

# Exploring Communication in Travel Planning Among Friends: A Case Study Based on the Politeness Principle and Face Theory

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In interpersonal communication, the principle of politeness is an important communicative principle that is widely applied in people's daily life. However, the communication patterns of the principle of politeness and face theory in the travel planning process among friends still need further exploration. This study aims to analyze the specific manifestations of these principles in the communication patterns of travel planning among friends through a pragmatic interpretation of the principle of politeness and face theory, providing a new perspective for understanding linguistic behavior in interpersonal relationships.

*Keywords:* The Politeness Principle, friendship, face theory, travel planning

The Politeness Principle was proposed by the British linguist G. Leech in the 1970s, aiming to explain how people maintain their own and others' face through linguistic expressions in communication. In recent years, with the continuous development of pragmatics, research on the Politeness Principle has gradually deepened and has been widely applied and extended in different cultures and contexts. The Politeness Principle put forward by Leech in 1983 was an important theoretical foundation in this field. He summarized the Politeness Principle into six maxims. These maxims provided researchers with a systematic framework for analyzing politeness phenomena in language communication.

Brown and Levinson proposed the Face Theory in 1978, further enriching the theoretical foundation of the Politeness Principle. They divided face into positive face and negative face and proposed three strategies to analyze how to maintain face in communication. This theory provided a deeper explanation for the Politeness Principle and emphasized the importance of face in communication.

The following are some conversational examples from the daily interactions among friends, with the theme being about inviting friends to go out and have fun together. This article will introduce how friends negotiate the itinerary and determine the activities to engage in.

## About Discussing Going Out Together

A and B were good friends, and it has been a long time since they last met. A year ago, A and B agreed that if A could achieve her goals for this year, she would come to Shanghai to visit B and spend a few days together.

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This would involve the question of whether the two of them should stay together, where to stay, and how to arrange their accommodation. Since B was a student in Shanghai, she usually lived on campus. A was concerned about disturbing B's study schedule, so she wanted to discuss with B a suitable time that didn't hit the peak tourist season and didn't affect B's study schedule.

A: Are you in class?

B: No, I don't have classes today.

A: Isn't today Friday?

B: Our classes ended on Thursday. Next week, I won't have any classes after Wednesday afternoon.

A: Hahaha, okay. I just wanted to check when would be a good time to hang out with you. So, when do you want to go out together?

B: After next week is fine. It doesn't have to be on the weekend; there might be fewer people then.

A: Yeah, weekends are always crowded. I found that Disneyland is crowded. I heard it's fully booked and even more expensive in April and May. Do you want to go to Disneyland? I was thinking we should skip it this time. It's not worth it with all the waiting in line.

B: Well, there are always a lot of people everyday. I think we should go. Don't you want to have fun?

A: Yeah, you're right. It's always going to be crowded no matter when we go. So, when should we go out? I need to make a plan. After next week we go out on weekday. I want to stay for two nights and visit for three days.

B: I'm free from the 23rd to the 26th. During these days I'll stay with you.

A: You will stay with me? Hahaha, I was thinking you could stay in your dorm to save money, and I'd stay in a hotel near your school. But if you stay with me, I bet we can't sleep. Hahaha.

B: We can fall asleep. We'll be exhausted from sightseeing.

A: Have you visited all the places in Shanghai?

B: I haven't been to Disneyland yet. I've been to some of the famous spots, but they're worth visiting many times. What do you want to see?

A: I need to make a plan these days. Hahaha, let's go to Disneyland together.

B: Sounds great!

Actually last year, A had told B that she wanted to visit Disneyland when she came to Shanghai. So during B's day in Shanghai, B never went to Disneyland, because B thought she would go there with A in the future. This time, when A mentioned to B that Disneyland was very crowded with long queues, it was actually because she was worried that B might have already been there and wouldn't want to go again. However, B knew that A really wanted to visit Disneyland. All people who come to Shanghai for tourism would want to visit Disneyland. Because not every place has a Disneyland. Since A has been everywhere, B wanted to make sure she had a great time and left with no regrets.

