

Interpersonal Pragmatics
HoPs 6

Handbooks of Pragmatics

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Interpersonal Pragmatics

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Preface to the handbook series

Wolfram Bublitz, Andreas H. Jucker and Klaus P. Schneider

The series *Handbooks of Pragmatics*, which comprises nine self-contained volumes, provides a comprehensive overview of the entire field of pragmatics. It is meant to reflect the substantial and wide-ranging significance of pragmatics as a genuinely multi- and transdisciplinary field for nearly all areas of language description, and also to account for its remarkable and continuously rising popularity in linguistics and adjoining disciplines.

All nine handbooks share the same wide understanding of pragmatics as the scientific study of all aspects of linguistic behaviour. Its purview includes patterns of linguistic actions, language functions, types of inferences, principles of communication, frames of knowledge, attitude and belief, as well as organisational principles of text and discourse. Pragmatics deals with meaning-in-context, which for analytical purposes can be viewed from different perspectives (that of the speaker, the recipient, the analyst, etc.). It bridges the gap between the system side of language and the use side, and relates both of them at the same time. Unlike syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics and other linguistic disciplines, pragmatics is defined by its *point of view* more than by its objects of investigation. The former precedes (actually creates) the latter. Researchers in pragmatics work in all areas of linguistics (and beyond), but from a distinctive perspective that makes their work *pragmatic* and leads to new findings and to reinterpretations of old findings. The focal point of pragmatics (from the Greek *prāgma* 'act') is linguistic action (and inter-action): it is the hub around which all accounts in these handbooks revolve. Despite its roots in philosophy, classical rhetorical tradition and stylistics, pragmatics is a relatively recent discipline within linguistics. C.S. Peirce and C. Morris introduced pragmatics into semiotics early in the twentieth century. But it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that linguists took note of the term and began referring to performance phenomena and, subsequently, to ideas developed and advanced by Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin and other ordinary language philosophers. Since the ensuing *pragmatic turn*, pragmatics has developed more rapidly and diversely than any other linguistic discipline.

The series is characterised by two general objectives. Firstly, it sets out to reflect the field by presenting in-depth articles covering the central and multifarious theories and methodological approaches as well as core concepts and topics characteristic of pragmatics as the analysis of language use in social contexts. All articles are both state of the art reviews and critical evaluations of their topic in the light of recent developments. Secondly, while we accept its extraordinary complexity and diversity (which we consider a decided asset), we suggest a definite structure, which gives coherence to the entire field of pragmatics and provides

orientation to the user of these handbooks. The series specifically pursues the following aims:

- it operates with a wide conception of pragmatics, dealing with approaches that are traditional and contemporary, linguistic and philosophical, social and cultural, text- and context-based, as well as diachronic and synchronic;
- it views pragmatics from both theoretical and applied perspectives;
- it reflects the state of the art in a comprehensive and coherent way, providing a systematic overview of past, present and possible future developments;
- it describes theoretical paradigms, methodological accounts and a large number and variety of topical areas comprehensively yet concisely;
- it is organised in a principled fashion reflecting our understanding of the structure of the field, with entries appearing in conceptually related groups;
- it serves as a comprehensive, reliable, authoritative guide to the central issues in pragmatics;
- it is internationally oriented, meeting the needs of the international pragmatic community;
- it is interdisciplinary, including pragmatically relevant entries from adjacent fields such as philosophy, anthropology and sociology, neuroscience and psychology, semantics, grammar and discourse analysis;
- it provides reliable orientational overviews useful both to students and more advanced scholars and teachers.

The nine volumes are arranged according to the following principles. The first three volumes are dedicated to the foundations of pragmatics with a focus on micro and macro units: *Foundations* must be at the beginning (volume 1), followed by the core concepts in pragmatics, *speech actions* (micro level in volume 2) and *discourse* (macro level in volume 3). The following three volumes provide *cognitive* (volume 4), *societal* (volume 5) and *interactional* (volume 6) *perspectives*. The remaining three volumes discuss *variability* from a *cultural and contrastive* (volume 7), a *diachronic* (volume 8) and a *medial* perspective (volume 9):

1. *Foundations of pragmatics*
Wolfram Bublitz and Neal Norrick
2. *Pragmatics of speech actions*
Marina Sbisà and Ken Turner
3. *Pragmatics of discourse*
Klaus P. Schneider and Anne Barron
4. *Cognitive pragmatics*
Hans-Jörg Schmid and Dirk Geeraerts
5. *Pragmatics of society*
Gisle Andersen and Karin Aijmer

6. *Interpersonal pragmatics*
Miriam A. Locher and Sage L. Graham
7. *Pragmatics across languages and cultures*
Anna Trosborg
8. *Historical pragmatics*
Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen
9. *Pragmatics of computer-mediated communication*
Susan Herring, Dieter Stein and Tuija Virtanen

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Miriam Anne Locher and Sage Lambert Graham
Basel/Memphis, September 2010

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1. Introduction to interpersonal pragmatics

Miriam A. Locher and Sage L. Graham

1. The interpersonal aspect of language and the aim of this handbook

This collection of papers within the *Handbook of Pragmatics* series deals with the interpersonal or relational¹ side of *language in use* in that it explores in what ways social actors use language to shape and form relationships in situ. Before we outline this particular focus in more detail, we wish to position this approach within the field of pragmatics as such. Pragmatics, as a discipline, has a long and complex history, with what some would call an “identity problem” from its earliest conception to the present day. Crystal (1997: 120) says that pragmatics is “not as yet a coherent field of study,” and, although he made this observation over ten years ago at the time of this writing, it can be argued that pragmatics is still just as diverse as it was then. Verschueren (2009: 9) says that “pragmatics sometimes looks like a repository of extremely interesting but separable topics such as deixis, implicature, presupposition, speech acts, conversation, politeness, and relevance.” Many, in fact, associate the field of pragmatics with Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969). Others (e.g., Schiffrin 1994) link pragmatics most strongly to Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle. The label ‘pragmatics’ has also been assigned, however, to a much broader array of research. Cummings (2005: 1) observes that “pragmatics is significantly informed by a range of academic disciplines” and although this breadth has been viewed as problematic by some (e.g., Blakemore 1992; Davis 1991) others advocate a broader approach. Verschueren (2009), for example, interprets pragmatics as

[A] general functional perspective on (any aspect of) language, i.e. as an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. meaningful) functioning in the lives of human beings. (Verschueren 2009: 19, italics removed)

The strength of this definition, we believe, is that it allows us to examine the complexity of language use from a rich array of perspectives, and, consistent with this, our goal here is to take advantage of the multi-faceted nature of pragmatics. We thus use a definition of pragmatics in the European tradition, i.e., a view that includes the study of language in use from a social and cultural point of view, rather than a definition of pragmatics in the more narrow sense (Taavitsainen and Jucker, 2010; Jucker 2008).

Having said this, the term ‘interpersonal pragmatics’, which features in the title of this volume, is not to be understood as a term for a theory in competition with theoretical approaches to the study of language in use such as interactional sociol-

inguistics, conversation analysis, discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, systemic functional grammar, or others, which have traditionally studied the interpersonal aspect of language as well. Instead, what we aim to achieve in this collection is to bring together researchers from different theoretical strands and fields in order to discuss topics and themes that are relevant to the study of the interpersonal side of language in use; we therefore take a perspective within pragmatics that focuses in particular on the aspect of relationships. In choosing the chapter topics for this volume, we attempted to explore facets of interaction between social actors that rely upon (and in turn influence) the dynamics of relationships between people and how those relationships are reflected in the language choices that they make. The term ‘interpersonal pragmatics’ is used to designate examinations of the relational aspect of interactions between people that both affect and are affected by their understandings of culture, society, and their own and others’ interpretations. We hope that this compilation is relevant for researchers and students alike who are interested in this particular focus of linguistics.

In order to illustrate the importance of the relational aspect of language in more detail and to explain the focus of this volume further, we will briefly touch on a number of findings derived from previous linguistic research. Recognizing that much of the language variation that we witness is caused because people adjust their language to their addressees and the situation in order to achieve interpersonal effects, we posit that it is of interest to give this part of language use center stage here. As a case in point, consider Holmes’ (1992) example taken from her well known *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*:

(1) Every afternoon my friend packs her bag and leaves her Cardiff office at about 5 o’clock. As she leaves, her business partner says *goodbye Margaret*, (she replies *goodbye Mike*) her secretary says *goodbye Ms Walker*, (she replies *goodbye Jill*) and the caretaker says *Bye Mrs Walker* (to which she responds *goodbye Andy*). As she arrives home she is greeted by *Hi mum* from her son, Jamie, *hello dear*, *have a good day?*, from her mother, and simply *you’re late again!* from her husband. Later in the evening the president of the local flower club calls to ask if she would like to join. *Good evening, is that Mrs Billington?* she asks. *No, it’s Ms Walker, but my husband’s name is David Billington*, she answers. *What can I do for you?* Finally a friend calls *Borodar Meg*, *how’s things?* (Holmes 1992: 3)

What we witness here is that one and the same person is being addressed with different terms and adjusts her lexical choices herself when saying hello and goodbye to her conversational partners depending on the role she and her addressees take on in the contexts at hand (business partners, employer/secretary, employer/caretaker, mother/son, wife/husband, friends, strangers). The choice of lexemes on both sides is influenced by factors such as power, distance and closeness, and affect between her and the addressees as well as the expectations about appropriate conduct linked to roles in particular situations. The speech acts of *saying hello* and *saying goodbye* thus receive different instantiations depending on the factors mentioned. We could

argue that the informational content remains the same in all cases, i.e., the speakers wish to initiate their conversations or terminate their dealings with each other for the time being and express this by a conventionally recognized sequence of exchanges, that, in Searle's (1969: 65) words, count "as a courteous indication of recognition of the hearer". At the same time, the ways in which the interactants achieve this exchange tells us something about how the conversational partners position themselves vis-à-vis each other. They thus index relationships by means of their use of language: "Linguistic variation can provide social information" (Holmes 1992: 4).

