

Realization of Politeness Strategy Mixture - A Case Study

Duong Bach Nhat, Ph.D

University of Economics – The University of Danang, Vietnam
 Duongbachnhat[at]gmail.com

Abstract: In communication, it is difficult to find a sharp distinction between the strategies and it is not always easy to decide which politeness strategies (PS) the utterances belong to in many communicative acts including inviting (In.) and declining an invitation (DIn) because one PS may be used for different communicative intentions and one communicative intention may employ more than one PS. In this paper, deriving from Brown and Levinson [1] and Nguyen, Quang's classification [10], we make an attempt to propose a view in PS mixture with some common hybrid politeness strategies (HPS) and combined politeness strategies (CPS) in In and DIn in America (AM) and Vietnam (VN).

Keywords: politeness strategies (PS), mixture, hybrid politeness strategies (HPS), combined politeness strategies

1. Introduction

Thomas, J. [2:176] criticizes a flaw in Brown and Levinson's work that '[they] claim that positive and negative politeness are mutually exclusive'. According to him, rightly in the opinion of the author of this dissertation, in some communicative cases, a single utterance or a single strategy can be oriented to both positive and negative face simultaneously, and the existence of this ambiguity, as Nguyen, Quang [10:113] shows, is unavoidable in the study on such a dynamic and open subject as communication and culture. It is assumed that Brown and Levinson have realized the uses of strategy mixtures [1:230-231]. However, his work is limited to the simple realization without a deeply empirical analysis. For this reason, based on our investigation into the use of positive and negative politeness strategies separately [2: 582 – 592] and [3:941-950], a discussion on the use of strategy mixtures in In. and DIn. in AM and VN is advanced in this paper.

2. Content

2.1 Politeness Strategies

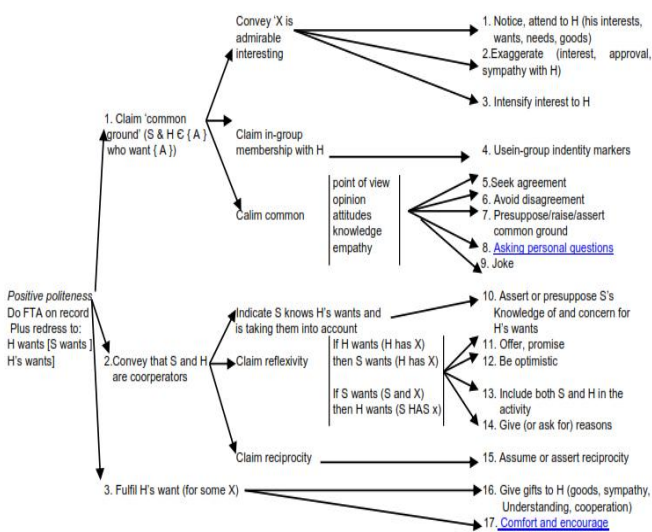


Figure 1: Positive politeness strategies (Adapted from Brown and Levinson [1:582])

As discussed in our previous research [2] and [3], three broad mechanisms belonging to the strategies of positive politeness (*Claim 'common ground' - Convey that S and H are co-operators - Fulfill H's want (for some X)*) with their 17 strategies and five broad mechanisms with their 11 strategies belonging to negative politeness (*Be direct - Communicate S's want to not impinge on H - Don't presume/assume - Redress other wants of H's - Don't coerce*) suggested by Brown and Levinson [1] and N. Quang's amendments [11] are advanced with reference to In. and DIn. in AM and VN.