B also knew that A might feel embarrassed about inviting her to stay together outside, as it would cost B more money. But staying together was more convenient when going out to have fun. So, B told A that she would stay in a hotel with her, without waiting for A to ask her about it. B thought that if she accompanied A to the places she had already visited, A would worry that B would be bored. That's why A asked if B had visited all the places in Shanghai. A wanted to choose some places that B hadn't been to so they could go together. In order not

to burden A, B said that these attractions are worth visiting many times because they were all very beautiful. B told A that just decided where she wanted to go.

This conversation reflects several politeness maxims in pragmatics, including the Tact Maxim, the Agreement Maxim, the Sympathy Maxim, and the Approbation Maxim. When A asked B, “Are you in class?”, she used a gentle manner to understand B’s usual class schedule and also got a general idea of when it might be suitable to go out. Instead of directly asking B whether she was available for a trip, A showed respect for B. B’s response that After next week is fine. It doesn’t have to be on the weekend; there might be fewer people then considered A’s feelings and also offered a reasonable suggestion. This avoided potential conflict and was a manifestation of the Tact Maxim. When A and B were discussing whether Disneyland would be crowded, A said, “I saw that Disneyland is packed. I heard it’s fully booked and even more expensive in April and May”. B responded, “Well, there are always a lot of people everyday. I think we should go.” This response showed that B agreed with A’s view that it would be crowded. B also knew that A actually wanted to go to Disneyland but was worried that the long queues and crowds would be a bother for B. So B suggested going even if it is crowded to fulfill A’s wish to go to Disneyland.

When A mentioned the crowd at Disneyland, “You still have to wait in line once you get there,” B responded, “There’s never really a time when it’s not crowded. I think we should still go; there will always be lots of people.” This response demonstrated B’s understanding and support of A’s desire to visit Disneyland. When discussing accommodation arrangements, A said, “I was thinking you could stay in your dorm to save money.” B replied, “We can fall asleep. We’ll be exhausted from sightseeing.” B knew that A would prefer to stay together during the trip, so she tried to make A feel at ease and without any burden. This conversation also reflected the face theory in pragmatics, especially the concept of negative face. When B says, “I haven’t been to Disneyland. You decided where you want to go?”, this manner of speaking demonstrated respect for A’s autonomy. B did not impose her own preferences but allowed A to make the decision. By preserving each other’s negative face, the conversation created a friendly and cooperative atmosphere.

### **About Booking the Hotel**

A: Where should we stay? These were the hotels I had found; they all seem pretty good. Which one do you prefer? You can also do a search. I think this one is really nice because the environment look good.

B: If there aren’t any bad reviews, it should be fine. Let’s go with this one.

A: Alright, let’s book this hotel. As for the room type, should we go with the one on top or the one on the bottom? They’re exactly the same, except the one on top is 25 square meters, and the one on the bottom is 22 square meters. It’s only a difference of three square meters, but it costs 20 yuan more.

When they were booking the hotel, A asked B if she wanted to stay on campus while A stayed in a hotel near B’s school, so that B wouldn’t have to spend money on a hotel. Of course, B wouldn’t let A stay alone in a hotel. Since A had come all the way to Shanghai to see her, B wanted to stay together with A. So A asked B which hotel she preferred and suggested that B can do some research. However, this hotel had two room types. A asked B which one to choose. The two room types were essentially the same, except for a slight difference in size—one was three square meters larger but cost 20 yuan more. A was implying that the larger room type didn’t seem to be worth the extra cost and that they don’t need such a big room. Although A asked B’s opinion, she had already

expressed her own view, and it was clear which room type A preferred. A asked for B's opinion in a relaxed and polite tone while also conveying her own thoughts. In this way, B could understand A's preference and make a choice that aligned with A's. Finally, they chose the smaller room type.