The above example and brief explanation will be familiar to many readers; it clearly illustrates the importance of language in the creation of relationships and how those relationships affect language use in turn. Many strands of research have investigated these interpersonal effects and some of these strands of research are listed below. For example, Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967: 54) maintain that "[e]very communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication." Furthermore, the content and relational aspects of language are impossible to separate entirely (Fill 1990). There are certain practices that primarily focus on "optimally efficient transmission of information" (Brown and Yule 1983; Lakoff 1989), i.e., what Kasper (1990: 205) terms *transactional discourse*, and there are other practices that have as their "primary goal the establishment and maintenance of social relationships", and constitute *interactional discourse* (Kasper 1990: 205). We nevertheless cannot entirely separate the content from the relational aspect in these instances. In the above example, we can see that the exchanges between the business partners (*goodbye Margaret/goodbye Mike*), secretary and employer (*goodbye Ms Walker/goodbye Jill*) and caretaker and employer (*bye Mrs Walker/goodbye Andy*) achieve the act of leave-taking and also shape relationships between the participants by foregrounding the hierarchical relationships through the use of more formal/less formal address terms.

With respect to Example (1) it is important to point out that relational aspects in language use are not only conveyed in the use of lexical alternatives, but may also manifest themselves in syntactic and phonological choices. Interactants may signal (consciously or subconsciously) that they belong to a certain social class or group by their use of language. For example, non-standard syntactic patterns in the case of dialects may index social and regional belonging. Research in sociolinguistics² has further established that the use of language is influenced by a variety of factors such as age, gender, ethnicity or socio-economic background. Ultimately, such language use creates in-groups and out-groups and as such shapes relations between people. As a result, the combination of these choices add to a person's linguistic identity construction and thus combine to position a person vis-à-vis others.

The latter point highlights that the relational aspect of language is closely linked to how people shape their identities. Seminal work on linguistic identity

construction is carried out, among others, by psychologists such as Davies and Harré (e.g., 1990) in their positioning theory, conversation analysts like Bucholtz and Hall (2005) in their sociocultural linguistic approach, or De Fina (2003), who uses a discourse analysis framework when studying narratives and identity (cf. De Fina's Chapter 8 in this handbook). Further theoretical approaches to the study of how people create relational meaning in interaction by means of language can be found in communication studies and social cognitive linguistics (which is also influenced by social psychology) (cf. Chapters 6 and 7).

Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) politeness theory is a further approach that has addressed the relational aspect of language and in particular the factors of power and distance (in addition to contextualizing factors)³ that play a crucial role in the study of language in use. Their approach is an attempt to systematically take into account the relational factors that hold between interactants and that shape the decisions on language choice the interactants make in situ. Their work and work inspired by them in the last decades will be discussed in detail in Chapters 2 to 5 of this volume and will be further introduced below.

As this cursory glance at some of the linguistic strands of research has shown, the relational aspect of language is recognized as important and has received attention in the past but it still deserves our attention today. While much of the research just mentioned may not be explicitly positioned in the field of pragmatics by the scholars themselves, we posit that it contributes to the study of *language in use*. Taking advantage of this multi-faceted nature of pragmatics we invited scholars from different research traditions to explore the interpersonal aspect of language in use from different perspectives. The overall structure of the volume consists of three parts: Part I deals with a selection of theoretical approaches to interpersonal language issues, looking at the politeness and impoliteness frameworks, approaches to interpersonal interpretation from communication studies and cognitive linguistics, and the key issues 'gender' and 'identity'; Part II introduces classical issues in empirical research with the focus on linguistic strategies employed for interpersonal effects; Part III sheds light on interpersonal issues in a number of different discourses and practices, i.e., the focus is on the practices and the many different linguistic strategies that are employed therein. In what follows, we will raise a number of theoretical issues by introducing the structure and chapters of the handbook in further detail.

2. Part I: Theoretical approaches to interpersonal pragmatics

The first part of this handbook is dedicated to 'theoretical approaches to interpersonal pragmatics' and thus takes up different approaches to and different foci on the relational aspect of language in use. The first subsection of Part I deals with 'approaches to politeness and impoliteness'. To include im/politeness research in

this volume seems almost a given since many readers may first think of politeness theory when considering interpersonal or relational issues in language. Four chapters are dedicated to this research strand. Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) seminal study exemplifies the attempts of the researchers to include the situation and the interactants' relations in the study of how im/politeness is negotiated. They have given currency to the metaphor of 'face' and so-called 'face-threatening acts'. In their framework, face is "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [sic.]" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61), while face-threatening acts are "acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65). The researchers then demonstrate how people systematically redress or avoid face-threatening acts, a process which they equate with politeness. Their study is influential to the present day and can easily be argued to be the starting point for most research in the field of politeness since its publication. This is even true for work that takes a distinctly different point of view since work in this field cannot but make reference to this seminal study. For this reason, Chapter 2 by Maria Sifianou, entitled 'Linguistic politeness: Laying the foundations', re-examines this classic work by appraising its advantages and drawbacks, looking back over three decades of research. She also includes a discussion of other early work, such as Lakoff's (1973) Rules of Politeness or Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle.

Chapter 3 by Richard J. Watts, 'Linguistic politeness theory and its aftermath: Recent research trails', then takes up and explores the developments in politeness research since these early approaches. There are two issues that appear to be most noteworthy. On the one hand, there is a current debate to what extent researchers should take a first order (interactant-informed/emic) or a second order (theoretical/etic) approach to studying politeness (cf., e.g., Locher and Bousfield 2008; Bousfield, this volume). This debate on methodology is important since it has again brought movement into this field of research. On the other hand, both first and second order researchers have started to broaden the field of study in that politeness is no longer the only object of study. For example, the term 'relational work', as used by Locher and Watts (2008: 96), "refers to all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice." Studies in recent years thus focus no longer predominantly on mitigating facework, but on face-enhancing, face-maintaining, as well as face-aggravating/damaging behavior.

Some of the reactions to the vast numbers of politeness studies inspired by the early approaches to politeness research called forth reactions from researchers who investigated non-Western, and especially Asian languages (e.g., Matsumoto 1988; Mao 1994). Early on, there was criticism of the notion of face because it was argued to be conceptualized as an Anglo-Western, individualistic concept, at the exclusion of cultures that would favor a more group-oriented and less individualistic understanding of face. As a result, research on Asian languages furthered our

understanding of politeness in general and asked the research community to critically re-examine notions of universality. For this reason, Chapter 4 by Shigeo Okamoto, 'Politeness in East Asia', is dedicated to this research tradition. Okamoto takes up these early criticisms and traces research to the present in order to show how politeness studies have advanced in these language contexts.

Finally, Chapter 5 by Derek Bousfield focuses on 'Researching impoliteness and rudeness: Issues and definitions', i.e., on relational work that disrupts the balance of interpersonal communication and is face-damaging or face-aggravating. Research into this part of interpersonal pragmatics has only recently picked up momentum within the field of politeness studies (cf. the introduction to the edited collection on impoliteness by Bousfield and Locher 2008). The scope of interest has therefore been enlarged to no longer only look at the mitigation of face-threatening acts, but also to investigate intentional as well as accidental face-damaging behavior. In his chapter, Bousfield, focusing on the English language, critically looks at current first and second order research and argues for a second order approach, fed by first order information.

The second sub-section in the theoretical part of this handbook contains two papers. Chapter 6 by Robert B. Arundale is entitled 'Relating'. It gives a voice to those researchers in communication studies and social psychology who have worked on interpersonal relations for a long time, but who have generally been rarely read and received in the linguistics (politeness) literature. Arundale opens our eyes to further important methodological issues and the need of working with clearly defined terminology when studying how people use language within relationships.

Chapter 7 by Andreas Langlotz is named 'Social cognition'. The author proposes that scholars of interpersonal pragmatics can benefit from taking research approaches and results from cognitive psychological, cognitive-linguistic, and socio-cognitive theories on board. The result of this merging of interests is called 'social cognition' and firmly takes the situated and dynamic dimension of language in use into account when explaining how individuals create meaning and make sense of their identities, roles, and interpersonal relationships.