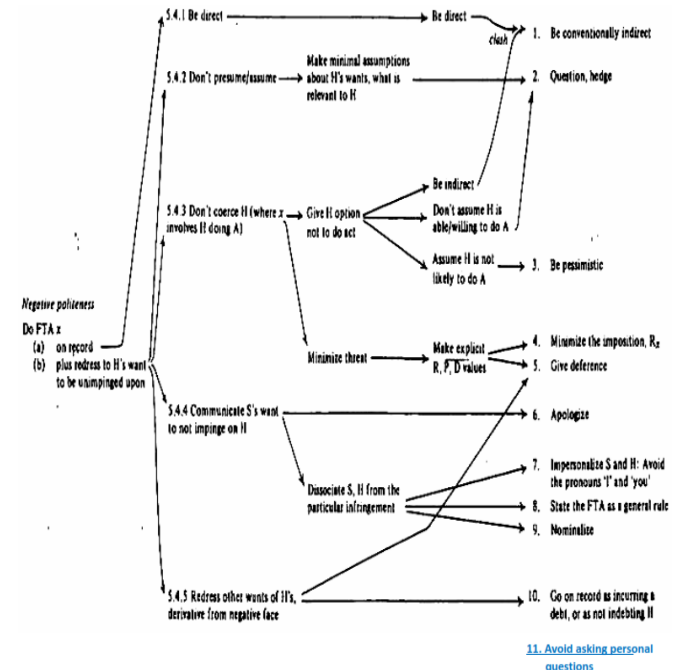


Figure 2: Negative Politeness Strategies (Adapted from Brown & Levinson [1:941])

As discussed in Nhat, D.B [2] and [3], lead-ins or pre-invitations/ pre-refusals and lead-outs or post-invitations/ post-refusals, which are commonly used in real life, will be counted in the close analysis of the realization of PS in In. and DIn. in AM and VN. The VN invitations or refusals to invitations, if being not equivalent to the AM ones in the preceded examples, are translated into English word-by-

word in order to help the readers understand the main idea of the utterances, and the codes of strategies mentioned here are in the same way as they were used in our previous papers [2] and [3].

2.2 Realization of the Politeness Strategy mixture with Reference to In. and Din in American and Vietnamese

2.2.1 Hybrid Politeness Strategies (HPS)

In communication, there are some cases in which one strategy can be considered as a negative - positive strategy which is labeled a hybrid politeness strategy (HPS) because it is oriented to both positive and negative face simultaneously. In the other words, HPS is a politeness strategy which possesses the characteristics of both PPS and NPS. Notice that with this feature, HPS discussed here is not the kind of hybrid explained by Brown and Levinson which is produced by 'the mixture of elements deriving from PPS and NPS in a given utterance' [1:230]. In consideration with the characteristics of PPS and NPS suggested by Brown and Levinson [1], and based on the empirical results from DCT questionnaire, the following strategies with well-recognized characteristics of both PPS and NPS are proposed to be classified as HPS in In. and Din. in AM and VN.

• HPS 1: Negative questions

Negative questions as a PPS, which presume 'yes' answer, are widely used as a way to indicate that S knows H's wants, tastes, habits...partially to redress the imposition of FTAs (PPS 7). At the same time, it is also a NPS, which derives from the want not to presume and want not to coerce H (NPS 2). For example:

- 1) Wouldn't you like a drink?
- 2) Don't you want some dinner now?

(Brown & Levinson 1990:122-123)

With such an invitation, the inviter implies that he knows the addressee wants to have a drink but he, in order to avoid the imposition on the addressee, does not to presume that. Such expressions as 'Won't you come...?, You won't..., will you?' are easily accepted as invitations in AM, but not in VN (see PPS7). This is a real culture shock because the VN are used to affirmative positive forms of invitation. However, there are some common VN expressions which are equivalents to 'I don't know if you could...': Không biết (là) anh/chị có thể...được không (a)?, Chẳng hay (là) anh/chị có thể được không a?

- [1] Không biết (là) anh/chị có thể đến ăn tối với chúng tôi được không (a)?
Chẳng hay (là) anh/chị có thể đến ăn tối với chúng tôi được không (a)?
(II) do not know if you could come over for dinner?)
Or double negative forms:
- [2] Chẳng lẽ anh lại không đến tham dự câu lạc bộ khiêu vũ với chúng tôi sao?
- [3] Chẳng lẽ trời đẹp thế này mà anh em mình lại không đi đâu đó thì phí nhỉ?
(Why don't we go somewhere in such a beautiful weather?)

