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THE POLITENESS FRAMEWORK IN THE CONTRASTIVE STUDY OF POLISH AND ENGLISH COMMERCIALS

The theory of politeness formulated by Brown & Levinson (1987) seems to be the most extensive and detailed model, covering a wide variety of issues contributing to the linguistic expression of the phenomenon. It has been successfully used by many authors (e.g. Sifianou, 1992) to account for the strategies used by communicators in a variety of contexts. The model has been developed to cover mainly the interpersonal, spoken type of communication. The present paper investigates the applicability of the theory to the description of the advertising discourse. As a special form of communication, with an untypical assignment of roles of the sender and the addressee of the message, and the predominant persuasive function, it is expected to reveal different tendencies in the use of politeness strategies, both in the communication between the characters appearing in the commercials, and along the sender-addressee dimension. Frequent application of stereotyping in the construction of advertising messages is another possibly significant factor. For the illustrative purposes the study uses contrastive samples of data, in the form of British and Polish advertisements, in the hope to discover certain tendencies prevailing in the advertising communication within the Polish and English environment.

1. The Applicability of the Framework

Since its first publication in 1978, Brown and Levinson's "Politeness Theory" has found numerable applications in various spheres of linguistic investigation. It has been used to account for variable verbal behaviours found among speakers of different languages and representatives of various cultures, to serve as a universal underlying principle behind the strategic management of verbal interaction, or to provide the explanation for apparently superfluous use of language by people, to mention but a few. It has inspired many scholars to test its applicability to the analysis of conversations and other forms of both spoken and written discourse. Such use has borne valuable fruit of interesting and insightful studies of many languages, revealing both

similarities and differences in the use of many strategies in the management of talk between representatives of different cultures. Consequently, it has posed and attempted to answer very intriguing questions about the universality of the concept of "face" and the explanatory power of the theory itself. Many of those questions are until now subjects of heated debates between scholars, as evidenced by the publications of many books and articles, making references to the influential work by Brown and Levinson.

Most of writers working within the "Politeness" framework were focusing on the aspect of intercultural validity of Brown and Levinson's observations. Much effort has been devoted to testing whether the concept of "face", with its positive and negative manifestations, is indeed deeply rooted in all cultures and whether the theory is really capable of satisfactorily accounting for the whole spectrum of variable linguistic behaviours of speakers representing all possible cultural backgrounds (House & Kasper, 1981), (Young, 1982), (Thomas, 1983), (Wierzbicka, 1985), (Matsumoto, 1988), (Sifianou, 1992). Thus, the intercultural applicability of the framework has been thoroughly tested, while its explanatory potential across the dimension of various discourse types has not been yet sufficiently investigated. Even such extended studies as Sifianou (1992) were focusing more on the relevance of their findings to conclusions about the cultures being compared than on peculiarities pertaining to different discourse types, in spite of sufficient variability of language material under analysis. The samples of language were not perceived from the perspective of their potential discourse type features; instead, the authors usually treated them as roughly representative and uniform manifestations of language use. It does not imply, however, that the aim of the present paper is to set one type of discourse against another and test the applicability of the "Politeness" framework to analyse both. In its contrastive dimension, it is pretty old-fashioned: one of its aims is to show the differences (and possibly similarities) between the British English and the Polish cultures in the application of politeness strategies. Its novelty lies in an attempt to apply the paradigm to an unusual type of discourse, to the language of advertising.

The fact that Brown and Levinson decided to construct their model within the framework of strategic interaction is a significant advantage in the context of its application to the analysis of advertising language. The peculiar character of advertising communication, foregrounding its persuasive aspects, seems to place the strategic use of language in its very core. Advertising is a kind of game between the advertiser and the audience, with clearly defined aims, at least on the part of the former, which have to be achieved in order to fulfil its primary function. Brown and Levinson's framework works best in the description of particular types of speech acts, whereas in some other cases there is little place for considerations related to politeness. Among the ones which inherently exploit politeness strategies, two types are usually mentioned as the most compatible: competitive and convivial (Leech, 1983: 104). It seems that, although advertising cannot be really classified or described as a single type of a speech act, it definitely has many features of the general class of the competitive type, often dressed up as convivial. It is competitive since its aim is clearly persuasive, on the verge of insisting or demanding, and it is convivial because of its form of invitations and offers.