The last two chapters in Part I are dedicated to two important themes in interpersonal pragmatics: identity and gender. Both topics represent major trends in linguistic research that deal with interpersonal issues. The construction of identity – and gender as one aspect of it⁴ – is by definition linked to positioning vis-à-vis others and is thus interpersonal. Since neither gender nor identity can be argued to be linguistic strategies (discussed in Part II of this handbook) or contexts/discourses (discussed in Part III), they are covered here. In Chapter 8, 'The negotiation of identities', Anna De Fina reviews the literature on how language contributes to creating identities within the social constructivist framework, i.e., within a view that sees identity not as a fixed given, but as emerging and being constructed in interaction. She identifies three main research strands (CA inspired ap-

proaches/autobiographical approaches/sociolinguistically oriented approaches) and highlights their respective methodological and theoretical choices.

Chapter 9 by Louise Mullany is then dedicated to ‘Gender and interpersonal pragmatics’. The notion of gender is seen as (just) one aspect important in identity construction and is thus considered relevant with respect to how people use language and index relational meaning. This topic has received much attention within pragmatics so that Mullany starts out with a review of different research traditions. She then proceeds to demonstrate how research on politeness and gender can be merged and thus makes a link to the first section of the handbook.

3. Part II: Linguistic strategies for interpersonal effects

Part II introduces a selection of linguistic strategies that interactants use to negotiate relational issues: Mitigation, respect and deference, swearing and humor. The argument is that these linguistic strategies can fulfill different social and interpersonal functions. The chapters review how the linguistic strategies are employed and what factors play a role in determining their interpersonal effects. The attention is thus on linguistic choices that have been found to be associated with relational work. We are of course aware that these linguistic strategies are multifunctional and that the list is far from exhaustive. We have opted for four concepts that have been well documented in research and hope to highlight their relational impact on language in use by offering reviews of the current state of the art.

Chapter 10 by Stefan Schneider is dedicated to mitigation – probably one of the best-studied strategies within interpersonal pragmatics. Schneider enlightens us with respect to the interpersonal side of mitigation and offers a plethora of terminology derived from the extensive literature (disclaimers, bushes, hedges, shields, parenthetical verbs, tag questions, etc.) in order to enlarge and improve our understanding of the processes involved.

Michael Haugh turns our attention to the notions of respect and deference in Chapter 11 and links back to the chapters on politeness and impoliteness at the beginning of the handbook. He shows that some of the work inspired by early politeness research conflated respect and deference (in the form of honorifics) with politeness, while others have called for treating the concepts separately. Haugh argues for studying them within the broader framework of relational work as such.

Karyn Stapleton deals with swearing in Chapter 12 by reviewing how this strategy can bear on relationships due to its psychological, social and interpersonal functions. She discusses the taboo areas from which swear-words are taken and shows that, while swearing is considered a risky activity that might call forth censure, it can also be used, for example, as a strategy to reinforce in-group solidarity. Stapleton makes links to the topics of gender and identity construction and discusses research on the notion of gendered swearing.

Finally, Stephanie Schnurr discusses the multifunctionality of humor and how it relates to the creation of interpersonal meaning in Chapter 13. She shows that humor can be employed to reinforce solidarity, create a friendly atmosphere, mitigate, demarcate groups (in-group/out-group) and reinforce existing power relations (or resist and challenge them); sometimes more than one function may occur. In addition, Schnurr highlights the social constraints on the use of humor, discusses how social factors such as gender, intimacy, culture, or ethnicity play a role in the creation of interpersonal effects, and introduces methodological challenges in the study of humor.

4. Part III: Interpersonal issues in different contexts

While Part II focuses on specific linguistic strategies and draws on several discourse contexts to explain them, Part III gives central stage to particular contexts and then looks at the (potentially many) linguistic strategies employed for creating relational effects in these discursive practices. The contexts and discourses chosen to be discussed are the workplace, health discourse, legal discourse, political discourse, and the discourse of dating ads. Although this list provides only a snapshot of possible topics, each of these areas has received a great deal of attention as contexts in which interpersonal negotiations of power and solidarity can have a tremendous impact, not just on expectations about appropriateness on an interpersonal level, but also within larger social structures. In each of the chapters, the focus is on the interpersonal issues that emerge as shaping the discursive practices (e.g., power, solidarity, delicateness of topics, interactional roles, etc.). The chapters include reviews of the field as well as reports on empirical research.

Chapter 14 by Bernadette Vine examines ‘Interpersonal issues in the workplace’. Using the notions of power and solidarity as a foundation, she explores strategies (small talk, narrative, and humor) employed by individuals engaging in ‘social talk’ in the workplace to negotiate their identities and relationships within their workplace roles. She also explores the interpersonal functions of turn-taking, face threatening acts, and interpersonal markers in workplace transactional talk. By engaging in an examination of both the social aspect of workplace interaction as well as the transactional component, Vine gives us a more comprehensive view of the connections between interpersonal communication strategies and power as they relate to the negotiation of workplace identities and interpersonal relationships.

In Janet Cotterill’s chapter on ‘Interpersonal issues in court’, the author notes that previous research on forensic linguistics has focused on turn-taking and the pre-ordained and prescriptive rules that govern interaction in the courtroom, but has not explicitly addressed the relationships between the participants from the

perspective of power. Drawing on the tenets of Gricean pragmatics and the cooperative principle, she explores the fundamental rules of courtroom behavior and examines the strategies and practices of witnesses who appear to rebel against these “interactional rules”. She goes on to explore the relational strategies that witnesses employ and what consequences might exist for the witnesses who resist and rebel against the (sometimes unspoken) dictums of what is considered appropriate language use in this context.

Boyd Davis provides a close examination of ‘Interpersonal issues in health discourse’ in Chapter 16. Her examination not only explores the ramification of communicative practices and assumptions for speakers with Alzheimer’s, it also poses a key question in the development of health discourse research (namely how to best connect the wide array of researchers who are studying interactional and interpersonal issues in medical encounters). Researchers in this area run the gamut from linguists to medical doctors interested in communicating more effectively with their patients (although not all of them focus on the interpersonal/relational component of medical interactions). This is important for two reasons: (1) each of the groups that Davis identifies has different research goals (and therefore hopes for different outcomes and applications for the research that they do), and (2) because there is little dialogue between the various disciplines, the *application* of research findings may be limited. In other words, if researchers are not aware of findings from other disciplines, they cannot take advantage of this (potentially) rich resource. Research findings uncovered by medical doctors, for example, may never reach the linguistics community (and vice versa) because the journals where results are published are rarely read by researchers from other disciplines/other perspectives. This shortcoming has striking implications for treatment, and Davis uses examples from Alzheimer’s talk to illustrate this.

As with the other contexts discussed so far, political discourse is another area where the rules for interaction are intricately intertwined with power relations. In José Luis Blas Arroyo’s chapter on ‘Interpersonal issues in political discourse’, the author examines the ways that conflict management and the enactment of power and authority are used by candidates in navigating the complex relationships they have with their audiences. As Blas Arroyo notes, political discourse is particularly complicated with regard to interpersonal relationships because of the multi-layered and overlapping web of audiences. Politicians must manage their adversarial relationships with other candidates, attend to their communication with the voters (who may be the ultimate audience for any politician’s talk), and strategically interact with the media (and its ability to craft a persona for the candidate who might or might not be appealing to its own (the media’s) audience or the politician’s envisioned audience (voters)).

Finally, Carol Marley’s chapter puts issues in the discourse of dating ads ‘under the microscope’. In fact, dating ads can be argued to be an ideal forum to investigate the connection of language and identity construction, since the ads function as

the first means of contact between interactants who want to start a relationship. In other words, while all interactions have an interpersonal side, it is the aim of this genre to make possible further interpersonal contact in the first place. The strategies used to create an individual's identity, i.e., how they position themselves within the expectations of the genre of dating ads, are thus critical to the interpersonal relationships that the participants are trying to create. This study therefore examines the interpersonal strategies that dating ad writers use to craft identities as physically and emotionally appealing to their (envisioned) audience.

5. Concluding remarks

The contributions to the *Handbook of Interpersonal Pragmatics* show how the relational aspect of language can be looked at from many different angles. Embracing a definition of pragmatics that allows for this multi-faceted approach, we hope that this collection will (a) give some insights with respect to the importance of the relational aspect of language and its power in shaping discourses and relationships, and (b) make some contributions to our understanding of language and “the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. meaningful) functioning in the lives of human beings” (Verschueren 2009: 19, italics removed). The theoretical part of the volume offers insights into several research traditions – from im/politeness theory, communication studies, and social cognition to the study of identity construction and gender. The chapters on linguistic strategies associated with interpersonal effects show how interactants make use of language to convey relational meaning in addition to informational content. Finally, the contributions on particular discourse contexts highlight how complex and dynamic the interpersonal aspect of language in use is. The issues covered in this collection are far from exhaustive. The mere fact that we cannot separate the relational aspect of language from the informational explains that, ultimately, every set of linguistic data can be looked at from the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics. We hope that this handbook will prove to be a valuable starting point for researchers who wish to study the creation of interpersonal meaning, and that it demonstrates the many open questions that remain to be addressed.