When A presented the hotel options, she said, "These are the ones I found; they all seem pretty good. Which one do you prefer? You can also do a search." This way of expressing herself did not force B to accept her opinion but gave B the freedom to choose, making B feel respected. When A and B were discussing the choice of hotel, B did not contradict A's opinion but simply said, "Let's go with this one." This way of expressing herself reduced the potential for disagreement between them and increased the consistency of the conversation, which reflecting the Agreement Maxim. This dialogue also reflected the face theory in pragmatics, particularly the maintenance of both positive and negative face.

In the conversation, A demonstrated respect and friendliness towards B, hoping that B would participate in the choice of the hotel. A said, "These are the ones I found; they all seem pretty good. Which one do you prefer? You can also do a search." This way of expressing herself showed that A wanted B to be involved and to voice her own opinion, thus maintaining B's positive face. B responded, "If there aren't any bad reviews, it should be fine. Let's go with this one." This response showed B's respect for A while also expressing her approval of the choice, thereby maintaining A's positive face.

### **About Watching the Performance**

A: I suddenly have work to deal with. If I reply to work messages while we're watching, you might not enjoy the performance fully.

B: It's okay. You handle the urgent matters first. We can enjoy it together after you're done.

When the two of them went to watch the Frozen concert, a staff member outside was just calling them to hurry up and get inside because the seats were about to be filled. He was counting the number of people, and it felt like the two of them wouldn't be able to get in the next moment. B quickly grabbed A and called for A to go in together with her. At that time, A was dealing with some work matters. A had some very tricky issues to handle and was constantly replying to messages on her phone. She might have also felt that handling official business during the fun was a bit of a downer and felt a bit guilty for not giving B any emotional feedback. But the matter was very urgent and had to be dealt with before one o'clock. A said, "I feel like working now might make the experience less fun and make you feel bored." B replied, "You go ahead and deal with it. It's okay. After all, you don't want this either." Although it felt a bit of a downer, it couldn't be blamed on a friend, as the task was urgent. No one wants to handle work while on vacation or traveling.

This conversation reflected the Tact Maxim and the Modesty Maxim in pragmatics. When responding to A, B said, "It's okay. You handle the urgent matters first." This way of expressing herself fully considered A's situation, avoiding putting any pressure on A. B did not show any impatience or dissatisfaction but gently allowed A to deal with the work matters first, which reflecting the Tact Maxim. B's statement, "We can enjoy it together after you're done," illustrated her modesty and patience. Instead of emphasizing her own needs or feelings, B proposed waiting for A to finish her work before resuming the previous activity, showing respect and understanding towards A.

This conversation also reflected the face theory in pragmatics, particularly the maintenance of negative face. In the dialogue, A mentioned, “I suddenly have work to deal with. If I reply to work messages while we’re watching, you might not enjoy the performance fully.” This way of expressing herself showed A’s respect for B, as she felt her work might interrupt the interaction with B and thus affect B’s experience. B responded by saying, “It’s okay. You handle the urgent matters first. We can enjoy it together after you’re done.” This response demonstrated B’s respect and understanding for A, without showing any impatience or dissatisfaction. Through this response, B maintained A’s negative face, that is, to respect A’s autonomy and choices, and let A know that B understood and supported A’s need to deal with work first.

### Conclusion

The friendship is one of the most important and complex types of interpersonal relationships. In interactions among friends, the Politeness Principle and the Face Theory play a crucial role, which can promote the development of friendship. Through a series of research and practical analyses, we have delved into the specific applications and significance of the Politeness Principle and Face Theory in friendships.

The Politeness Principle and Face Theory hold significant importance in friendships. They not only foster the development and maintenance of friendships but also enhance our social skills and the quality of our interpersonal relationships. Through polite language we can better express ourselves and deepen mutual understanding and trust.

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