Brown and Levinson's framework was designed to describe interaction between individuals. How can it, then, be applied to the analysis of a type of communication which has not got many features of individual encounters? Communication in advertising is a mass type of communication, in which a largely depersonalized producer or service provider communicates something to a mass audience. The situation would be more comfortable if a highly individualised type of message could be directed to everyone personally. It is still impossible, however, and advertisers have to make do with roughly targeted messages, hoping that they will be similarly understood by most members of the general audience. The typical communicative situation for an advertising message involves the abstract advertiser, representing the producer of the good on the one hand, and an individual addressee, while watching television, reading a paper, or listening to the radio, on the other. Bearing that in mind, how can we conceptualise then the "face" of both participants of such an untypical communicative situation?

In order to do it we first have to construct them as Brown and Levinson's Model Persons. While it should not be very difficult for the individual addressee of an advertising message, it seems a bit strange, at first, to think of the advertiser as a Model Person. What kind of "face wants" could such a Model Person possess? What are the component parts of this MP's positive and negative "face"? Can we think of him as a rational being, as described in the initial chapter of Brown and Levinson's extended essay?

In order to facilitate this elaboration let us start with the addressee of advertising messages. Each individual at least aspires to be perceived by others as a rational being; also in the contact with advertising messages, we claim that, in most of the cases, we evaluate them and act upon them in a predominantly rational way. Although there is much evidence to the contrary, we do not like to admit it and maintain that in contact with advertisements we absorb only their informative component. This is our rational aim: to get as much objective information from the ad and to analyse and react to it in the way most profitable to us. In contact with ads, our negative face is being threatened if it is admitted that someone is successful in persuading us to do something or in changing our beliefs and attitudes without our conscious consent. Our positive face suffers when it is being suggested in the ad that we might belong to an unfavourably perceived group of people, or appear unattractive or foolish. An excellent example of this technique is the use of the slogan "Nie dla idiotów! (Not for idiots!)" by the MediaMarkt chain, which implies that the ones who do not buy at MediaMarkt are fools, and examples of their stupid behaviour are humorously presented in a series of ads. Advertisers take advantage of the above facts and frame their persuasive messages in such a way that saving either aspect of our face involves yielding to the suggestion. As it can be seen, although we do not really interact verbally with the advertisements, there is a risk of a face loss imminent in each contact with them. Is there any risk, however, on the part of the advertiser, who seems to be quite anonymous?

The advertisers are conscious of many such risks. Although they are rarely individuals, they undoubtedly can be conceived as some collective personalities, with

clearly defined aims and objectives. They have much more to lose than the addressees of advertising messages and that is why they must act rationally in a very cunning and intelligent ways, to outwit the target audiences of their messages. Where large sums of money are involved, there is often little place for qualms of conscience. In the contemporary world, with markets saturated with breathtakingly rich assortments of competing products, it is the question of 'to be or not to be' for many of them. Being fully honest and playing fair all the time equals being eliminated from the market by more ruthless competitors. Being an advertiser means reconciling many factors and variables, which often seem completely incompatible. Their freedom of action (i.e. the negative face wants) is restricted in many ways: on the one hand there is the law, banning dishonest and potentially deceitful practices, on the other hand there is the competition who fiercely fight for their share of the market, there are the budgets which have to be balanced and the potential customers who cannot be offended or discouraged. Low tricks and aggressive appeals are out of question most of the time,¹ because they would entail loss of respect among the recipients. The companies must take good care of their positive self-image and invest a lot of effort to appear caring and respectful, which might be identified as the positive aspect of their face. Business people know what brand-building means: it involves a lot of effort extended over a long period of time, with a very little margin for mistakes. In a more subtle perspective, the positive face wants involve also building the image of the world in the minds of the potential customers which is most compatible with the advertised product. Thus, implementation of various politeness strategies in advertising messages involves taking care of the above-mentioned face wants, or conversely, the strategies applied by advertisers in order to preserve their face wants as well as those of the audience can be analysed in terms of politeness phenomena. The parallels with Brown and Levinson's model of individual strategic interaction are obvious: also here there is something invested in the interaction (albeit not necessarily only emotionally), which can be maintained or lost in it, which has to be mutually taken care of.

