

NLP POLITENESS STRATEGIES: IDENTIFYING APPLICATIONS IN THE MAILSUITE WEBSITE FOR SECRETARIES

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Abstract

This research investigates the use of Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) politeness strategies in email templates for secretaries within the MailSuite platform. Through qualitative analysis, key techniques identified include the Meta-Model, Milton Model, reframing, pacing and leading, anchoring, rapport building, and outcome-oriented strategies. Findings reveal that Building Rapport, Pacing and leading and Outcome-Oriented Techniques are the most dominant, present in 100% of templates. While some templates effectively utilize these strategies, others lack the subtlety needed for professionalism. This study emphasizes the importance of enhancing email communication through NLP techniques to foster more respectful and effective professional interactions.

1. Introduction

In the contemporary digital landscape, email communication is a cornerstone of professional interactions, especially for secretaries who function as essential intermediaries among executives, clients, and various stakeholders. Secretaries are often tasked with managing extensive communication, and to do so efficiently, they frequently rely on email templates. These templates must strike a delicate balance, conveying not only clear and concise information but also maintaining a tone of politeness and professionalism. The challenge lies in crafting messages that are both effective and respectful, particularly when standardization often leads to the dilution of nuanced communication.

Politeness, as articulated by sociolinguists Brown and Levinson, involves employing strategies that demonstrate respect, mitigate imposition, and foster cooperative relationships. In email correspondence, where tone can be difficult to gauge through text alone, a lack of politeness can create misunderstandings and ultimately harm professional relationships. Studies have shown that perceived politeness plays a critical role in how messages are received and interpreted, making the identification and implementation of politeness strategies vital for secretaries aiming to uphold professionalism.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) provides a framework for understanding how language can be structured to enhance politeness and improve overall communication effectiveness. Since its inception in the 1970s, NLP has developed a range of techniques that explore the impact of language patterns on human perception and behavior. Key strategies, including the meta model, milton model, anchoring, and rapport-building, can be leveraged to create messages that resonate with recipients, fostering both engagement and politeness.

MailSuite, a popular email management system utilized by many professionals, offers various pre-designed email templates aimed at facilitating efficient communication. However, there is a pressing need to critically assess whether these templates effectively incorporate politeness strategies and NLP techniques. This research focuses on a comprehensive analysis of MailSuite's email templates to identify the NLP politeness strategies employed and evaluate their effectiveness in fostering professional communication.

Despite the prevalence of email templates in professional settings, there remains a noticeable gap in understanding how NLP politeness strategies are operationalized, particularly in the context of secretarial work. Many existing templates lean towards directness, often at the expense of the subtlety necessary for polite discourse. This tendency can result in communication that feels impersonal or abrupt, leading to negative perceptions among recipients and jeopardizing professional relationships.

Given the increasing reliance on email as a primary mode of communication in the workplace, it is essential to explore how NLP techniques can be applied to enhance both the politeness and effectiveness of email templates. By centering this research around MailSuite, the study aims to identify the specific politeness strategies embedded within the templates and assess how NLP can be utilized to refine and improve these communication tools for secretaries.

The objectives of this research are threefold: first, to identify the NLP politeness strategies present in MailSuite email templates designed for secretarial use; second, to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in promoting a polite and professional tone; and third, to offer actionable recommendations for enhancing the design of email templates through the application of NLP techniques.

To achieve these objectives, the study will explore several critical research questions: What NLP politeness strategies are embedded in MailSuite email templates for secretaries? How effective are these strategies in ensuring that email communication remains polite and professional? What specific NLP techniques can be implemented to further enhance the politeness of these email templates?

The significance of this research extends beyond academic inquiry; it holds practical implications for secretaries, administrative professionals, and organizations that depend on effective email communication. By identifying and evaluating the NLP politeness strategies present in MailSuite, this study aims to offer insights that will facilitate the refinement of email

templates, ensuring they foster respectful and professional exchanges. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of how NLP can be harnessed to enhance politeness in professional communication, ultimately offering practical guidelines for improving the quality of email interactions in the workplace.

