

### Essay 3A:

Being polite is considered an unspoken edict in order to be accepted in our first world culture that relies on societal niceties in order to function. Those part of such a community use polite speech to faintly imply intent but as the anthropologist concluded, these phrases are used to communicate politeness rather than the literal meaning of the sentences. This is because although these are unnecessary in accomplishing whatever one sets out to do directly, they are the trappings that make others more receptive to one's own purpose, whether they are superiors, juries, or even the general public. Polite speech is what enables those who use it to obtain what they want in a society free from the pressures other than simple desire to do something. Polite speech lends respectability to proceedings.

For example, polite speech is an expectation in an environment like school. It is a tacit rule to speak as such when students address teachers or other administrators, and probable that without its implementation, students' words, and by extension, requests or queries, would be disregarded. Polite speech conveys not only a serious intent but also ensures a subservience that students must display to assure their superiors that they are the ones in control. It is used thus when titles like "ma'am" must be used as addresses, to imply mastery, and when phrases like "please," and "may I" are thrown in to lend an impression of supplication to simple requests. Human nature to assert power over those who ought to follow until they are capable of fulfilling their roles in a community has resulted in polite speech being the indication that respect must be conferred to those higher up in order for one to be taken seriously.

A common platform for polite speech is also when important personages such as politicians conduct ceremonies and must make celebratory addresses. These people know that their words will be broadcast to the general population. Since their continued influence relies on the goodwill of the people, polite speech is used in order to give the impression that their words are official and justified. It separates them from the lower population who use colloquialisms in their informal speech and places these people as higher up on the ladder of authority, to impress upon their subordinates that they ought to be followed. Throughout history, formal language has been associated with those in power and thus those in power continue to use it as they way to signify that they possess the capability to retain that power, and are fit for the position to lead. Being polite shows that they don't need to resort to baser tendencies to accomplish goals, and provides a veneer of respectability to their affairs.

Lastly, polite speech makes frequent appearances in the language of those working in

service to the law, such as judges, lawyers, clerks, court officers, and other officials present during legal proceedings. As with the example mentioned previously, polite speech adds a sense of elevated respectability to proceedings. In venues where legal cases are being tried, polite speech also is utilized to make it seem as though the decisions made are right and completely justified. Because politeness is associated with propriety and thus ethical correctness, when it is used in official decisions it gives those affected, such as juries, accused, and witnesses the closure that the ruling was fair and just. It is meant to be confirmation for those listening that it is likely unquestionable that justice was served. This once again is a product of the human need to be supported in their decisions. Human nature can be subject to doubt in all cases, but the polite speech used is able to confer a sense of resolution so that people feel secure about the rulings. After all, if they sound so correct, the rationalization is that it is similarly correct in meaning.

Therefore, it can be seen that although polite speech, like regular communication, may display intent, instead it in fact is used to relate politeness to the receiver. This connotes subservience, respectability, and ethical rightness to the audience for it, and so functions as a method to persuade those receiving the words to the side of the speaker. The usage of polite speech preys on human susceptibility to ethos and pathos in order to influence them to trust and support the speaker, and therefore it is evident that polite speech is much more than empty words.

### **Essay 3B:**

In society, there are certain standards that are expected to be met. It is expected that when meeting new people or old friends, you communicate with age-old phrases. It is not required, necessarily, it is just the norm that is expected. But what function does typical, everyday politeness serve? Why do we never come up with new phrases? In my experience as an employee to a local yogurt shop, I find myself obligated to inquire how my customers are feeling. It may not be much more than socially expected, but a polite “How are you?” can be more than a polite phrase. I know from experience that when asked, “how are you?” one has a sense of being cared for. The speaker may not mean anything by the phrase aside from standards, but knowing that someone cares enough to inquire after their well-being is a pick up. Sometimes I fail in asking this, but when I do the customers, especially the older generation,

seem genuinely surprised. Politeness seems to be a thing of the past, but when one is polite on principle, the word of a stranger can change a person's day. Another function of polite, even colloquial phrases is to show the world that one is not a stuck-up, arrogant human with no emotion for the well being of others. As a teenager in today's society it is hard to break the social stereotypes placed on us. Media and social networking have made my generation an egotistical, self-helping, arrogant generation with no respect for themselves, peers, or elders. Politeness and chivalry are dying concepts, and with the media only encouraging their destruction it is difficult for teenagers to stand out from the stereotypes. Polite speech is also a showing of respect. When asking someone how their day is going one is saying that whether they want to or not, they care about the other person's well being. Most of the time people respond with the expected, "I am doing well, How are you?" but sometimes the question may elicit a conversation that has the potential to bloom into the beginnings of a new friendship.