There is only one small problem, connected with the reciprocity and bidirectional character of politeness. In the analysis of the language of advertising, we do not analyse the contribution of the audience, because it is hardly ever recorded, or not available, often it is non-verbal, and on other occasions very idiosyncratic. The available data includes only the message by the advertiser, so how can we talk about any interest of the addressee to preserve the face of the advertiser? The criticism of advertisements that we very often hear may lead us to conclude that indeed the audience is put under no pressure to respect the face wants of the advertiser. This is true, but as we shall soon see, quite irrelevant for our considerations. There are at least two reasons for that.

Firstly, the analysis of politeness strategies can be carried out only in a situation when we have some piece of language (or at least some meaningful non-verbal behaviour) to investigate. As I have already mentioned, such data is rarely recorded. Thus, if we do not possess the language to analyse, we cannot say anything about the

¹ I have qualified the claim with "most of the time", since it sometimes happens that such practices are used as an attempt to win admiration by auto-irony

politeness phenomena involved in it. Secondly, and more importantly, the perspective of the advertiser's face is included in the advertising message itself, so we do not really require any responses in order to be able to say something about it. As already explained, the advertiser's position involves a lot more risk, because in communicating the advertising message he has to pay respect to both his own and the addressees' face wants, and has to be able to predict quite precisely their most likely reactions and responses. Thus, the mutuality of care for the face wants suggested above lies, in a sense, in the responsibility of only one of the participants of this special kind of interaction. Such an observation opens a wide range of promising possibilities in the analysis of advertising messages, as it at least doubles the number of perspectives which must be taken into account. The present study focuses on the perspective of positive and negative face wants of the advertiser and the addressee, which seem to influence the framing of the advertising messages. The author attempts also to present a contrastive sketch of the relative preference for particular strategies in British and Polish advertising. It is based on a sample of 100 British and 100 Polish radio advertisements, randomly recorded from various commercial radio stations.

2. The perspective of the face

Let us start with the positive face wants of the advertiser. Advertiser's positive face is threatened when the recipients of advertisements feel that the only objective of releasing the advertising messages is the desire for profits, that he offers nothing more but the advertised product, or when his reputation and position in the market is in any way put to doubt. As I have already suggested, the strategies used to reduce such impressions usually take the form of maximally positive self-presentation of the advertiser. In the most unmarked cases we are presented with a collection of claims (most desirably of maximally objective character) which are supposed to convince the recipients of a superior position of the manufacturer on the market and of his extensive care for the interest of potential customers. The more independent the source of such positive opinions, the better, that is why we often hear quotes from independent newspapers, are presented with opinions of credible authorities, learn about awards won in prestigious competitions or centuries of traditions in the manufacturing of the commodity. Here is an example of an ad for MOBIL diesel, which suggests that the company developed the product out of care not only for drivers:

- (1) (a) For postmen, lollipop ladies and window-cleaners...
 - (b) From MOBIL comes a new kind of Diesel that dramatically reduces black smoke emissions,
 - (a) For pedestrians, cyclists and milkmen...
 - (b) And it also gives you more engine power,
 - (a) For paper boys and bus conductors...
 - (b) MOBIL cleaner-burn Diesel Plus. Less smoke, more power and no extra cost,
 - (a) For me and my children and for your children...
 - (b) You don't just have to be a driver to appreciate it.