Notes

1. The terms *relational* and *interpersonal* are used as synonyms in this chapter.
2. Coulmas (2005: 10) argues that “[t]he central theme of sociolinguistics is variety. To the observer, language presents itself as a seemingly infinite variety of forms, but this variety is patterned. That is, there are restrictions on choices between coexisting varieties.”

Wardhaugh (2002: 5) tells us that “[a] recognition of [this] variation implies that we must recognize that a language is not just some kind of abstract object of study. It is also something that people use.” For our purposes, it is important to point out that the relational aspect of language plays an important role in the search for the cause of the observed variation.

3. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argue in their theory of politeness that people estimate the degree of a face-threatening act by taking into account the variables of power, distance and the relative ranking of an imposition in a particular situation and adjust their linguistic behaviour accordingly. Their framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 2 by Maria Sifianou and Chapter 3 by Richard J. Watts.
4. As mentioned before, next to gender, age, ethnicity, and class are considered further important factors in identity construction (cf. De Fina and Mullany, both this volume).

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Part I: Theoretical approaches to interpersonal pragmatics

Approaches to politeness and impoliteness

2. Linguistic politeness: Laying the foundations

Maria Sifianou

In memory of Lukas Tsitsipis,
a dear friend and colleague

Abstract

Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) theory has undoubtedly been the most influential treatment of politeness phenomena. Along with Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson have contributed to the immense expansion of related research both within and outside linguistics. Ensuing publications both supported but also contested several of the tenets of these earlier theories, with more recent ones attempting to provide alternative frameworks that focus on politeness as a discursive social phenomenon.

In this chapter, I shall concentrate on the above early approaches to politeness and sketch their major tenets, their sources and common assumptions as well as their distinctive aspects. I shall consider criticisms expressed, especially in relation to Brown and Levinson's theory, a substantial body of which relates to its claims of universal applicability and its treatment of the concept of 'face'. Finally, I shall highlight the impact of these theories on current developments. These are explored in more detail by Richard J. Watts in Chapter 3 of the present volume.

1. Introduction

Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) theory of politeness along with those of Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) established the foundations and induced a tremendous expansion of research on politeness phenomena both within and outside linguistics. Thus writing on the issue of politeness and, in particular, appraising the contribution of its forerunners is a difficult task for various reasons, not least because it feels like committing a sacrilege. Furthermore, since so much has been written on these approaches, one feels that there is nothing more to be said without sounding trite. Yet, no project on interpersonal interaction can be complete without an appraisal of this extremely influential early work.

The stage for the study of linguistic politeness was set by Lakoff's (1973) pioneering work, followed by the contributions made by Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) as well as by Leech (1983). Presumably, without this early work, we would

be nowhere near where we stand today on politeness research. As any theory so explicit and widely used, these theories have received both extensive support, especially in earlier publications, and a lot of criticism (see, e.g., Watts, Ide, and Ehlich 1992; Werkhofer 1992; Glick 1996; Kasper 1997). Brown and Levinson have been the target of most criticism, which in itself is “something of a tribute to B&L” (Leech 2007: 168).

All three theories which developed in the seventies and early eighties are by now considered to be classics. This does not mean that interest in politeness phenomena emerged that late. As far as Japanese and Chinese are concerned, interest dates back millennia and even in the West, it goes back to the age of Romanticism (Watts 2003: 53, 56). Watts (2003: 53–56, drawing on Held 1992) calls these earlier ventures “prepragmatic” and attributes the emergence of pragmatic and sociolinguistic research into politeness phenomena to the emergence of the speech act theory and of the theory of linguistic cooperation and implicatures. These theories along with the concept of ‘face’ offered the necessary theoretical backdrop for the development of the early politeness theories. Consequently, having shared a Gricean and a speech act theoretical perspective, they have been criticised for shortcomings deriving from this legacy (e.g., a speaker-oriented, utterance-level of analysis) along with problems attributed to their English linguo-cultural bias.

One cannot do justice to the richness of the ensuing publications,¹ but broadly speaking we can say that these attempted either to rectify shortcomings (see, e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Blum-Kulka 1992; Matsumoto 1989; Ide 1989; Gu 1990) or to introduce alternative concepts (see, e.g., Fraser and Nolen’s [1981] and Fraser’s [1990] conversational contract view; Arndt and Janney’s [1985] idea of emotive communication; and Watts’ [1989] and [1992] distinction between ‘politic’ and ‘(im)polite’ behaviour).² At a time when interest in politeness phenomena appeared to be subsiding, Eelen’s (2001) critical work stirred up renewed excitement, challenging all previous models of politeness as having been grounded on wrong premises and thus missing insights into the structure of social reality. His (2001: 119) criticism is encapsulated in his “triple conceptual bias” of the theories which: (a) bend towards the polite end of the polite/impolite distinction, (b) favour the speaker (and neglect the hearer and the dyad) and (c) consider the production rather than its evaluation. Soon after, alternative frameworks incorporating social theoretic insights and focusing on politeness as a discursive phenomenon were proposed. Watts (2003) views utterances as social acts and (im)politeness as part of the discursive social practice. Along similar lines, Mills (2003) emphasises the need for a community-based, discourse-level, processual model of interaction to account for both gender and (im)politeness and their relationship.

In this chapter, I shall concentrate on these early approaches, that is, Lakoff’s (1973), Brown and Levinson’s ([1978] 1987) and Leech’s (1983), which admittedly constitute the most frequently used core sources. However, some of the notions have been discussed in other publications, such as Lakoff (1975, 1977) and Leech

(1977). These three approaches are sometimes called “pragmatic” (Watts 2003: 56) or “traditional” in the sense of “classic” (Terkourafi 2005: 237).³ To this end, I shall briefly outline the major tenets of these approaches, tracing their sources and common assumptions, as well as their distinctive aspects. I shall consider some of the criticisms, especially in relation to Brown and Levinson’s theory, and attempt to highlight the impact of this early work on current developments. Nevertheless, it is only fair to assess these earlier theories by locating them in the rationalist and universalist intellectual environment that was predominant at the time rather than on the basis of the knowledge that has accumulated since then. Moreover, as many scholars (see, e.g., Eelen 2001: 3; Mills 2003: 57; Watts 2003: 10; Christie 2005: 6) agree, there can be no discussion concerning politeness phenomena without consideration of this early work and no criticism can detract from the significance and impressiveness of its contribution to the study of a highly complex subject.

2. An overview of the intellectual sources of politeness research

Understandably, all three approaches to politeness have drawn on the linguistic pragmatics that was prevalent at the time; namely, the highly influential work of ordinary (as opposed to formal) language philosophers, notably, Grice’s (1975) theory of conversation and Austin’s (1962) and Searle’s (1969) speech act theory. Grice’s passing comment that “there are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social or moral in character), such as “Be polite”, that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges” (Grice 1975: 47) instigated further interest, most clearly evident in Lakoff’s (1973) and Leech’s (1983) work. Additionally, his time-honoured Cooperative Principle (hereafter CP) and attendant maxims of quantity, quality, relation and manner are incorporated in some form or other in all three accounts of politeness. Similarly, Austin’s and Searle’s influence is also traceable in all three approaches, concentrating on speakers’ single utterances rather than longer exchanges between two or more interlocutors. Like Grice, Searle (1979: 36) makes a passing, though extremely influential, comment on politeness, when he says that “in directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness”. This relationship in its broad sense underlies all three theories and has been explored and supported but also contested in many subsequent publications (see, e.g., Held 1992; Locher 2004).

Ordinary language philosophy was rationalistic and universalistic. The assumption was that the maxims, the rules and the conditions people follow reflect the workings of the human mind. In order to understand what is meant (besides what is actually said), one needs, in addition to the knowledge of the specific language, general knowledge and general human rationality that are endowments of all human beings. To this end, single constructed utterances were explored in an attempt to explain the difference between what is said and what is meant. Language

and by extension linguistic politeness were seen as objects of knowledge to be explored outside individual experience (Watts 2005: xvii). This framework, though rather unsuitable for the analysis of stretches of discourse, was a starting point which offered an escape route from the confines of autonomous syntax and a means of incorporating not only semantic but also pragmatic aspects into the analysis of language. As Levinson (1980: 20) suggests, speech act theory was a promise “to bridge the gap between an abstract linguistic theory and observations of how language is actually used”. In the light of empirical evidence, the theory was soon undermined as being inadequate to support that claim, and ended up “by being replaced with full-blown empirical theories” as “is the fate of many philosophical concepts” (Levinson 1980: 21).

