



# The Pragmatics of Politeness (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics)

*Geoffrey Leech*

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## **The Pragmatics of Politeness (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics) Geoffrey Leech**

This readable book presents a new general theoretical understanding of politeness. It offers an account of a wide range of politeness phenomena in English, illustrated by hundreds of examples of actual language use taken largely from authentic British and American sources. Building on his earlier pioneering work on politeness, Geoffrey Leech takes a pragmatic approach that is based on the controversial notion that politeness is communicative altruism. Leech's 1983 book, *Principles of Pragmatics*, introduced the now widely-accepted distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of politeness; this book returns to the pragmalinguistic side, somewhat neglected in recent work. Drawing on neo-Gricean thinking, Leech rejects the prevalent view that it is impossible to apply the terms 'polite' or 'impolite' to linguistic phenomena.

Leech covers all major speech acts that are either positively or negatively associated with politeness, such as requests, apologies, compliments, offers, criticisms, good wishes, condolences, congratulations, agreement, and disagreement. Additional chapters deal with impoliteness and the related phenomena of irony ("mock politeness") and banter ("mock impoliteness"), and with the role of politeness in the learning of English as a second language. A final chapter takes a fascinating look at more than a thousand years of history of politeness in the English language.

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