The ultimate aim of such positive presentations is either laying grounds for the atmosphere of trustworthiness and credibility, which allows later for transmission of claims related to the advertised products, or building of a maximally positive image of the company to be called upon in the situations of purchase later. Thus, enhancing the positive image of the company (i.e. its positive face) works eventually in the advertiser's own interest. In the collection of Polish advertisements we find 24 such positive presentations of the advertiser by secondary characters, compared to only 6 in the English set. The British advertisements focus more on the presentation of the product or service, very often convincing the potential customers that everything will be done for them and that they do not have to worry about anything. When it comes to the Polish data, the most frequently applied strategy of advertiser's positive presentation is the inclusion of praise and recommendation by anonymous characters appearing in the commercials constructed in a form of a mini-drama. Since in the British data relatively few such advertisements are found, it might be the reason why the difference in the positive presentation of the advertiser is so significant. If, however, we decide to include within this category the advertisements with primary characters only (no role-plays), then the ratio of positive self-presentations in the Polish and British sample raises to 31% and 42% respectively, reversing the proportions described above. Now it seems that the British employ more effort to present the company in the most positive way. In this context, an interesting tendency can be observed: the Polish advertisers prefer to use intermediaries, i.e. the secondary characters in mini-dramas, for positive self-presentation, while the British advertisers use more often primary address, where a single voice-over praises and recommends the manufacturer or service-provider.²

Another strategy, also suggested above, boils down to such a presentation of the surrounding world in which the advertised product occupies a prominent position, becoming everyone's object of desire and satisfying all potential needs of the audience. If this is the case, then the potential customers do not feel that they are being talked into buying something that they do not need. Such an image of the world is, obviously, very far from objective reality, it is more in the sphere of the wishful thinking of the advertiser. However, the presentation is usually so suggestive, so deeply anchored in the most basic and the strongest instincts of the audience, in such a way attached to the commonly acknowledged norms and values, that an attempt not to yield to such appeals automatically involves denial of the above-mentioned factors. That is why we often tend to accept the connections and the mental constructions of reality which the advertiser wants us to believe. In this way the advertiser makes sure that we start to value what is presented as valuable and we start to desire what is presented as desirable. This sounds very much like one of the positive politeness strategies, aiming at the convergence of the interactants' needs, wants and desires. I suggest including it within the sphere of politeness strategies used to cater for the advertiser's positive face, because it is not the addressee's wants and desires that the

² This issue is more extensively discussed in Wojtaszek (2002).

advertiser is trying to respect and preserve, but his own system of values, the world created for his own purposes. It is the audience who are invited to converge mentally with this kind of alter-reality, in this way becoming the members of the artificially constructed in-group. The fact that all that is subjected to the maximising of the sales of the advertised product is something that we are not supposed to notice, as it would damage so painstakingly constructed advertiser's positive face. Within this category there is relative balance between the British and the Polish commercials, with around 10% of the sample exhibiting the strategy described above.

The negative face is defined as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62). In relation to the advertiser (who can be treated as a 'competent adult member' for our purposes) this translates as freedom from any restraints to the most effective persuasive messages. Such limitations, however, are unavoidable, and in order to at least stretch their borders advertisers resort to various tactics, very often of linguistic kind.