2.1. A rule-based approach

Her celebrated article “The logic of politeness; or, minding your p’s and q’s” constitutes Lakoff’s (1973) first attempt to incorporate pragmatics, and more specifically, politeness phenomena, into the core grammar; she does this by expanding on Grice’s CP. Working in a Generative Semantics environment, her aim was to discover ways in which important aspects of interpersonal context would be incorporated in grammars (Lakoff and Ide 2005: 7). Thus, Lakoff (1973) starts by considering the inadequacy of grammars based solely on grammatical rules, and argues for the necessity of inclusion of some kind of pragmatic rules to enable the detection of deviant utterances which pose neither syntactic nor semantic problems. She proposes two rules of pragmatic competence (1. “Be clear” and 2. “Be polite”) and subsumes all of Grice’s maxims under her first rule, whereas her second pragmatic rule comprises three rules of politeness (Lakoff 1973: 297):

R1. Don’t impose.

R2. Give options.

R3. Make A feel good – be friendly.

The first rule is associated with the distance and formality that is created, for example, by using passives and impersonal constructions. The second rule is associated with deference manifested in cases in which linguistic realisations appear to leave options to the addressee; for example, by using hedges or markers of hesitation. In some cases, rules 1 and 2 are applicable together, whereas in others only one of them is appropriate, both foreshadowing Brown and Levinson’s negative politeness devices (see Section 2.2.). Her third rule accounts for cases in which the devices that are used make the addressee feel liked and wanted, much like Brown and Levinson’s positive politeness strategies (see Section 2.2.). Later on, Lakoff (1975: 65, 1977: 88) elaborates and reformulates her rules.

Lakoff explains that if the main concern is the message to be communicated, the speaker will concentrate on the clarity of the utterance; if, however, consider-

ations of context (e.g., status of participants) are involved, then the main concern will be the expression of politeness. She contends that, although clarity is sometimes politeness, the two are often incompatible, in which case it is politeness that supersedes clarity. This then testifies to the fact that politeness is an intrinsic part of a communication system rather than a superficial addition to a grammar (Lakoff and Ide 2005: 8–9). In this way, Lakoff attempts to provide a means of relating form and function and to explain the connection between linguistic form and social function.

2.2. A strategy-based approach

Brown and Levinson (1978) construct a comprehensive theory of politeness in their extensive essay “Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena”. They also draw from speech act theory and Gricean pragmatics but the core concept here is Goffman’s ([1955] 1972, 1967) notion of ‘face’, along with its English folk perceptions which tie face together with “notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or ‘losing face’” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). In fact, Brown and Levinson’s Model Person (MP) is endowed with two special properties: ‘rationality’ and ‘face’. ‘Face’ is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself [sic.]” and has two related aspects: (a) ‘negative face’ which refers to “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” and (b) ‘positive face’ which refers to “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61, 62). Since face, which interlocutors must observe in interactions is central, face-threatening acts (FTAs), that is, “acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65), also receive prominent attention in the theory. In fact, politeness is equated with minimising or avoiding FTAs. This is achieved by selecting from among a number of strategies: (1) bald on record, (2) positive politeness, (3) negative politeness, (4) off record and (5) don’t do the FTA. The first strategy is chosen when the threat to face is estimated to be relatively low or when other concerns are more salient than those related to face (e.g., urgency). When the face threat is estimated to be relatively very high, the last strategy is seen as the most appropriate one.

Performing acts baldly on record adheres to the Gricean maxims but risks threatening the addressee’s face and, by extension, that of the speaker. To avoid this, interlocutors select strategies which will soften the face-threat. However, in this way they exploit the Gricean maxims. The clearest example of this is off-record strategies which are formulated on the basis of maxim exploitation. Positive and negative politeness strategies also exploit the Gricean maxims by being, for instance, more verbose than by simply conveying the message. In brief, here politeness is understood as a principled reason for deviation from rational efficiency (Brown and Levinson 1987: 5; see also Kasper 1997: 376 and Locher 2004: 61). In

this sense, then, Brown and Levinson's view differs from both Lakoff's and Leech's, since the former attribute quite a different status to the CP from that of politeness principles, whereas the latter view politeness principles as coordinate in nature to the Gricean CP (Brown and Levinson 1987: 5).

Brown and Levinson (1987: 76) suggest that the seriousness of a threat is not inherent in an act but is rather calculated on the basis of three social variables: (a) the social distance (D) (i.e., the degree of familiarity shared by interlocutors), (b) the relative power (P) (i.e., the social status of the speaker in relation to that of the addressee) and (c) the absolute ranking of the imposition (R) (i.e., the level of face threat of the specific act in the particular culture). Thus they provide a formula ($W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$), as an illustration of how the seriousness of an FTA is computed and how the level of politeness required in any specific situation is selected by speakers.

2.3. A maxim-based approach

Like Lakoff, Leech (1983) expands and elaborates on Grice's views, but his broader aim is an issue predominant at the time: the demarcation between semantics and pragmatics. In his *Principles of Pragmatics*, he develops on his previous work (1977) and presents a thorough and detailed analysis of politeness in terms of maxims within a broader pragmatic framework. Unlike Lakoff, he is not interested in rules of pragmatic competence and how these should be incorporated into the grammar of a language. In fact, he (1983: 5) explains that semantics is rule-governed (i.e., grammatical), whereas pragmatics is principle-governed (i.e., rhetorical). His pragmatic framework is made up of two components: textual rhetoric and interpersonal rhetoric. Each type of rhetoric is elaborated with a number of principles. For his interpersonal rhetoric, Leech adopts Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) with its four maxims and adds his Politeness Principle (PP). This clearly shows that he sees the CP and the PP as coordinate constructs, much like Lakoff (see Kasper 1997: 377) but unlike Brown and Levinson. Leech justifies the need for the PP, not just as an addition to the CP but as a necessary complement, by discussing apparent exceptions which cannot be handled satisfactorily solely in terms of the CP. In fact, Leech (1983: 80) contends that the PP "rescues the CP from serious trouble". Both these are first-order principles accompanied by the related, though parasitic, second-order Irony Principle (IP).⁴ Like Grice, Leech subsumes a number of maxims under his PP, those of tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement and sympathy.

Similar to Lakoff, Leech (1983: 82) argues that when the CP and the PP are in conflict, if the PP is sacrificed, the equilibrium of harmonious relationships is risked; this further justifies the complementarity of the two principles. Leech further posits a number of scales (cost-benefit, optionality, indirectness, authority and social distance) which interact with the maxims in intricate ways and deter-

mine the degree of politeness that is appropriate in any given instance. The optionality scale reminds one of Lakoff's second rule ("Give options"), whereas the cost-benefit, authority and social distance scales are on a par with Brown and Levinson's ranking of imposition (R), relative power (P) and social distance (D) variables. The indirectness scale refers to the inferential process required by the addressee to arrive at the intended meaning, pinpointing the important position of indirectness in this theory (Leech 1983: 108), where politeness is almost equated to indirectness. This view is also evident in Brown and Levinson's theory, where the more indirect an utterance the more polite it is assumed to be. In fact, Brown and Levinson (1987: 49) claim that their theory was designed to account for the existence of indirection or the mismatch between the said and the unsaid.⁵

2.4. Common assumptions

In all three theories, politeness is viewed as rational, rule-(principle-)governed activity deeply rooted in the human need to maintain smooth, harmonious relationships and to avoid conflicts (Kasper 1990: 194). Thus, a common denominator in all three theories is their claim to universality, though leaving some leeway for culture-specificity. This is most evident in Brown and Levinson's theory which explicitly (even in the title of the monograph) advocates a universalistic perspective, but still allows for a certain degree of cross-cultural variation, called "ethos" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 243, 253, 283). Their R variable is explicitly defined as culturally and situationally relative: "R is a culturally and situationally defined ranking of impositions". They also concede that the other two (P and D), even though intended as pan-cultural variables, probably have 'emic' correlates (Brown and Levinson 1987: 16, 17). In brief, Brown and Levinson's (1987: 13) justification for their universalistic account is that "despite the rich cultural elaborations, the core ideas have a striking familiarity" in the three unrelated languages and cultures they investigated (i.e., English, Tamil [a Dravidian language] and Tzeltal [a Mayan language of Mexico]).

Similarly, Leech (1983: 150) adopts a rather universalistic perspective, arguing that "so far our knowledge of intercultural differences in this sphere is somewhat anecdotal", even though he (1983: 10, 138) acknowledges the influence of local conditions on the use of the maxims of the PP. In a similar vein, Lakoff (1973: 303) subscribes to a universalist perspective when she claims that "these [her politeness] rules are universal" and explains differences in different cultures as the result of "different orders of precedence for these [her politeness] rules". In brief, it seems that to a greater or lesser extent, they all subscribe to a universalistic perspective, even though they would probably agree with Leech's (2007: 170) recent statement that both absolute universalist and relativist positions are untenable. This focus, the result of a rationalist era with an interest in linguistic universals (Janney and Arndt 1993), has spurred extensive research comparing politeness

phenomena in different situational and cultural settings (see, e.g., the anthologies in Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989; Watts, Ide, and Ehlich 1992; Bayraktaroğlu and Sifianou 2001; Hickey and Stewart 2005), espousing mostly cross-cultural variability.

