or he admits Antonio’s favor and he wants to ennoble him.

**SHYLOCK** [Aside] How like a fawning publican he looks! I hate him for he is a Christian, But more for that in low simplicity. He lends out money gratis and brings down The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

If I can catch him once upon the hip, I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him. He hates our sacred nation..... Cursed be my tribe, If I forgive him!

Context of situation: Aside means a dramatic device used by the author to express the actor’s thinking. This speech produced by a character in the play is directed to the audience or to himself, while the other characters appear that they don’t hear him (defined by Literary Devices, 2018). The aim behind the use of the *aside* here is to reveal the amount of hatred that Shylock hides for Antonio since he is a Christian and he lends people money without interests and consequently affects Shylock’s trade negatively.

Analysis: Shylock violates the approbation maxim since he maximizes dispraise of Antonio. He talks aside impolitely. He mocks him as a Christian and reveals his hatred towards him. Yet, he is seeking to be polite in front of the two Christians to reach his devil goal.

**ANTONIO** Shylock, although I neither lend nor borrow  
By taking nor by giving of excess, Yet, to supply the ripe wants of my friend,  
I'll break a custom. Is he yet possess'd How much ye would?

Analysis: It seems that Antonio is maximizing dispraise of Shylock and maximizing praise of himself, since he denies the inappropriate act of lending people money for the sake of interests as Shylock does. So, there is a violation of two maxims; approbation and modesty maxim, and that resulted in producing impolite speech by Antonio.

**SHYLOCK** I had forgot; three months; you told me so.  
Well then, your bond; and let me see; but hear you;  
Methought you said you neither lend nor borrow upon advantage.

**ANTONIO** I do never use it.

Context of the situation: Shylock ironically repeats Antonio's personal values that he would neither lend or borrow money with advantages. Then Antonio seriously answers that this bad habit is not of his own.

Analysis: Antonio's reply "I do never use it" reflects violation of the modesty maxim. He maximizes praise of himself and refines himself from taking advantages against lending people. Following Leech's maxims, I think his impoliteness reflects his strictness when dealing with such situations so as to prevent people from thinking that he would do that one day. It's something related to his beliefs and values that he would never change it.

**SHYLOCK** Signior Antonio, many a time.... You call me misbeliever, cut-throat dog, And spit upon my Jewish gaberdine, And all for use of that which is mine own.  
Well then, it now appears you need my help...

Analysis: In the utterances above, there is a kind of impoliteness since the speaker (Shylock) minimizes praise of Antonio. He recalls what Antonio used to call him (a dog) and dealt with him rudely in the past days. Thus, he is mocking how Antonio is asking him for money although he despises him. In this case, there is a violation of approbation maxim.

**ANTONIO** I am as like to call thee so again, To spit on thee again, to spurn thee too.  
If thou wilt lend this money, lend it not

Analysis: Antonio replies to him impolitely. He again violates the maxim of approbation. He maximizes dispraise of other (Shylock) by saying he did not regret what he did and rather he would do these acts of indignation again. His impoliteness indicates that he is a disinterested and honest person who doesn't care about others. He won't change his values to get money from Shylock. Moreover, he maximizes antipathy between himself and Shylock and this is also a violation of sympathy maxim.

**SHYLOCK** Why, look you, how you storm!  
I would be friends with you and have your love,  
Forget the shames that you have stain'd me with,  
Supply your present wants and take no doit  
Of usance for my moneys, and you'll not hear me: This is kind I offer.  
**BASSANIO** This were kindness.

Surprisingly, Shylock follows the sympathy maxim in his speech with Antonio. Although Antonio announces that his hatred towards Shylock will never change, Shylock astonishes the hearers with his good intention of becoming friend with his enemy, Antonio. He has, now, a good feeling towards Antonio and reveals an offer to become friends and accept the money (the loan). In addition, he tries to be tactful by saying "This is kind I offer". He is not imposing on him to accept the offer. Yet, he tries to convince him through offering a friendship. In this case, Shylock turns to be politer through using the tact maxim.

Then, Bassanio's utterance "This were kindness" reflects the approbation maxim through which he maximizes praise to other (Shylock). Bassanio shows a high degree of politeness throughout the previous utterances, although Shylock isn't showing kindness with him and his friend. In this case power plays a significant role in determining the degree of politeness since Shylock has the power of money and Antonio needs money from him urgently. Thus, all his speeches show a high level of politeness till this moment.