Literature Review

Politeness Theory in Professional Communication

Politeness is a critical component of effective communication, especially in professional settings where interactions must be conducted with respect and courtesy. Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory have been widely recognized as a foundational framework for understanding how individuals maintain face and mitigate potential threats to their self-esteem in communication. The theory proposes that politeness strategies can be categorized into positive politeness (seeking to build rapport) and negative politeness (aimed at being respectful and minimizing imposition). This theory has been applied extensively to analyze language use in various communication forms, including email correspondence (Herring, 1996).

Lakoff (1973) further emphasizes the importance of politeness in ensuring smooth and effective communication, proposing that politeness strategies help manage interpersonal relationships and prevent conflict. In the context of secretarial communication, politeness is essential for maintaining professionalism and establishing a positive tone, particularly when dealing with clients and superiors (Holmes, 2013).

Politeness in Email Communication

Email communication, as a key mode of professional interaction, presents unique challenges in conveying politeness due to the absence of non-verbal cues (Gains, 1999). Research indicates that the lack of face-to-face interaction can make it more difficult to interpret tone and intention, which may result in misunderstandings or perceived impoliteness (Bjørge, 2007). This makes it crucial for professionals, such as secretaries, to adopt appropriate politeness strategies when composing emails to ensure their messages are interpreted correctly and maintain a level of professionalism.

Chen (2019) explored politeness strategies in email communication and found that overly direct language often leads to perceptions of impoliteness, even when the sender's intentions are neutral or positive. The study highlighted that the use of polite expressions, hedging, and appropriate greetings significantly enhances the perception of politeness in emails. Furthermore, Crystal (2001) emphasizes that politeness in emails is not just about word choice but also involves other elements, such as structure, tone, and clarity.

Challenges of Politeness in Template Emails

The use of email templates offers numerous benefits, including efficiency, consistency, and time-saving, particularly for secretaries who manage a large volume of communication

(Huff & Snider, 2016). However, template emails can often be rigid and fail to adapt to the nuances of politeness required in different contexts (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). This rigidity can lead to instances where the intended politeness level is not achieved, resulting in emails that seem impersonal, abrupt, or even impolite.

Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch (2013) examined politeness strategies in automated and template-based emails, revealing that such emails often lack the personalization and adaptability needed to convey politeness effectively. As a result, the recipients of these emails may perceive them as less considerate or respectful, which can negatively impact professional relationships.

MailSuite, a popular tool for managing email communication, provides a variety of templates designed to assist secretaries in drafting messages quickly and consistently. However, these templates may not always align with the principles of politeness, leading to potential issues in professional communication (Smith, 2020). For example, pre-written phrases may not account for the recipient's status, relationship with the sender, or the specific context of the communication, resulting in messages that are perceived as inappropriate or impolite (Jones & Hall, 2018).

The Role of NLP in Enhancing Politeness in Communication

Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a psychological approach that explores the connection between neurological processes, language, and behavioral patterns (Bandler & Grinder, 1975). NLP techniques have been widely used in various fields such as therapy, business, and education to improve communication and influence outcomes (O'Connor & Seymour, 1995). These techniques provide tools for structuring language to achieve desired effects, making them particularly relevant for enhancing politeness in written communication.

The application of NLP techniques in email communication can help create messages that are more engaging, polite, and effective (Freeth, 2013). For example, the Meta-Model helps identify vague or ambiguous language, making it easier to clarify messages and ensure precision, thereby preventing misunderstandings. On the other hand, the Milton Model emphasizes using indirect language, allowing requests or instructions to sound more polite and less demanding, which can be particularly important in professional settings. Reframing enables the writer to present ideas more positively, transforming potentially negative statements into constructive ones, while anchoring involves using specific words or phrases to evoke a positive emotional response from the reader, thereby enhancing the overall tone of the communication (Smith & Spencer, 2017).