Another common thread in all three theories is the emphasis on politeness as strategic conflict avoidance (see, e.g., Kasper 1990). This is explicit in Leech's (1983: 113) statement that the tact maxim is "a means of avoiding conflict" and in Lakoff's early (1975: 64) and later work (1990: 34), where politeness is defined as "a system (...) designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation". It is also evident in Leech's (1983: 133) contention that "avoidance of discord" is more important than "seeking concord". Understanding politeness in negative terms, that is, as a means of avoiding conflict probably reaches its extreme realisation in Brown and Levinson, who view politeness as a means of mitigating or avoiding FTAs. This emphasis on politeness as a means of avoiding conflict and discord is problematic since it seems to ignore politeness as a means of maintaining or creating involvement and solidarity. Nevertheless, it is only fair to note that the latter aspect is not ignored but the overemphasis on the former triggers a view of "communication (...) as a fundamentally dangerous and antagonistic endeavor" (Kasper 1990: 194) and "an overly pessimistic, rather paranoid view of social interaction", as Schmidt (1980: 104) rather forcefully puts it. "Fortunately enough, politeness cannot confine itself to keeping everyone's aggressiveness within reasonable limits!" (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997: 13).

A third common thread is that there is a merger between politeness as a theoretical construct and politeness as a lay concept or perhaps an attempt at a cross-fertilisation of theoretical considerations and empirical data. Eelen (1999 and 2001) is critical of this when he says that "the relationship between the scientific and the commonsense notions of politeness is a bit unclear to say the least" (Eelen 1999: 167). Ordinary speakers most probably do not think of politeness along the lines elaborated in the theories, yet empirical data are explored in those terms without any consideration of what actual speakers would have to say concerning such data. This shortcoming has been attributed to 'politeness' being both a folk term and one used in research. The need for a distinction between the lay concept (first-order politeness) and the theoretical construct (second-order politeness), initially voiced by Watts, Ide, and Ehlich (1992), was rather neglected at first, but was later taken up and further elaborated by Eelen (2001, as *Politeness1* and *Politeness2*) and Watts (2003). Both authors agree that the study of politeness is necessarily the study of politeness1.⁶

3. The concept of 'face' and its discontents

The concept of 'face' is assumed to have originated in Chinese (see, e.g., Goffman [1955] 1972: 319; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003: 1454) and although it has been brought to the attention of the West through Goffman's ([1955] 1972) seminal essay "On face-work", it has been Brown and Levinson's work which has popularised it. So extensive is the debate on the concept that it has, in fact, "become an area of research in its own right" (Watts 2005: xxviii). Brown and Levinson (1987: 13) contend that the notion of 'face' is universal, although they acknowledge the possibility of cross-cultural variability concerning the types of acts which threaten face and the importance attached to cultural notions of, for instance, shame, honour and virtue.

As is well-known, their theory has attracted criticism on a number of grounds. A substantial body of this criticism relates to Brown and Levinson's restricted use of the term 'face' and to their equating identity concerns with a positive and a negative aspect of it. Even though it is clearly stated (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61) that it is in the best interest of both interlocutors to attend to each other's face, the theory develops primarily around the protection of the addressee's face through the mitigation of face-threatening acts. Thus, the model largely ignores aggressive facework and facework directed to the speaker's face, probably because of its concentration on isolated utterances and of the assumption that interlocutors work in harmony. Particularly vulnerable to criticism has been the problematic nature and culture-specificity of negative face and its close association with the notions of 'imposition' and 'threat'. This duality in the conceptualization of face has been challenged as a western individualistic construct delineated in terms of an individual's wants and desires. Researchers exploring the issue mostly in non-western societies (see, e.g., Matsumoto 1988; Gu 1990; Nwoye 1992; Mao 1994) were of the first to challenge this conceptualisation of face and to argue that the concept of 'face' is broader, not just "a public *self*-image" (Brown and Levinson 1987, emphasis mine) with a positive and a negative aspect to it but one which involves not only social and moral but also group aspects.

More specifically, Matsumoto (1988, 1989) and Gu (1990) find the conceptualisation of face in Japanese and Chinese, respectively, to be incompatible with the notion of negative face. They attribute Brown and Levinson's concept of negative face to the dominant role of individualism in western cultures and contrast this with the significance attached to social relationships in oriental cultures. They agree that the differences observed cannot be accommodated within the existing theory and they, consequently, question the universality of the notion of negative face based on defending one's autonomy.⁷ Ide (1989), on the other hand, expanding on Hill et al. (1986: 348), suggests that, in addition to positive and negative face, which constitute the "volitional" or strategic component of face, the theory needs to be supplemented with the "discernment" component to account for social rela-

tionships. She further argues that it is not the content but the weight of face which varies in different cultures and that, in Japanese, honorifics are used even in non-face-threatening situations. More recent research (see Kasper 1997: 280) suggests that, even in such cultures, negative face wants are not alien and that the concept of politeness is more dynamic and “volitional” than the static view of “discernment”. Along similar lines, Gu (1998, as quoted in Spencer-Oatey 2005: 102) points out that autonomy and imposition concerns exist in eastern cultures but are not seen as face concerns.

On the other hand, early studies considering politeness phenomena in western, eastern and Mediterranean societies (see, e.g., Wierzbicka 1985; Blum-Kulka 1992; Sifianou 1992) seem to have endorsed, though indirectly in some cases, some of the basic claims of the theory. The interesting common denominator in these studies is that these societies have been identified as bearing a primarily positive politeness orientation. Thus, relevant research so far concerning cultural orientation directs attention to the inadequacy of predictions relating to negative face and politeness, in particular. No society, other than the English, has been felicitously identified so far as exhibiting a negative politeness orientation. Needless to say that such generalisations should be treated with caution and the need for further research in different groups and different situations is evident.

The abundance of largely empirical research has paved the ground for an increasing number of scholars (see, e.g., Watts, Ide, and Ehlich 1992; Werkhofer 1992; Eelen 2001; Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Watts 2003, 2005) to argue that Brown and Levinson’s conceptualisation of face is too narrow and individualistic, focusing as it does on individuals’ psychological wants and desires (but see O’Driscoll 1996). It is in fact a restricted, modified version of Goffman’s perception, largely ignoring its social aspects. For Goffman, ‘face’ is a public, socially situated identity assigned to individuals. As a result, some (see, e.g., Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Watts 2003; Locher and Watts 2005; O’Driscoll 2007) have espoused a return to the Goffmanian concept of face, since, as has been argued, it provides a better basis for the social/interpersonal aspects of face.

In contrast, Arundale (2005, 2006, 2009) rejects both Goffman’s and Brown and Levinson’s conceptualisations of face and offers an alternative relational and interactional approach, which he calls ‘face constituting theory’, since face, as he argues, is conjointly co-constituted by interlocutors in interactions. Criticism of Brown and Levinson’s conceptualisation of ‘face’ has been expressed by various scholars, some proposing finer distinctions (see, e.g., Lim and Bowers 1991; O’Driscoll 1996) and others suggesting alternatives such as ‘fear’ (Held 1992) and ‘rapport-management’ (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005) in an attempt to encompass the negotiation that goes on between interlocutors. The complexity of the concept of ‘face’ urges Spencer-Oatey (2005) to distinguish between situation-specific and pan-situational face as well as between individual and group face.

Even though politeness is assumed to be involved only when face interests are at risk, thus being much narrower than facework (see Kasper 1997: 377), the way Brown and Levinson's theory has developed may lead one to assume that facework is coterminous with politeness, so that Watts (2003: 89) warns us against such a reading. In fact, Brown and Levinson (1987: 22, 130) hint at this when they say that their strategies do not serve only politeness needs but may also be used as a social brake or social accelerator in social relationships. In fact, Locher and Watts (2005: 10) argue that Brown and Levinson's theory is not a theory of politeness but rather one of facework, largely concerned with the mitigation of face-threatening acts.

The issue is vast, but one may briefly say that the need to escape from Brown and Levinson's narrow and individualistic construct along with the so-called 'practice turn' in linguistics, has led scholars to discard the idea of face being a matter of an individual's public self-image, arguing instead that it is an emergent property of situated relationships (Arundale 2005: 201, 202). This understanding, which shifts the focus from the individual to the situated dyad, is endorsed by many in recent relevant literature (see e.g., O'Driscoll 2007; Terkourafi 2007).

3.1. Face-threatening acts

The problems relating to the notion of 'face' are carried over to that of 'face-threatening acts'. Brown and Levinson (1987: 65) admit that they rely on their intuition to suggest that "*certain kinds of acts* intrinsically threaten face" of either or both of the interlocutors, and further add that "we may distinguish between acts that *primarily* threaten H's face (...) and those that threaten *primarily* S's face" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 67, emphasis mine). Acts that appear to prevent the addressee's independence of movement and freedom of action threaten their negative face, whereas those which appear as disapproving of their desires threaten their positive face. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that nowhere in the book are non-face-threatening acts discussed nor are we given even a hint of what kinds of acts they would classify as such. On the contrary, in their illustrative classification of acts in relation to which aspect of whose face is threatened (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65–68), one finds all kinds of speech acts, including expressing thanks and compliments and even responding to some such acts. This then suggests that despite their mitigated statements (above), they probably view all speech acts as face-threatening, and this standpoint has created problems and triggered criticism.