**SHYLOCK** This kindness will I show. Go with me to a notary, seal me there  
Your single bond; and, in a merry sport, If you repay me not on such a day,

In such a place, such sum or sums as are Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit  
Be nominated for an equal pound Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken  
In what part of your body pleaseth me.

Context: Shylock is setting up some conditions for the bond. He requires Antonio to repay the loan in the exact day and place; otherwise, he will have the right to cut off any flesh of Antonio's body that would please him. Actually, he starts to reveal his malicious intention towards Antonio.

Analysis: Not strange than before, Shylock lacks the tact maxim in the previous utterance because he maximizes cost to other (Antonio and Bassanio) and minimizes benefit to other (Antonio). On the one hand, he is imposing on Antonio and Bassanio a heavy load that nobody would endure. The condition is extremely brutal and unbelievable; however, Antonio would accept anything for his friend. On the other hand, if he doesn't pay the money at the specific day, Antonio will lose a flesh of his body and it is obvious that there are no benefits behind doing that.

**ANTONIO** Content, i' faith: I'll seal to such a bond  
And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

Analysis: "Content" means that Antonio totally agrees with Shylock's condition. So he follows the agreement maxim by maximizing agreement between himself and Shylock. In addition, he shows another way of politeness by sticking to the maxim of approbation when he maximizes praise of the Jew and characterizes them with kindness. He seems to be ironic in this case. He seems to be polite, but that implicates impoliteness.

**BASSANIO** You shall not seal to such a bond for me: I'll rather dwell in my necessity.

Bassanio, the polite character, sticks to the maxim of generosity when he says to Antonio "You shall not seal to such a bond for me". By saying that, he minimizes the benefit of self since there is no other choice for borrowing the money from anyone rather than Shylock.

For the sake of saving his friend's life, Bassanio states his disagreement with Antonio of accepting the conditions of the bond. Thus, he violates the agreement maxim to maximize disagreement between himself and his friend. According to Leech's maxims, he is impolite when he tries to disagree with the speaker.

**ANTONIO** Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it: Within these two months, that's a month before This bond expires, I do expect return  
Of thrice three times the value of this bond.

Analysis: Antonio is tactful with his friend and that appears in the use of a commissive speech act (promise). He calms him down and promises him that his ships will come back home with lots of profits, so he can pay the loan for Shylock. He minimizes cost to Antonio by reassuring him and decreasing the feeling of guilt. Moreover, he maximizes benefit to him through his promise.

In addition to that, he is extremely polite when he says "Why, fear not, man; I will not forfeit it" because he is showing sympathy with his friend Antonio. He is caring a lot about Antonio's interest rather than himself. Thus, sticking to the maxim of sympathy will increase the degree of politeness.

**ANTONIO** Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.

**SHYLOCK** Then meet me forthwith at the notary's; Give him direction for this merry bond,  
And I will go and purse the ducats straight...

**ANTONIO** Hie thee, gentle Jew.

By saying "Yes Shylock, I will seal unto this bond", Antonio is showing politeness according to Leech's tact and agreement maxims. For the former, he maximizes benefit to other (Antonio) because he makes a favor for him and if he loses his trade, he will be the victim of such a bond. For the latter, he uses an assertive speech act "will seal" to show his agreement with Shylock's conditions.

Then Shylock violates the maxim of generosity through maximizing rather minimizing benefit to self. He asks Antonio to go with him to the notary before giving them the money, so that he can guarantee his right first. The speech act used here is a directive in the form of order for he is ordering Antonio to sign the contract before having the money.

In a surprising way, Antonio replies to him in a polite way by calling him "gentle Jew". He uses the expression "gentle" ironically to refer to Shylock since we all know his internal feeling of hatred towards him. He follows the approbation maxim in his last speech in this scene before he leaves.

### *Analysis of Act Iv Scene I. Venice. A Court Of Justice*

**DUKE** What, is Antonio here?

**ANTONIO** Ready, so please your grace.

**Analysis:** The duke asks whether Antonio has come to the court or not. Antonio, then, answers him "yes" with respect and readiness for his obscure destiny. He uses a polite utterance "so please your grace" that is suitable for the duke's position. That represents the authority scale discussed by Leech.