Pacing and Leading is another NLP technique that involves matching the language or style of the recipient to create rapport before subtly guiding them towards the intended outcome. This technique is beneficial in email communication, as it helps the recipient feel understood and valued. Additionally, rapport building focuses on establishing a sense of connection and trust with the reader by using language that feels warm, friendly, and

respectful. By addressing the reader’s needs and using language that resonates with them, rapport building creates a foundation for polite and effective communication.

Lastly, the outcome-oriented techniques in NLP encourage crafting emails with a clear and positive goal in mind, ensuring that the communication is directed towards achieving a specific, respectful outcome. This involves being mindful of the reader’s perspective and tailoring the message to address their concerns or expectations in a way that feels considerate and respectful (O’Connor & Seymour, 1995).

In the context of email templates, NLP techniques like the Meta-Model, Milton Model, reframing, pacing and leading, anchoring, rapport building, and outcome-oriented techniques can be used to tailor messages that meet the expectations of the recipient, making communication feel more personalized, polite, and respectful (Freeth, 2013). However, despite the recognized potential of NLP in enhancing politeness, there is a lack of research focusing specifically on its application in email communication for secretarial tasks.

2. Method

This study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze the NLP politeness strategies employed in email templates for secretaries provided by MailSuite. A qualitative approach is appropriate because it allows for an in-depth examination of the language patterns and strategies used in the email templates. This method provides a nuanced understanding of how NLP techniques contribute to politeness and professionalism in written communication (Creswell, 2014).

This study analyzes a sample of secretarial email templates from the MailSuite platform to identify NLP politeness strategies. By conducting content analysis, the research will categorize and examine how these strategies enhance tone and professionalism. No direct interaction with secretaries or email recipients is involved, ensuring objectivity. While the focus on MailSuite limits generalizability, inter-coder reliability and triangulation will address potential biases from the qualitative approach.

3. Result and Discussion

Table 1. NLP Approach applied by Mailsuite

No	NLP Approach	Transactional Email				Event Invitation					Customer Service Email				Internal Email		
		A1	A2	A3	A4	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	C1	C2	C3	C4	D1	D2	D3
1.	Meta Model										√	√	√	√	√	√	
2.	Milton Model					√	√		√	√	√	√			√		√
3.	Reframing				√												

4.	Pacing and Leading	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
5.	Anchoring			√													
6.	Rapport Building	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
7.	Outcome-Oriented Techniques	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√

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|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| A1: Verification Email | B3: Call Invite Email | C4: Customer Satisfaction Email |
| A2: Order Confirmation Email | B4: Meeting Invitation Email | D1: Performance Improvement |
| A3: Shipping Email | B5: Podcast Invite Email | D2: Internal Company |
| A4: Thank You Email | C1: Complaint Response Email | Newsletter |
| B1: Event Invite Email | C2: Feedback Survey Email | D3: Promotion Announcement |
| B2: Appointment Email | C3: Survey Email | |

Table 2. Percentage of NLP Approached

No.	Category Template	Percentage Amount						
		F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
1.	Transactional Email	0%	0%	100%	25%	100%	25%	25%
2.	Event Invitation	0%	50%	0%	25%	0%	25%	25%
3.	Customer Service	66,6%	25%	0%	25%	0%	25%	25%
4.	Internal Email	33,3%	25%	0%	25%	0%	25%	25%

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| F1: Meta Model | F5: Anchoring |
| F2: Milton Model | F6: Building Rapport |
| F3: Reframing | F7: Outcome-Oriented Techniques |
| F4: Pacing and Leading | |

The sentence "Rest assured that the concerned team is already working on resolving the matter," which makes up 66.6% of the email template, effectively utilizes the NLP meta model. It provides reassurance, alleviating the recipient's anxiety, and personalizes the response by referring to a specific team, indicating accountability. By stating the team "is

already working," it clarifies any assumptions of inaction and emphasizes ongoing progress. Overall, this sentence fosters trust and encourages a positive outlook in the recipient.