• HPS 2: Quality hedges and presupposing S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants

There is another HPS with the characteristics of quality hedge, which functions to stress S's commitment to the truth of his utterance (NPS2), and presuppose S' knowledge of H's wants (PPS 9):

- [4] Go to see the film 'Titanic' tonight! I believe it's very interesting!
- [5] Tôi nay đi xem phim 'Titanic' đi! Tôi tin chắc là hay lắm đấy!

In this invitation, while with the quality hedge S affirms that the film is interesting, he simultaneously presupposes his knowledge of H's favourite topic of film (= I believe you find it interesting).

• HPS 3: Admit the impingement and presupposing S's knowledge of and concern for H's wants.

S can admit that he is impinging on H's face, at the same time S may assert or imply knowledge of H's wants and willingness to fit S's own wants in with H (to indicate that S and H are cooperators, and potentially to put pressure on H to cooperate with S).

- [6] I know you can't bear parties, but this one will really be good – do come! [1:125]
Similarly in VN:

- [7] Mình biết là cậu bị 'dị ứng' chỗ đông người, nhưng đây là buổi ca nhạc có một không hai- toàn là các ca sĩ nổi tiếng. Không đi là phí một đời đấy! Đi nhé?
(I know you have a 'bad reaction' to crowds, but this is a special music performance with famous singers. Don't let slip this good opportunity!)

This technique is also resorted to in declining invitations to soften the FTA:

- [8] Chị biết là em sẽ rất buồn nếu đám cưới mà không có họ hàng nào, nhưng thực sự hôm đó chị không thể đến được vì phải đi công tác ở Mỹ chưa về kịp.
(I know you will be very sad if in your wedding party there is no relative of yours, but that day I can't come because I will have gone on business to the U.S.)

Notice that if the invitation fits the addressee's wants the technique should be seen as a PPS as discussed in PPS 10 [2].

• HPS 4: Quality hedges and personal-centre switch

Quality hedges may be used as a NPS (NPS 2) to involve H in affirming the truth of the utterance by presuming that H's knowledge of the particular details is equivalent to S's, and simultaneously used as a PPS (PPS7) to express emphatic agreement or understanding. Some cajolers and expressions as quality hedges may be used as lead-ins for starting the reason why the invitation is not accepted: -AM: As you know, As is known, As is well known, As you and I both know...-VN: anh/ chị...biết không? (do you know), như anh/chị... thấy đấy? (As you see...), 'anh/ chị hiểu cho' (do you understand), Như anh/ chị biết đấy ... (As is known, As you know):

(A invites B to have a drink) B declines:

[9] I wish I could, but you know I've got to take the kids to swim practice today.

[14:1987: 144]

[10] (A invites B to come for dinner), B declines:

Đạ, chắc là em không tới được. Chị biết đấy, bà nội mầy đưa mới lên chơi nên em phải ở nhà làm nhiệm vụ con dâu đảm đang chứ.

(I can't come. You know, my husband's mother has just come, so I have to stay at home to do a clever daughter-in-law's duties.)

Such expressions as 'as you know'/'anh biết đấy', 'chị biết không' harmonize the interpersonal relation and raise the inviter's sympathy with the invitee when she cannot accept the invitation. Apart from this function, these quality hedges are explored to involve H in asserting the truth of the utterance.