**SHYLOCK** I have possess'd your grace of what I purpose;  
And by our holy Sabbath have I sworn To have the due and forfeit of my bond:  
If you deny it, let the danger light Upon your charter and your city's freedom.....  
so I can't give a reason, and I won't give a reason (other than the simple hate and loathing I feel for Antonio)

**Context and analysis:** Shylock announces his insistence through the utterances above when the duke asks him if he will change his mind and show mercy and pity for Antonio. He replies in a rude and impolite way according to Leech's maxims. He violates three maxims in replying in such way. The first is tact maxim since he minimizes benefit to Antonio, refuses the duke's suggestion to forgive him and insists upon taking a pound of Antonio's flesh.

The second is generosity maxim since he maximizes benefit to self rather than the others. Instead of showing mercy and forgiving Antonio who lost his trade, Shylock thinks of himself and insists on taking his revenge.

The last one is sympathy maxim because he maximizes antipathy between himself and all the Christians, not only Antonio. By insisting on his cruel demand, the grudge and hatred will increase between him and all the society. In addition, there is an obvious declaration of hate when he says "so I can't give a reason, and I won't give a reason (other than the simple hate and loathing I feel for Antonio)".

**BASSANIO** That's no answer, you heartless man. It doesn't excuse your cruel behavior.

Analysis: When Bassanio hears Shylock's refusal of forgiving Antonio, he turns to be a different person from that who was talking with Shylock politely in the first act. He describes him as a "heartless" and "cruel" man and as a result he violates the approbation maxim for maximizing dispraise of other (Shylock).

**BASSANIO** Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?

**SHYLOCK** To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there.

Analysis: Shylock tries to provoke the feelings of the audience through sharpening his knife to take his revenge. When Bassanio asks him why he did that, he says seriously "To cut the forfeiture from that bankrupt there". In this case, he isn't tactful because he minimizes benefit to Antonio who wants to revenge him.

**PORTIA** For the intent and purpose of the law

Hath full relation to the penalty,

Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

**SHYLOCK** 'Tis very true: O wise and upright judge!

How much more elder art thou than thy looks!

Context: Shylock is extremely pleased with the justice of the young lawyer, who is his daughter, but he doesn't know that, since she argues that the bond should be applied as it is legal.

Analysis: By saying "Tis very true" he shows agreement with the lawyer's speech that the penalty should be executed. Then he follows Leech's approbation maxim by describing her as a "wise and upright judge". He maximizes praise of the young judge and thus he shows a high degree of politeness towards her.

**SHYLOCK** I pray you, give me leave to go from hence. I am not well. Send the deed after me, and I will sign it.

Context: At the end of the court scene, things turn in favor of Antonio. After supporting Shylock, the lawyer argues something important in the bond. She says that the laws of Venice state that if a foreign resident directly or indirectly attempts to kill any citizen, the person who tries to kill will receive one half of the foreigner's goods. The other half goes to the state. At the end, he is forced to change his identity and to become a Christian. Moreover, he loses his money and his daughter.

Analysis: This is the language of a humiliated person who has lost the power he has at the beginning of the play. The use of 'pray' suggests politeness and his religious identity that he keeps clarifying throughout the play. Politeness in the above speech is shown through tact and modesty maxims. By saying "I will sign it" he maximizes the benefit to other, and by saying "I am not well" he minimizes praise of self since he lost his power and identity, so he isn't well.

The tables below summarize up the way the three characters stick to Leech's maxims or violate them in both acts:

Table 1. Analysis of Bassanio's Speech According to Leech's Maxims

Character's Speech /Directed to Whom	Following The Maxims (Polite)	Violating The Maxims (Impolite)
Bassanio to Shylock (Act1 scene3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tact maxim</li> <li>• generosity</li> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>	

Bassanio to Antonio (Act1 scene3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> <li>• generosity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agreement</li> </ul>
Bassanio to Shylock (Act 4 scene 1)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>

Table 1 shows Bassanio's way of speaking. The way he talks to Shylock and Antonio reflects his politeness. For instance, for softening the effect of imposition act, Bassanio tries to use certain words in delivering requests such as "May, If it please" (data 5, act 1). These findings are in line with Nurdianingsih's study (2006) which concludes the more indirect you are, the less imposing on the hearer, and as a result the politer you are. However, he moves to speak in an impolite way in act 4 since he has a high power status now. Thus, it seems that power and social status play a significant role in adopting a certain politeness strategy.