The most serious group of restrictions is imposed on advertisers by the law. The particular legal regulations of advertising are slightly different in different countries, but the basic rules are the same: the ban on advertising of drugs, serious limitations on advertising of liquor, tobacco, sexual services and the like, the ban on broadcasting false information and on the use of some manipulative techniques, such as subliminal transmission of persuasive messages. Some of those bans are of rather absolute character, some others may be circumvented, and this is the area where the application of various strategies may be analysed as an attempt to save the advertiser's negative face. Let us take, for instance, the advertisements of liquors: it is usually restricted to a small selection of media, such as quality magazines. However, in Poland one can see billboards bearing the names of well-known vodka producers. It does not mean that vodka can be advertised on billboards in Poland, and it would be difficult to prove that those really are advertisements of alcohol, because the drink is never actually mentioned. The company's name is used in connection with some events which it sponsors, or competitions that it organises, or some incidental publications which it offers. It is interesting, then, that almost everybody identifies such billboards as disguised advertisements of alcohol. It seems that the brand name is so strongly associated with liquor in the minds of the recipients that all other associations are blocked, although the events mentioned in the ads really take place and the books are really published. A slightly different, but more linguistically based operation was used in the famous Bols Vodka advertisement in Poland a couple of years ago, when the company was being advertised as the sponsor of "łódka Bols" (Bols boat) taking part in a sailing regatta. The whole trick was based on the phonetic similarity of the words "łódka" [wotka] (boat) and "wódka" [votka] (vodka) in the Polish language. Since products of the above kind are rarely advertised on the radio, there is only one example of a similar strategy in the Polish sample, actually ridiculing the ban on advertising alcohol. It is a commercial of a beer, in which the Polish word "piwo" (beer) is beeped out, and the advertisement ends with the word "ocenzurowano" (censored), making the impression that the commercial has been tampered with by the censorship officials. On the surface, there is no mention of the

beer, but the contextual framing, with the names of particular brands, makes it evident what is being advertised.

A different spectrum of possibilities opens before advertisers in the context of the ban on presentation of falsehood. Advertisements do not lie. Instead, they are 'economical with the truth', they present only a part of the picture, or, in most of the cases, contain claims which are simply impossible to verify. This is the most powerful weapon that the language offers: it is possible to say almost everything without making the slightest truth commitment. The majority of utterances simply cannot be evaluated in terms of truth and falsity. In order to undergo such assessment they have to be full sentences in indicative mood. A brief look at some examples of advertising messages is enough to convince anyone that such sentences are quite seldom met, and even if they are, it is still easy to construct them in such a way that it is impossible to state whether they are true or false. Many books written on the language of advertising provide numerous examples of linguistic constructions which escape attempts at verification. Among the ones which are most often quoted we find sentences containing modal verbs, incomplete comparative constructions, semantically empty or incompatible phrases, the use of presuppositions and communicating on the level of implicature. It is not difficult to find examples of the above-mentioned strategies in use, let us have a look at the following advertisements:

- (2) Why waste precious time waiting to download? With a BT ISTN line, you can access data much faster, saving your time and aggravation.
- (3) You could have luxury for so much less. LAKER AIRWAYS daily scheduled services – Gatwick to Miami start 21st of March.
- (4) (a) And now follows an appeal on behalf of the tax man.
 - (b) Please, spare a thought for the tax man – a poor unfortunate who's been deprived of his income, first by PEPS then by TESSAS. Now there's another threat to his livelihood.
 FIDELITY MONEY BUILDER PEPS. With no entry or exit charges and a high return potential, people are succumbing to them all over the country. Already, they have devastated the tax man's profits. But it's not too late to help. So please, keep well away from the FIDELITY MONEY BUILDER range and give generously to the tax man.
 - (a) If you're not feeling charitable, call FIDELITY free, on 0-800 41-41-71 for your free information pack. The value of units and income from them will fluctuate and your capital is not guaranteed. Tax savings and eligibility to invest in a PEP will depend on individual circumstances and may be subject to future statutory change. Money-builder products are subject to an annual management fee and offered by members of the FIDELITY Marketing Group, all of which are regulated by IMRO and the personal investment authority. FIDELITY only gives advice on the FIDELITY Group Product Range.

The first of these commercials includes a comparative construction without the comparative element, the second one, apart from an infelicitous comparative, uses

also a modal verb, while the third one is an excellent example of communication on the level of implicature, clearly violating Grice's maxim of quality in the first part and with frequent use of modals in the disclaimer. Because commercials use implicature very frequently, it would be difficult to find examples which communicate everything directly, and with all the potential variability of covert communication, this category does not offer any solid grounds for comparison of the British and the Polish commercials.