Politeness is expected, and rudeness is socially unacceptable. There are things one is supposed to say, and things they are not supposed to say. And then there are things that people say that go beyond social expectation. Inquiring after a person's well-being is a kind gesture, but offering a compliment is far more appreciated. I once offered a young woman a compliment on her appearance and she smiled widely and told me I had just made her day.

People expect the normal, expected phrases but when one goes beyond the expectation great things happen. Polite speech serves a purpose, and we can take that at the bare minimum, but when we go the distance and are kind as well as polite, we present ourselves in a newer, friendlier light. Don't fit the typical mold. Go beyond expectation and offer a little more of yourself. Sometimes you get a response, other times you don't but not depending on the response, you will leave the situation feeling a better person.

## AP® ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND COMPOSITION 2015 SCORING COMMENTARY

### Question 3

The “Argument Question” was intended to elicit a demonstration of students’ skills in critical thinking and rhetorical crafting of written argumentation. This year’s prompt featured an observation, from an anthropological study of first-year students at an American university, that common, friendly phrases such as “How are you?”, “Nice to meet you,” and “Let’s get in touch” convey politeness rather than literal meaning. Students were asked to articulate their own positions on the “value or function” of polite speech in a community with which they were personally familiar, and to support their assertions with evidence or reasoning drawn from their reading, experience, or observation. Like the Synthesis Question, Question 3, in directing students to consider polite speech in a community familiar to them, asked students to apply the prompt to their own real world experiences. In offering students the option of arguing about either the function or the value of polite speech, the prompt encouraged students to shape their arguments as rhetorical analysis (What work do these phrases do in the world, and how so?) or evaluation (What is the worth of these phrases, and how so?). In asking students to consider three potential sources of support, the argument prompt encouraged students to employ synthetic thinking skills.

#### Sample: 3A Score: 8

This essay effectively argues that “polite speech is much more than empty words.” Using three well-developed examples, the essay convincingly demonstrates that polite speech in schools, official ceremonies, and in the legal system communicates more than “the literal meaning of the sentences.” In the example of students and teachers or administrators, the essay claims that “[p]olite speech conveys not only a serious intent but also ensures a subservience that students must display to assure their superiors that they are the ones in control.” This claim is supported by appropriate evidence and explanation: “titles like ‘ma’am’ must be used as addresses, to imply mastery, and ... phrases like ‘please,’ and ‘may I’ are thrown in to lend an impression of supplication to simple requests.” Similarly, the essay demonstrates that, in official contexts, “formal language has been associated with those in power and thus those in power continue to use it as the way to signify that they ... are fit for the position to lead.” In the final example, the essay examines how in legal contexts polite speech is used “to confer a sense of resolution so that people feel secure about the rulings.” The essay is especially coherent, its argument is well-developed, and its prose demonstrates a consistent ability to control a wide range of the elements of effective writing; for these qualities, the essay earned a score of 8.

#### Sample: 3B Score: 5

This essay develops the position that polite speech can create a pleasant social mood; indicate to others that “one is not a stuck-up, arrogant human with no emotion for the well being of others”; and be a way to show respect. The evidence and explanations are limited; for example, to support the claim that polite speech shows respect, the essay simply repeats an earlier point made to show polite speech creates a nice atmosphere: “When asking someone how their day is going one is saying that whether they want to or not, they care about the other person’s well being.” How polite speech functions to demonstrate respect is not explained or developed. The essay develops its position unevenly; toward the end, the student launches into a discussion of how “rudeness is socially unacceptable” and of how going beyond “the normal, expected phrases” can make “great things happen.” Neither of these points focuses upon the prompt, which asks students to consider the value or function of polite speech. The essay is able to advance a position in generally clear prose, but because it does so inconsistently and with limited evidence and explanation, it earned a score of 5.