• HPS 5: Promise in apologizing

'Promise' is used to apologize and indicate S's regret or reluctance to do an FTA and promise this refusal will not happen again (NPS 6). In the other words, as a NPS 'promise' is used with a compound communicative intention: on one side, S indicates that he is aware of the impingement on H; on the other side, he asserts that the refusal will not occur again or there will be a redressive action. At the same time, 'promise', as a PPS (PPS 11), is also one way to stress the cooperation between S and H, which demonstrates S's good intention in satisfying H's positive face wants. Following are some common expressions belonging to this strategy in declining invitations in AM and VN: -AM: I'm sorry and I promise to/that..., Maybe another time, Let's do it another time....-VN: Tôi xin lỗi... tôi hứa là...(I'm sorry and I promise that), Có lẽ để dịp khác nhé (Maybe another time)...

[11] Sorry, I can't today. I promise to come after the examination.

[12] Mình xin lỗi hôm nay không thể đi được. Mình hứa là sau kì thi nhất định sẽ tới thăm cậu.
(I'm sorry today I can't come. I promise to visit you after the exam.)

Similar to inviting discussed in PPS 10, in declining an invitation, there are also such definite and indefinite promises:

[13] I'm sorry, today I have a meeting. Maybe another time?

Tiếc quá hôm nay em bận họp. Để hôm khác anh nhé!
(indefinite)

(I'm sorry, today I have a meeting. Or Saturday, O.K?)

It is admitted that 'promises', though definite or indefinite, real or unreal, clearly demonstrate S's good intentions in satisfying both positive and negative-face wants of H.

• HPS 6: Presumptuousness in apologizing

Beside the function of a PPS (PPS 11), 'hope', according to Nguyen, Quang [1:158], is one way to apologize indirectly to minimize the threatening H's negative face (NPS 6). It is certain that there is an overlap in the use of PS and the decision on the kind of PS the utterance belongs to is partly

dependent on S's communicative intention. However, in my opinion, it is reasonable to consider 'hope' which is used in making invitations as a PPS because with the use of conventional gambit S shows his presumptuousness (see PPS 11), but if this technique is explored in declining invitations, it should be seen a HPS, which is oriented to both PPS and NPS. Let us compare these examples:

[14] I hope you will accept my invitation to the New Year party on Sunday.

[15] Tôi hy vọng cậu sẽ không từ chối lời mời tới dự tiệc Năm Mới với chúng tôi. (*I hope you will not decline my invitation to come to the New Year party with us.*)

In this case, S is so optimistic as to claim tacitly that H will cooperate with S to obtain S's wants because they share mutual interest.

In declining an invitation:

[16] Oh! Sorry. I'll have to take an exam that day. I hope you won't be sad if I can't come.

Ồi, ngày hôm đó tớ phải đi thi mất rồi. Tớ hy vọng là cậu sẽ không buồn nếu tớ không đến được.

and:

[17] I hope you will forgive me if I won't be able to come that day.

Tôi hy vọng anh sẽ thứ lỗi cho tôi nếu ngày đó tôi không thể đến được.

Different from [17] and [18], 'hope' in [19] and [20] is one way of apologizing indirectly to reduce threatening H's negative face. By saying so, S expresses his feeling of reluctance when declining the invitations. At the same time, such a conventional gambit may indicate that S is so optimistic as to assume a tacit claim that S may beg H's forgiveness.

• HPS 7: Token tags and appealers as weakening hedges in the cooperative strategy

Token tags in AM and appealers in VN may be used both as weakening hedges to soften the imposition of the FTA including making invitations and a tacit commitment for H to cooperation with S. For example:

[18] You come to my party, won't you?

[19] Tối dự sinh nhật tớ nhé!

'nhé' is employed with the same purpose as 'won't you' to reduce the threatening H's negative face and to claim his presumptuousness that H will accept his invitation.

• HPS 8: State the FTA as a general rule

In the light of Brown and Levinson's classification of PS, this strategy is considered as the eighth negative politeness strategy [1:2006] because by stating the FTA as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation S indicates that he doesn't want to impinge but is merely forced to by circumstance (not a particular one. In my opinion, however, accompanied with that intention S can also implicitly claim the common ground with H (convey in-group membership). Let us see the following examples:

[20] A- I feel so sad!