Mills (2003: 61, 79) argues that Brown and Levinson's notion of what constitutes an FTA is sometimes counter-intuitive and further illustrates that the concept is a lot more complex than their conceptualisation. This conceptualisation probably stems from and/or is reinforced by their preoccupation with decontextualised acts like requests, which quite clearly (though not unexceptionally) threaten the addressee's negative aspect of face.⁸ Moreover, viewing all acts (e.g., thanking and complimenting) as primarily face-threatening probably reflects a bias towards the

importance attached to non-imposition, where even mere verbalisation of any act might be considered face-threatening (see, e.g., Mills 2003: 60; Pinker 2007: 440). However, there is evidence that acts like compliments are primarily face-boosting (Bayraktaroğlu 1991; Holmes 1995) or face-enhancing (Sifianou 1995; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997) acts, as too are acts of offering and thanking in Persian (Koutlaki 2002). In fact, face-enhancing acts can be viewed as even more polite than re-dressed FTAs, at least in some cases; for instance, praise should be more polite than mitigated criticism (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997: 15). The problematic nature of the concept of 'FTA' is most clearly evident in Brown and Levinson's last strategy ("Don't do the FTA"), an issue that will be discussed in the following section.

3.2. The hierarchy of politeness strategies

One of Brown and Levinson's contested tenets is that their politeness strategies are intrinsically ranked, with "Don't do the FTA" being the most polite, followed by off-record strategies, and then in turn by negative and positive politeness strategies. This ranking, which stems from the close association of politeness with indirectness, has been challenged by a number of scholars on various grounds.

The very first issue relates to the nature of positive and negative politeness strategies. Brown and Levinson (1987: 70, 101) seem to recognise differences between them when they say that positive politeness strategies are approach-based and directed to the relationship as a whole (rather than to a particular act), whereas negative politeness strategies are avoidance-based and are addressed to a specific act. Likewise, Scollon and Scollon (1981) argue that since these strategies are different phenomena, they cannot be ranked on a unidimensional scale (see also Werkhofer 1992; Holmes 1995). A further issue concerns the ordering of these strategies, and Baxter (1984: 451) presents evidence in support of a reverse ordering; in some respects positive politeness strategies were assessed by his informants as more polite than negative politeness ones. For Holtgraves (2005: 77) a specificity principle may govern the order of these strategies in that negative politeness strategies may be more polite for acts threatening the addressee's negative face, whereas positive politeness strategies may be more polite for acts threatening the addressee's positive face. However, it is arguable whether such a principle is useful since requests, for instance, which typically threaten the addressee's negative aspect of face may be mitigated through either positive or negative politeness depending on the context. Other scholars (see, e.g., Blum-Kulka 1992; Harris 2001) have suggested that positive and negative politeness strategies are not as distinct as presented by the theory, since they can be mixed in discourse. This view is shared by Brown and Gilman (1989: 165) who, in fact, collapse positive and negative politeness into one super-strategy. In actual language encounters more than one face-threatening act may be performed, probably encoding different degrees of imposition, so that different politeness strategies will be required.⁹

Brown and Levinson (1987: 230–231) acknowledge the possibility of a mixture of positive and negative politeness elements in an utterance, but view it either as a kind of hybrid strategy or as a sometimes “painful” movement of interlocutors between approaching and distancing. Despite counterevidence, Brown and Levinson (1987: 18) insist, even though with some scepticism in their second edition, that these strategies are so ordered and that they are mutually exclusive. This ranking follows “from the Durkheimian perspective: rituals of approach are for lesser deities, those of avoidance for the ultimate deity”.¹⁰ However, counterevidence is rather strong and it is rather clear that negative facework does not instantiate more attention to face than positive facework (O’Driscoll 2007: 472).

A second issue concerns the award of higher levels of politeness to off-record than to on-record negative politeness strategies. Blum-Kulka (1987) challenged this claim by suggesting that, at least for requests, politeness is associated with conventional indirectness (on-record, negative politeness), but not necessarily with non-conventional (off-record) indirectness, leaving room for cross-cultural variation. Her basic argument is that a certain interactional balance between clarity and non-imposition is necessary for any utterance to count as polite, which is not the case with off-record indirect utterances because, although they may be non-imposing, they are ambiguous, thus posing a higher processing burden on the addressee. Brown and Levinson (1987: 19) admit that there might be an “efficiency” factor involved in assessing politeness, since it is not polite to impose inferential demands on superiors, but argue that Blum-Kulka’s experimental design and results do not offer genuine counter cases to their contention that off-record strategies are generally more polite than on-record, negative politeness strategies.

From a different point of view, it has been argued that off-record indirect utterances may serve positive politeness ends (Sifianou 1997a). At least in Greek, they are frequently found, in familial and familiar everyday contexts, in circumstances where it is extremely unlikely that the highest levels of politeness are sought. Off-record utterances rather grant the addressee the opportunity to offer to perform an act without being requested. Moreover, some such expressions may even be impolite if the addressee is taken to be responsible for the unpleasant situation. For instance, how can an utterance like “This soup is a bit bland”, especially when addressed to the hostess, be more polite than “Would you pass me the pepper, please?”, which may even be seen as a non-threatening request (Mills 2003: 60)? Pinker (2007) suggests, in reference to off-record utterances, that “indirect speech acts are not considerate to the hearer after all” and explores in detail the “plausible deniability” they offer to both interlocutors (see also Weizman 1993). For Goffman (1972: 335), this feature is what links them with tact, an idea elaborated by Brown and Levinson.

The least explored but most problematic strategy, in my view, is the last one, which most clearly exposes the shortcomings of the concept of ‘FTA’. In that it does not just mitigate but avoids the offensive act altogether, the attribution of the highest degree of politeness to the injunction “Don’t do the FTA”, is at least para-

doxical. Equally paradoxical is the fact that although this strategy is assumed to encode the highest degree of politeness, it does not receive any attention since it offers “no interesting linguistic reflexes” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 72).¹¹ First, it seems that this strategy applies to acts which clearly threaten the addressee’s face but rarely when the speaker’s face is at risk. For instance, even though it may be polite to avoid performing a request or producing a cutting remark in some cases, is it very polite to avoid expressing gratitude (which is assumed to threaten the speaker’s negative face, Brown and Levinson 1987: 67)? Secondly, it seems to be a choice that only the speaker has, since the addressee can hardly be very polite by remaining silent in response to a speech act (unless to avoid hurting the other). For instance, would no response to a compliment or an invitation be the utmost expression of politeness? The problem arises from the fact this model seems to suggest that all our acts are face-threatening. Avoiding face-threatening acts is polite but the question is “Are all our acts face-threatening, or even primarily face-threatening?” So, it seems that the “Don’t do the FTA” strategy is of restricted applicability and different in nature from all the others and cannot be ranked with them on a unidimensional scale (Sifianou 1997b; Fukushima 2000).

Despite evidence that the hierarchy of strategies is problematic, Brown and Levinson (1987: 20) insist that the various deviations which have emerged from research are not convincing counterevidence that their ranking is wrong. However, such a hierarchy may conceal an implicit assumption of a possible ranking of societies according to degrees of politeness. For instance, one can easily assume that the British are more polite than the Americans since the former exemplify a negative politeness orientation and the latter a positive politeness orientation (Brown and Levinson 1987: 245). Considerations such as the above indicate, in my view, that Brown and Levinson’s hierarchy is indeed problematic. The only plausible explanation that may be offered is that this ranking reflects the situation- and culture-specific significance attached to social distance, non-imposition and indirectness, the significance of which obviously cannot hold cross-situationally let alone cross-culturally.

4. Discussion and concluding remarks

It seems that one major source of the shortcomings attributed to Lakoff’s (1973), Brown and Levinson’s (1978) and Leech’s (1983) theories relates to the Gricean and the speech act theory paradigms that served as the theoretical background of these theories. These rationalist, universalistic pragmatics approaches focused on isolated utterances rather than stretches of discourse produced by two or more interlocutors in specific contexts. Research has repeatedly shown that the function of an utterance is determined by its position in a sequence of utterances within a specific context with specific individuals sharing a specific relational history (see, e.g.,

Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Locher 2004). For instance, consider the utterance “as if that would be difficult”. This utterance was a male student’s reaction to a female classmate’s statement “I’m collecting compliments”, while distributing her observation sheets to her classmates asking for their help with the collection of her compliment data. However, if unaware of the specific context, one could not suspect that this utterance was intended as a compliment and was, in fact, received as such. Exactly the same utterance in different sequences and contexts will function differently (see, e.g., Mills 2003: 84), an issue which cannot be accounted for adequately in Brown and Levinson’s theory. Ironically, it is almost thirty years ago that Levinson (1980: 19–20) himself pinpointed the inadequacy of speech act theory. He observed that it can “tell us very little about how conversations actually proceed” and espoused “much more complex multi-faceted pragmatics approaches”. Thus, isolated utterances cannot be assessed as inherently polite or impolite nor can their effect on face be considered independent of the position and the context in which they occur. As O’Driscoll (2007: 469) rightly observes “effects on face are radically situational”.