Table 2. Analysis of Shylock's Speech According to Leech's Maxims

<b>Character's Speech /Directed to Whom</b>	<b>Following the Maxims (Polite)</b>	<b>Violating the Maxims (Impolite)</b>
Shylock to Bassanio (Act 1 scene 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> <li>• tact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• generosity</li> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>
Shylock to Antonio (Act 1 scene 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sympathy</li> <li>• tact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> <li>• tact</li> <li>• generosity</li> </ul>
Shylock's aside (Act 1 scene 3)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>
Shylock to Bassanio (Act 4 scene 1)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tact</li> <li>• generosity</li> </ul>
Shylock to Portia (the lawyer) (Act 4 scene 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agreement</li> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>	
Shylock to the Duke (Act 4 scene 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tact</li> <li>• modesty</li> </ul>	

Shylock's speech with Bassanio, the Duke and the lawyer reveals his politeness, while he turns to be impolite with Antonio even though he seems to be polite through using ironic devices.

Table 3. Analysis of Antonio's Speech According to Leech's Maxim

<b>Character's Speech /Directed to Whom</b>	<b>Following the Maxims (Polite)</b>	<b>Violating the Maxims (Impolite)</b>
Antonio to Shylock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• agreement</li> <li>• approbation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approbation</li> <li>• modesty</li> <li>• sympathy</li> <li>• tact</li> <li>• agreement</li> </ul>
Antonio to Bassanio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tact</li> <li>• sympathy</li> </ul>	

## CONCLUSION

This paper has investigated the way Leech's politeness theory can be employed in the analysis of dramatic texts. The focus was on surveying Leech's maxims can be used in exploring Shakespeare's *The merchant of Venice*. The researcher has found that the six maxims were employed as follows and discussed them in relation to their importance:

- 1) Tact maxim is primarily used to show politeness and this finding goes in line with Nurdianingsih's (2006) study which employed the tact and approbation maxims based on Leech's politeness principles in a movie called *Maid in Manhattan*.
- 2) Approbation maxim is used to show both politeness and impoliteness and that partially corresponds with Nurdianingsih's (2006) study that concluded that the use of the approbation maxim shows politeness only; however, the current study shows that approbation is used to show both politeness and impoliteness.
- 3) Generosity maxim is also used to show both politeness and impoliteness. It is used by Bassanio to show politeness, whereas used by Shylock to show impoliteness.
- 4) The employment of sympathy, agreement and modesty maxims appears in both aspects in relation to the context. Social distance and psychological factors play a determining role. For example, Antonio shows sympathy with his friend Bassanio, while Shylock and Antonio's relationship shows antipathy.

In light of the discussion, the study reached out some factors that may affect the degree of politeness:

- 1) Power: power gives the person freedom to be polite or impolite in his/her speech and that is clear in Shylock's speech in Act 1 scene 3. His financial power gives him the choice to speak freely. Sometimes, he shows himself as a refined polite person, but in other situations he is rude and impolite. However, when he loses his power at the end, he shows a high level of politeness.
- 2) Psychological aspects: our internal emotions are part of our identity, so they can't be easily separated. Throughout the analysis, the researcher discovered how hatred pushes the person to speak impolitely with his opponent. In the play, Shylock tends to speak somehow politely with Bassanio, while he shows antagonism towards Antonio through the use of impoliteness strategies. His problem is only with Antonio who used to despise him and affect his job negatively.
- 3) The irony principle: The Irony principle is a figure of speech used by speakers for the sake of being impolite while seeming to be polite. In contrast with politeness that cares about comity in our social relations, the irony principle avoids politeness. We can see this principle clearly in Shylock's and Antonio's relationship in several occasions. For instance, when Shylock says "Antonio is a good man", he seems to be polite although he implicates that he is financially good rather having good manners. Another example is when Antonio says "there is much kindness in the Jew" and describes him as a "gentle Jew". Again he seems to be polite, yet we can implicate his internal feeling towards him.
- 4) Social status: while talking about social status, we take into consideration several aspects such as age, gender, social distance, wealth, etc. Sociolinguists believe that the higher social status enables the speaker to be show formality or informality. While the lower social status forces the speaker to speak only formally (politely) (cited in Mesthrie et al., 2009). The results of this study are in line with this argument as well as Nurdianingsih's study (2006) since we notice how Bassanio's utterances in the first act reflect politeness because he needs money from Shylock. However, after he gets the money and gets married to the wealthy Portia, his new high social status gives him the eligibility to speak freely. Moreover, we can witness the