The problem of stretching the borders of truthful communication in advertising is an extremely complex issue, and a lot more could be said about it. However, given the limitations of the present paper, I am not going to go into any more details. It only has to be said that such a strategy undoubtedly can be discussed as yet another method allowing the advertiser to reduce the limitations imposed on him by the law and save his negative face. Obviously, this does not exhaust the topic of self-directed negative politeness strategies, as we might think of some other, apart from the law, potential threats to the advertiser's freedom of action, such as the budget of the campaign, the prices of advertising space, or the limitations directly related to the advertising medium. All of them may be reduced by application of appropriate strategies, but this would extend the discussion beyond the scope of the present paper.

As it has already been suggested, in the process of formulating advertising messages, the advertiser has to take into consideration his audience's positive and negative face. It is even more important than preserving his own face, because without earning the proper respect of potential customers, he cannot hope to increase sales. Let us have a brief look at the situations which might potentially threaten the audience's positive and negative face and check what the advertisers do in order to reduce such a threat.

Let us start, as previously, with the positive component. In what way can we construct the positive face of a mass audience? Every individual has different opinions, preferences, hierarchies of values, and the like. How can we appeal to them if many of them are mutually exclusive? Some people prefer tea with sugar, some without. In order to show concern for such individual preferences the advertisers have developed interesting tactics. Brown and Levinson (1987:102) include avoidance of potentially controversial topics as one of their positive politeness strategies. One way of avoiding controversy is selecting for the topic universally acknowledged and desirable norms and values, at best of very abstract character, because everyone will conceptualize them in their own preferable way, leaving the positive connotations intact. There are not many people who would have anything against such things as happiness, joy of life, freedom, love, peace or comfort. If the advertisers present such ideas as valuable and cherished, they may hope that such messages will be welcome by the audience. Making a connection with the advertised commodity is then the necessary step on the way to winning approval and admiration for the product itself. Showing concern for the norms and values which have the status of universally acknowledged reduces significantly the risk of rejection and makes an impression at the same time that each individual member of the audience is treated as a member of an in-group, which is yet another positively oriented politeness strategy. Appeals to the above

mentioned elements are present in 32 Polish commercials, while British advertisers mention them explicitly in connection with the products and services only 13 times. It seems that they prefer to talk about the advantages of the advertised commodities, rather than trying to link them with generally accepted values.

A more cunning version of the above-mentioned strategy involves a situation when the advertiser makes references to such universally acknowledged values and calls them unique, individual and rare, attributing them to the individuals who are at the receiving end of the advertising message. A good example of such a commercial is the following:

- (5) All who love kitchens, love TORLANA kitchens. TORLANA provide only the highest quality European kitchens and appliances that are as individual as you. TORLANA will expertly design and install your new kitchen to the highest standards. Kitchens of such quality don't have to cost a fortune at TORLANA. Simply call us free on 0-800 146-182, or call in to our showroom at Darsham Walk of Chesham High Street.

You deserve the best, you deserve a TORLANA kitchen.

Not only is the recipient included as a member of an in-group in such a situation, but he is at the same time flattered and feels exceptional. Flattery is also a frequently used strategy, aimed at melting the audience's defensive instincts. Not many people can resist invitations and suggestions served on a plate of pleasant admiration. If taking advantage of an offer or buying a product equals being included in the group of special, intelligent, worthy and attractive people, then yielding to the suggestion is not such a big price to pay for it. Among the advertisements analysed in the present paper 7 in the Polish data and 8 in the British set applied the strategies of flattery and individualised appeal.