B- Shopping is always a prescription for sadness. Let's go to supermarket now!

Equivalently in VN:

- [21] A- Em buồn quá! (I feel so sad)
 B- Buồn mà đi mua sắm là quên hết liền. Chị em mình đi siêu thị đi. (*When sad, go shopping and forget everything. We go to the market!*)
 This technique is also resorted to in declining invitations:
- [22] A- So sad now! Let's go out and have a drink.
 B- At this moment? It's not good for girls to go out at night. Stay at home and play cards, O.K?
- [23] A- Em buồn quá. Chị đi uống nước với em đi. (*I feel so sad now! Go out and have a drink with me!*)
 B- Đi bây giờ sao em? Con gái không nên đi chơi khuya thế, nguy hiểm lắm. Đánh một giấc là quên hết liền ấy mà. (*Go out at this moment? Girls should not go out too late, so dangerous. Go to bed and you will forget everything*)

By this technique the invitations, different from requests in which the 'coldness' [10:177] or 'not-sitting-on-tables' (Brown and Levinson 1987:207) and 'distance' between S and H is increased, seem to be more persuasive with a couple communicative target: conveying in-group membership and softening the imposition of the FTA. In agreement with Nguyen, Quang [10:178], we think that this is an overlap between PPS and NPS.

In brief, it is obvious that the HPS in inviting and declining invitations discussed above have the characteristics of both PPS and NPS. However, it is assumed that in communication there may exist some cases in which PPS or NPS is more overweight because according to Nguyen, Quang [10:186], in my opinion rightly, the overall impact of the utterance depends on the combination of intralanguage, paralanguage and extralanguage elements, which helps us to realize the communicative intention as well as the illocutionary force of the utterance.

2.2.2 Combined politeness strategies (CPS) in In. and DIn. in AM and VN.

As discussed at the beginning of the paper, there may be more than one strategy employed in one communicative intention or in a single utterance, and this is not an exception for In. and DIn.. In an invitation or a refusal to an invitation there may be the mixture of PS with elements deriving from PPS and NPS. According to Brown and Levinson [1:230-231] the uses of strategy mixtures may 'hybridize' somewhere between PPS and NPS or 'move the speaker and the addressee back and forth between approaching and distancing in their interaction'. Nevertheless, for the complexible combination of intralanguage, paralanguage and extralanguage in communication as discussed, it is not our intention to put a close analysis on the exact position of PS falling between PPS and NPS, but the focus is simply laid on the existence of elements or techniques belonging to PPS, NPS or HPS in an invitation or refusal to an invitation. For this reason, the so-called hybrid strategy and back-or-forth moving strategy according to Brown and Levinson [1:230-231] are replaced by the term of 'combined politeness strategy' (CPS) in our study. In the other words, CPS is a politeness strategy in which there are some different elements or techniques driving from different politeness

strategies (PPS and/or NPS or/and HPS) in a single utterance. A comparison between a HPS and CPS in our classification is made in fig.1.

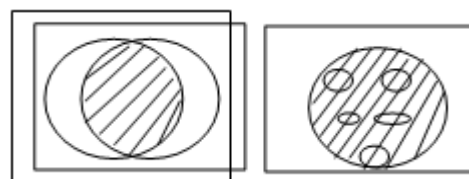


Figure 3: Comparison between a hybrid politeness strategy and a combined politeness strategy

Thus, the nature of HPS itself is the communicative intention oriented to both characteristics of PPS and NPS, but CPS is the combination of some of elements belonging to PPS and/or NPS or/and HPS. Let's take refusal [26] as an example of HPS:

- [24] At this moment? It's not good for girls to go out at night. Stay at home and play cards, O.K?
 HPS 8 is explored in this bold refusal because it is given out with a couple communicative target: conveying in-group membership (PPS) and softening the imposition of the FTA (NPS). But in the following example:
- [25] Hey John, I know you are busy, if you visit we can grab a drink.
 (PPS4 / HPS 2 / NPS 2b)

The strategy used in this invitation belongs to CPS because it combines some kinds of strategies at the same time (PPS4 + HPS 2 + NPS 2). Thus, there are some cases where a HPS may be embedded in CPS.