way Shylock speaks politely with high status people in the court such as the Duke and the lawyer.

5) Personal values: honesty is one of the most admirable values in a person. It enables us to live with others and ourselves in openness and clarity. Being honest means being not able to fake things and that would be reflected on our speech and behavior. In the play, Antonio's honesty is obvious through his impoliteness with Shylock. He hates him for his bad values and qualities, so he can't be polite with him. According to Leech, being honest would decrease the level of politeness since the speaker cares about "comity" which would be a kind of hypocrisy in many cases and that was supported throughout this study.

6) Religion: the analysis of the characters' utterances reveals the conflict between Christians and Jews and serves to increase the impoliteness strategies used. Many religious indications were revealed in the analysis to indicate hatred such as Shylock's reply to Bassanio's invitation for dinner. "I will buy with you, sell with you, but I will not eat with you, drink with you, nor pray with you". It should be noted that this finding is restricted to this study and can't be generalized because in the play hatred between both religions reflect personal conflicts rather than religious beliefs. In many occasions, Shylock expresses how he was mistreated by those Christians and how Antonio used to call him "a Jew dog".

The researchers have tried to present the employment of all the maxims in the utterances used by the most major characters in *The Merchant of Venice*. The researchers would suggest that other researchers would either employ one or two maxims to analyze the speech of the same characters or employ all the maxims in analyzing one character only. That might result in a more comprehensive reflection upon this play.

## REFERENCES

- Bouchara, A. (1996). *Politeness in Shakespeare: The Application of Brown+Levinson's Universal Theory of Politeness to Much Ado about Nothing, Measure for Measure, The Taming of the Shrew, and Twelfth Night*. Heidelberg.
- Brown, J. R. (1961). *The Arden Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice*. Great Britain: The Chaucer Press.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage* (2nd ed.). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Fletcher, R. F. W. (1938). *The New Clarendon Shakespeare: The Merchant of Venice* (158-172). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jucker, A. H. (2016). Politeness in eighteenth-century drama: A discursive approach. *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 12(1), 95-115. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1515/pr-2015-0027>
- Kasper, G. (1990). Linguistic politeness: Current research issues. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 14(2), 193-218. Retrieved from [https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/.../Kasper%20\(1990\) WP9\(1\)...](https://scholarspace.manoa.hawaii.edu/.../Kasper%20(1990) WP9(1)...)
- Kuntisi, P. (2012). *Politeness and impoliteness strategies used by lawyers in the 'Dover Trial': A case study* (MA Thesis, University of Eastern Finland).
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. London, New York: Longman Group Ltd. Retrieved from <https://periodicos.ufsc.br/index.php/desterro/article/viewFile/.../10366>
- Lestari, P. (2013). *A pragmatic analysis of Leech's maxims found in The Princess and the Frog movie script* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta).
- Literary Devices (2018). *Definition and examples of literary terms*. Retrieved from <https://literarydevices.net/aside/>
- Lomax, H. T. (2010). *Discourse analysis* (139-140). Retrieved from <http://219.244.160.5/yy/uploadfiles/201006/20100606095519379.pdf>
- Mesthrie, R., Swann, J., Deumert, A. & Leap, W. L. (2009). *Introducing sociolinguistics*. George Square, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.



Terkourafi, M. (2015). *The pragmatics of politeness by Geoffrey Leech*. (Oxford studies in sociolinguistics.) New York: Oxford University Press, pp. xvi, 343.

Wardhaugh, R. (2006). *An introduction to sociolinguistics: Solidarity and politeness*. Australia: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.