Not all products and services, however, are addressed to everyone. Sometimes there is a need to target a smaller and more homogenous group of potential customers. Then the advertiser does not have to resort to norms and values which are universally accepted, it is enough to find those which are cherished by that particular target group, and they will be different for small boys in their first years at the primary school, different for women over forty who still want to look young and beautiful, and different for very rich business executives who require material symbols of their status. In such situations, the most frequently used positive politeness strategies are the use of an in-group jargon or showing deep concern for a narrow set of values cherished by a particular group. The former is of a more linguistic character, and the most conspicuous examples involve the advertisements directed at teenagers, full of fashionable neologisms and expressions, sometimes difficult to understand or even hard to accept by the older members of the audience. However, in the collection of advertisements analysed here there were only 6 examples in the Polish and 4 examples in the English data.

Finally, the form of address used in commercials should be briefly discussed. A widely used practice is to apply the most direct form of addressing the audience,

with the omission of honorifics. There are several advantages of such a situation,³ but in the context of positive politeness strategies the most important effect which is achieved through it is the reduction of distance between the advertiser and the addressee, making the impression that the former is a close friend or at least an acquaintance of the latter. Friends are entitled to give us advice, to talk to us about our private and intimate matters, be direct, use colloquial language and communicate messages on the level of implicature. Thus, it can be expected that in commercials we will find a significant preponderance of direct address forms. However, the issue is a bit complicated in the contrastive perspective, because when we take into consideration Polish and English, different options are available for linguistic marking of that feature. Most importantly, in the Polish language the T/V distinction is present, so the difference between less and more direct forms of address is clearly marked. It turns out, however, that there are some markers of forms of address which function in both those languages and may be used to illustrate the preferences characteristic for them. One such factor is the sheer presence of address forms in the commercial. Interestingly, they are absent from 50% of all advertisements in the Polish collection analysed in this work, compared to only 7% of address-free forms in the British corpus. Thus, the Polish advertisers do not take advantage of the possibility to reduce the distance to the audience by applying direct forms; instead, they prefer to use covert form of communication. Within this dimension, the British culture seems to be much more positive-politeness-oriented than Polish.

It seems from the above discussion that the exploitation of positive politeness strategies offers a lot of possibilities, even though not all potentially useful strategies have been discussed so far.⁴ It would be interesting to see how the strategies connected with the negative aspect of the addressees' face compare to them. In relation to the audience of advertising messages, the negative face can be conceived as a conviction that all their actions connected with purchasing goods or taking advantage of services are fully conscious and autonomous, that they are motivated in the major part by self-interest and that they do not occur under any kind of pressure. At first glance, it seems that many of the strategies enumerated in Brown & Levinson (1987:131) within the negative politeness category are not compatible with what we find in advertisements. Advertisers rarely apologize, seldom go on record as incurring a debt, give deference, nominalize or are pessimistic. Commercials are full of imperatives, address the audience in a very direct way and are full of covert messages, which are better analysed as "off-record" strategies. However, even the use of such elements may be accounted for as a form of negative face preservation. For instance, formulating a request as an indirect message, flouting Grice's Maxim of Relevance, and giving the addressee the opportunity to interpret it in a different way, allows to make an impression, at least, that there is no pressure involved. Imperatives may be justified

³ For a more extended discussion see Wojtaszek (2002).

⁴ The other strategies include: give gifts, joke, offer reciprocity, be positive, etc. (Brown & Levinson, 1987:102).

by the explanation that such forms are used in most cases when it is obvious from the ad that the advertiser sees their content as inherently beneficial for the recipient. In such situations the polarity of politeness changes, and suggestions beneficial for the hearer are considered most polite when they are most direct.⁵ When it comes to the strategies listed in Brown & Levinson (1987:131), the most frequently applied include conventional indirectness, the use of hedges, impersonalized messages (in the sense of concealing the hearer's participation) and statements of the FTA as a general rule, or at least something that everyone would do or want. The best examples seem to be the following:

- (6) Don't gamble with your future, or leave your next move to chance.
 Call this lucky number: free-phone infonet on 0-800 50-30-80.
 All the latest information on training, qualifications and career guidance, helping you to get new skills, advancing your job or improve your business.
 What have you got to lose? Free-phone infonet, 0-800 50-30-80.
- (7) All who love kitchens, love TORLANA kitchens.
- (8) What went up just came down.
 The best albums of '97, from only 10.99, now, at WOOLWORTH'S

In the first of those advertisements imperatives and the rhetorical question at the end express things which would be considered by everyone as beneficial to the hearer and obviously sensible things to do, the second commercial applies a general statement, while the third says nothing about the actions of the potential customers, it just mention the items which are on offer. In the British data, it is a frequently used strategy: many commercials focus on the special features of the product, they highlight the extraordinary character of the offer and generally create the impression that it is short-lasting, so immediate action is the only sensible thing to do. Interestingly, the imperatives in such commercials usually do not encourage the listeners to buy the goods, but to get some more information:

- (9) Only CONROYS can offer clearance prices with no deposit, interest free credit and up to three whole years to pay. Ask for written details – but it's this weekend only!

This is an interesting persuasive strategy: the listeners are invited to make inquiries about the offer and to get more information. However, when the first step is made, it is usually more difficult not to follow it up. One of very powerful psychological mechanisms guiding our actions is the need of consistency, and the advertisers make a cunning use of it. It is more difficult to withdraw when we got ourselves engaged in some way.

⁵ Compare, for instance, *Have one more cake* with *Would you awfully mind if I were to offer you another piece of cake?* The latter would undoubtedly evoke serious suspicions about the intentions of the speaker.

In the Polish commercials the appeal is much more often mediated by secondary participants, but the strategies illustrated above are also frequently employed. One additional strategy, not so frequently used by the British advertisers, is the use of the future tense in the promises. The hearer's participation is hidden, while the advertiser's actions are foregrounded. Such framing of the message does not make an impression that anything is imposed on the addressee, preserving in this way his positive face wants.

3. Conclusions and suggestions for further research

The above strategies do not exhaust all the possibilities employed in the commercials analysed in this paper, but it seems that they are sufficient as illustrations of the most important tendencies. The general observations pertaining to the differences between the politeness strategies in British and Polish advertisements seem to indicate that the British advertising language is more oriented towards positive politeness than Polish, which shows preference for language use compatible with negative face preservation or the application of off-record strategies, with reference to both advertiser's and the addressee's face. In the British ads we find more positive self-presentations of the advertiser than in Polish, and the potential customers are addressed more directly. Even if they are not openly encouraged to purchase the advertised commodity or take advantage of the service, there are many direct appeals to take some action. In the Polish ads the relevant reaction of the listener is usually communicated on the level of implicature, or replaced by promises and actions by the advertiser. The only type of positive politeness strategy prevailing in the Polish ads is the connection of the advertised goods with some generally accepted and desirable norms and values, exhibiting the advertiser's respect for them.

The findings connected with the form of address used in the ads might seem contradictory to earlier observations pertaining to the cultural differences between the Polish and the British. Wierzbicka (1985) observes that the Poles, on the background of the English, may make the impression of being less polite, even rude, because of their preference for more direct expression of requests. It has to be remembered, however, that the use of direct address and imperatives receives special licensing in the language of advertising, since such messages must be perceived as inherently beneficial for the hearer. This is not the same as the situation of requesting, which constitutes a relatively weighty face threatening act.

Finally, it seems necessary to indicate some possible directions of research within the framework applied in the present work. Some attention could be devoted, for example, to the specific status of P, D and R variables (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in the language of advertising. Its specific communicational character changes significantly the perspective from which they are perceived and might be one of the reasons why the language of advertising differs from everyday code of communication. The use of social deixis, only briefly introduced in this paper, also deserves separate elaboration and more extensive research, in both primary and secondary type of address in

the commercials. Such research would definitely lead us to better understanding of the intricacies of the advertising language.

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