From 3.2., 4.2., and 5.2.1 it can be seen that the total of single PS examined in the study is:
 17 PPS + 10 NPS + 8HPS = 35 PS

However, PS will be multiplied by the combination of PS (CPS). Theoretically, with a simple mathematical problem, we come to the following minimum total of CPS:

The number of PS combined in an utterance
 The number of cases (CPS)

The number of PS combined in an utterance The number of cases (CPS)

- a- Two PPS are combined: 17 . 16 = 272
 - b- Two NPS are combined: 10 . 9 = 90
 - c- Two HPS are combined: 8 . 7 = 56
 - d- One NPS are combined with one PPS: 17 . 10 = 170
 - e- One PPS are combined with one HPS: 17 . 8 = 136
 - f- One NPS are combined with one HPS: 10 . 8 = 80
 - g- One PPS are combined with one NPS and one HPS: 17 . 80 = 1360
- 2164

Thus, theoretically there is at least 2164 CPS; yet in practice there may occur some cases in which a PS goes with another one in the same kind, or more than two PS are combined (in a, b, c, d, e, f), and more than three PS are combined (in g). For the countless total of CPS, a classification of CPS into seven groups is proposed as follows:

- Group 1: PPS +NPS
- Group 2: PPS + HPS
- Group 3: NPS + HPS
- Group 4: PPS + NPS+HPS
- Group 5: PPS + PPS
- Group 6: NPS + NPS
- Group 7: HPS + HPS

In this classification, the number of PS in each group is not limited, and the order of PS in each group is not fixed, and each group may be divided into many sub-types depending on particular speech acts. On this principle, following are some typical CPS used in an invitation and refusals to an invitation in AM and VN.

• **CPS 1: PPS + NPS (PN)**

The mixed strategies with one (or more than one) PPS and one (or more than one) NPS are used with a high frequency in In. and DIn. in both AM and VN:

- [26] John, I'm going to the canteen. Will you go with me?
(PP4a / PPS 14 / NPS 2a)
- [27] It is said that the new film is very interesting. Let's see it tonight! (NPS7d / PPS7c/4a)
This strategy is also resorted to in declining invitations:
- [28] Sorry, I have already had plans. But have a good time!
(NPS 6a / NPS 6b4 / PPS 17)
We can see the same phenomenon in VN:
- [29] Minh, ngày mai bạn tao mở tiệc mừng nhà mới đấy. Tối chơi nhé! (PP4a / PPS14 / NPS 7b)
(*Minh, tomorrow we are having a house-warming party. Come, please!*)
- [30] Chà, hấp dẫn quá nhỉ! nhưng tao bận mất rồi.
(PPS 6a / NPS 6b)
(*So attractive! But I will be busy.*)

• **CPS2: PPS + HPS (PH)**

An invitation may be making with the combination of HPS and PPS:

- [31] We are having a small party tomorrow. Why don't you join with us? (PPS14 / HPS1)
- [32] Shopping is always a prescription for sadness. Let's go to supermarket now! (HPS8 / PPS14)
Similarly in VN:
- [33] Con gái không nên đi vào quán cà phê vào giờ này. Bạn mình uống ở nhà đi
(HPS8 / PPS 4a)
(*Girls shouldn't come into the café at this time. We have a drink at home!*)

• **CPS 3: NPS + HPS (NH)**

NPS may be accompanied by HPS in a refusal to invitation:

- [34] I'm sorry, today I have a meeting. Maybe another time?
(NPS 6a / NPS 6b4 / HPS 5)
Equivalently in VN:
- [35] Tiếc quá hôm nay em bận họp. Để hôm khác anh nhé!
(NPS 6a / NPS 6b4 / HPS 5)
This PS can be seen in an invitation:
- [36] I know you are busy, but if you come we can have a drink and talk.
(HPS 3 / NPS 2b)