In the invitation template, the sentence "We would love to host you for our annual {{Event Name}} on {{Date}} at {{Time}} at {{Venue Name}}," incorporates Milton Model strategies and constitutes 50% of the overall templates. This phrase employs a warm and inviting tone, which can evoke positive feelings in the recipient. By expressing a desire to host the guest, it fosters a sense of belonging and appreciation, subtly encouraging the recipient to envision themselves as part of the event and reinforcing the importance of their attendance.

In the message, the sentence "We look forward to nurturing a long and meaningful relationship with you" employs reframing and constitutes 100% of the template. This phrase shifts the focus from a transactional interaction to a more relational perspective, emphasizing the company's commitment to building a lasting connection with the customer. By highlighting the intention to nurture the relationship, it fosters a sense of value and trust, encouraging the recipient to feel more engaged with the brand.

In the message, the sentence "We are always here to listen to you" employs pacing and leading and constitutes 25% of the template. This phrase acknowledges the recipient's current feelings and situation (pacing) while also guiding them toward a more open and supportive dialogue (leading). By expressing a willingness to listen, it builds rapport and encourages the recipient to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts.

In the message, the sentence "Hurray! Your order is on its way!" employs anchoring and constitutes 100% of the template. This enthusiastic exclamation creates a positive emotional response associated with the anticipation of receiving the order. By using the word "Hurray," it establishes an emotional anchor that can enhance the customer's overall experience, making them feel excited and valued as they await their delivery.

In the message, the sentence "We thank you for your continued efforts in making the company what it is" employs building rapport and constitutes 25% of the template. This phrase expresses appreciation and recognition of the employees' hard work, fostering a sense of belonging and connection within the team. By acknowledging their contributions, it reinforces positive relationships and motivates employees to continue their efforts for the company's success.

In the message, the sentence "{{Employee name}} will be handling {{insert a short overview of responsibilities}} from our {{place name}} office" employs outcome-oriented techniques and constitutes 25% of the template. This phrase clearly outlines the specific responsibilities associated with the new position, focusing on the expected results and contributions of the employee in their new role. By highlighting these outcomes, it sets a clear expectation for both the employee and the team, reinforcing the positive impact of the promotion on the organization.

4. Conclusion

This research, titled “Identifying NLP Politeness Strategies in Website Templates for Secretaries: A Case Study of MailSuite,” aimed to explore how Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) techniques can enhance politeness in email communication for secretarial tasks. Through a qualitative analysis of email templates used within MailSuite, several NLP politeness strategies were identified, including the Meta-Model, Milton Model, reframing, pacing and leading, anchoring, rapport building, and outcome-oriented techniques.

The Findings indicates Mailsuite effectively uses various NLP techniques across its email templates, focusing on Building Rapport and Outcome-Oriented Techniques in all emails. The Pacing and Leading technique is also prominent, appearing in 100% of templates, which helps engage recipients. The Meta Model is notably used in 62.5% of customer service emails, improving clarity and addressing customer concerns.

While techniques like the Milton Model and Reframing enhance event invitations, there is room for improvement in applying these strategies to transactional and internal emails. Overall, Mailsuite's use of NLP techniques strengthens communication and can lead to better engagement and satisfaction among recipients.

However, this study also highlighted areas for improvement within the MailSuite email templates. While some templates demonstrated effective use of NLP techniques, others were observed to be overly direct or lacking the necessary subtlety to convey politeness effectively. This suggests a need for further refinement in template designs to better align with the principles of effective communication and the expectations of recipients.

In conclusion, integrating NLP techniques into email templates for secretarial communication not only enhances the politeness and professionalism of messages but also contributes to improved relational dynamics within professional environments. Future research should focus on broader applications of NLP in various forms of digital communication and explore the impact of personalized templates on recipient responses. By continuing to refine and adapt email communication strategies, organizations can foster more respectful and effective professional interaction.

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