- [37] Tôi biết là câu đang gian đoạn thi cử, nhưng nhớ đến nếu câu có thời gian nhé.
(HPS3 / NPS 2b)
(*We know you are in the exam period, but if having time, remember to come, please!*)

• **CPS 4: PPS + NPS + HPS (PNH)**

There may be the combination of three kinds of PS (NPS, PPS, and HPS) in an invitation. For example:

- [38] It sounds great, but I got stuff to do. Why don't we do it next week?
(PPS 6a / NPS 6b 4 / HPS 1)

The combination may be resorted to in both In. and DIn. in VN:

- [39] Nghe có vẻ hay quá! Nhưng tiếc rằng tớ bận mất rồi. Thế sao mình lại không đi tuần sau nhỉ?
(PPS 6a / NPS 6b4 / HPS 1)
(*It sounds interesting! But regret that I'm busy. Why don't we do it next week?*)

• **CPS 5: PPS + PPS (PP)**

In this kind of mixed strategy, there exist some PPS at the same time in one invitation:

- [40] Mark, there is a good pub next. Let's go grab a drink!
(PPS4a/ PPS 14 / PPS7c/4a)
In a refusal to an invitation:
- [41] It's fantastic, but I'll see what's on my schedule.
(PPS 6a / PPS 6a)
Similarly in VN:
- [42] Hay quá, nhưng có gì em sẽ gọi lại cho chị sau nhé!
(PPS 6a / PPS 6a)
(*So interesting, but if there is something I will call you latter*)

• **CPS 6: NPS + NPS (NN)**

More than one NPS may be used in one invitation:

- [43] If you have time, I'd like to invite you to my party tomorrow. (NPS 2b / NPS 1)
- [44] Nếu rảnh ghé qua tiệc nhà mới của mình!
(NPS2b/ NPS7b)
It can be seen in declining invitations:
- [45] Sorry, I have made plans. (NPS 6a / NPS6b4)
The same combination may be used in VN:
- [46] Tiếc quá! Hôm nay em phải đi thi mất rồi.
(NPS 6b2 / NPS 6b4)
(*What a pity! Today I have to take an exam.*)

• **CPS 7: HPS + HPS (HH)**

One HPS may go with one (or more than one) HPS in one invitation:

- [47] I can't come! You know, my mother is in hospital. I hope you forgive me. (HPS4 / HPS6)
This CPS is also exploited in VN:
Chúng tớ biết câu rất bận, nhưng thiếu cậu buổi tiệc mất vui. Chẳng lẽ cậu lại không đến sao?
(HPS3 / HPS 1)
(*We know you are busy, but the party is not cheerful without you. Why don't you join with us?*)

3. Conclusion

The eight HPS proposed here are chosen with the typical characteristics of both PPS and NPS, and they all appear in In. and DIn. in both AM and VN. However, this classification is relative because, as discussed before, in real-life communication one PS may be explored for some intentions at the same time. Moreover, the classification is certainly dependent on the factors of not only intralanguage but also paralinguistic and extralinguistic at the same time, which is beyond our study. For this reason, in my opinion, the number of HPS may be amended in particular communicative interactions. Furthermore, due to that one communicative intention may use more than one PS, the subdivision of CPS is countless. With the classification of CPS into seven groups, which are commonly employed in In. and DIn. in both AM and VN as can be seen in the examples discussed above, we can both have an overall look on the typical categories of CPS and have a flexible number of CPS.

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Author Profile



Duong Bach Nhat received the M.A degree in Methodology in English in 2002 and the Ph.D degree in English Linguistics in 2008 from College of Foreign Languages - Vietnam National University, Hanoi. She is now working at University of Economics – The University of Danang, Vietnam.