It is fair to say that neither Brown and Levinson nor Leech ignore the significance of context, but attempt to capture it by incorporating in their models three broad social variables (i.e., social distance, relative power and weight of imposition the former and social distance, authority and cost-benefit the latter). These, however, have been treated as static entities and, despite some supportive evidence (see Holtgraves 2005: 78), have been criticised as rather inadequate to account for the immense complexity of context (see, e.g., Duranti and Goodwin 1992). For instance, in relation to social distance, it has been argued (see, e.g., Slugoski and Turnbull 1988; Brown and Gilman 1989) that it should be distinguished from affect, since greater liking entails the use of greater politeness, irrespective of degree of familiarity. However, it has been the variable or more broadly the concept of power which has fuelled a lot of research (see, e.g., Spencer-Oatey 1996; Locher 2004; Bousfield and Locher 2008), where power is sometimes seen not just as a single determining factor of the level of politeness but rather as a constitutive force of it (see Watts 2003: 214).

Brown and Levinson acknowledge their neglect of longer linguistic units (a shortcoming they attribute to speech act theory) and propose, even though they do not expand on it, the concept of ‘face-threatening intention’ (instead of FTA), “since FTAs do not necessarily inhere in single acts” (see Brown and Levinson 1987: 10, 233). This significant issue has been addressed in more recent literature (see, e.g., Arundale 1999, 2006; Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005; Eelen 2001; Watts 2003; Mills 2003; Terkourafi 2005), which explores longer stretches of discourse involving both speaker and addressee, and which in most cases elevates interlocutors’ evaluations to determining factors as to whether an utterance or an exchange is polite. In fact, Watts (2003: 9) locates (im)politeness in the discursive struggle between interlocutors, a view also shared by Mills (2003).

Exploring longer stretches of discourse opens up a number of issues which require attention. For one thing, it shifts the focus from an individual performing politely through the use of specific strategies to interactions co-constructed by at least two participants interacting in specific contexts. Once the addressee enters the picture as a legitimate member of an interaction, what is (im)polite involves his/her evaluation and not just the speaker's production or intention (Eelen 2001: 107). Interactions are thus seen as processes rather than products (Mills 2003: 38).

When considering interactions (rather than individual utterances), we cannot ignore the fact that interlocutors are involved in what has been called "relational work" (Watts 1989, 2003: 23; Locher 2004; Locher and Watts 2005), "the 'work' individuals invest in negotiating relationships with others" (Locher and Watts 2005: 10) or "rapport management" (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2005), "the management (or mismanagement) of relations between people" (Spencer-Oatey 2005: 96). This necessarily entails not only cooperative polite behaviour but also conflictual/aggressive behaviour, and ties in closely with issues of power. Since the emphasis has been on harmonious interaction with politeness being used to secure it, the introduction of such concepts appears to rectify yet another shortcoming: the exclusion from politeness accounts of aggressive/conflictual behaviour. This exclusion probably results from the mistaken assumption that Grice's CP refers to genuine cooperation or even benevolence (Xie, He, and Lin 2005), as a result of which antagonistic behaviour has been ignored, simply assumed to be action against face wants. By contrast, in rejecting the Gricean framework and adopting the broader Goffmanian concept of 'face', it is also explicit that relational work is not necessarily restricted to "the maintenance of harmony, cooperation, and social equilibrium" (Locher and Watts 2005: 11). Spencer-Oatey (2005: 96) is equally explicit when she says that the management of rapport involves "not only behavior that enhances or maintains smooth relations, but any kind of behavior that has an impact on rapport, whether positive, negative, or neutral".

Consequently, current theories share a concern for the study of both politeness and impoliteness seen not as in binary opposition but as falling on a continuum of interlocutors' assessments (Mills 2003). Mills (2003) as well as Locher and Bousfield (2008) note the paucity of research on impoliteness (especially when compared to that on politeness), and argue that "any adequate account of the dynamics of interpersonal communication (...) should consider hostile as well as cooperative communication" (Locher and Bousfield 2008: 2; see also Xie, He, and Lin 2005: 446). However, especially after Culpeper's (1996) article, even though it drew heavily on Brown and Levinson's model, research including impoliteness, rudeness and other forms of antagonistic behaviour (such as parliamentary discourse) started flourishing (see, e.g., Eelen 2001; Harris 2001; Pérez de Ayala 2001; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann 2003; Culpeper 2005; Mills 2005; Gorji 2007; Bousfield 2008; Bousfield and Locher 2008).

Generally speaking, all current theories emphasise the importance of situated assessments of (im)politeness and foreground those of the addressee, who had previously been rather neglected. This is a laudable effort but needs caution lest the speaker's intentions and assessments are relegated to the background. In other words, if an utterance is assessed as impolite by the addressee, would it still count as an act of impoliteness, even if that is not the speaker's intention or assessment?¹² Irrespective of who produces them, assessments are subjective, and interlocutors may differ as to how they evaluate an utterance or an exchange. What is impolite for one interlocutor may be interpreted as the reverse or even as neutral by the other. In fact, politeness itself may not always be viewed as a "good" thing (see, e.g., Eelen 2001: 168; Mills 2003: 59; Watts 2003: 32; Xie, He, and Lin 2005: 435) and impoliteness may even serve entertaining (Culpeper 2005) or other functions. Interestingly, Greek and Turkish speakers tend to draw a distinction between "politeness of manners" and "politeness of the soul",¹³ viewing the former rather negatively in that it "may hide real intentions and be hypocritical, while the latter reflects the essence of true politeness" (Bayraktaroğlu and Sifianou 2001: 7), a concept whose definition remains elusive.

Since politeness is basically a social phenomenon, most current theories attempt to escape from the confines of pragmatics and the problems related to it, and try to find solutions in social theory, primarily in Bourdieu's theory of practice (but see Terkourafi 2005). Considerations such as the above have resulted in an enormous amount of linguistic and interdisciplinary research using a variety of approaches and methodologies. This research attempts to explore both politeness and impoliteness phenomena and provide answers to intriguing and complex questions relating to a highly elusive phenomenon: politeness. Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983) and Brown and Levinson (1978), in particular, started it all and will continue to exert their influence for many years to come.

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Notes

1. Given the vast number of related publications, the references used here should be seen as indicative rather than exhaustive.
2. The distinction between ‘politic’ and ‘(im)polite’ behaviour has drawn much scholarly attention. The former is defined as “behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the on-going interaction, i.e. as non-salient”, while ‘politeness’ and ‘impoliteness’ are seen as behaviour “beyond what is expectable, i.e. salient behaviour” (Watts 2003: 19). For a related distinction see Ide (1989), who suggests one between ‘non-polite’ or ‘zero-polite’ and ‘plus-valued politeness’ (see also Blum-Kulka 1992 and Ehlich 1992).
3. They have also been called ‘modern’ in contrast to ‘traditional’ ones, which are concerned with social etiquette (Werkhofer 1992: 156).
4. Leech (1983: 142) explains that the CP and the PP are first-order principles in that they promote effective interpersonal communication directly, whereas the IP is a second-order principle, since its function can only be explained in terms of the others. The IP enables speakers to be impolite by sounding polite. This is achieved through breaking the CP on the surface (by being obviously insincere) but ultimately upholding it.
5. Despite the privileged position attributed to indirectness, both Brown and Levinson (1987: 17) and Leech (1983: 171) acknowledge the possibility of increased indirectness leading to contrary effects in inappropriate contexts.
6. This distinction appears to be useful though not unproblematic (see, e.g., Terkourafi 2005). See also Xie, He, and Lin (2005: 449), for a different view which attributes to the distinction overtones of one between a “lay person” and an “expert”.
7. Nwoye’s (1992) views in relation to the Igbo in Nigeria are similar. He argues that especially Brown and Levinson’s notions of negative face and imposition do not seem to apply to the “egalitarian Igbo society, in which concern for group interests rather than atomistic individualism is the expected norm of behaviour” (Nwoye 1992: 310). Similar objections are raised in relation to both Turkish and Persian (Bayraktaroğlu 2000 and Koutlaki 2002, respectively).
8. Directives (like requests) have been viewed as prime examples of acts that threaten addressees’ negative face, whereas the possibility of simultaneous enhancement of their positive face has been underplayed. Asking for help or for a favour may also indicate closeness and solidarity (see, e.g., Meier 1995; Fukushima 2000) and can be face enhancing since one must value somebody’s views to ask for their comments (e.g., among colleagues).
9. Strecker (1988: 155) goes even further and suggests that even off-record strategies are not independent of positive and negative politeness ones.
10. Leech (1983: 133) also claims that “negative politeness (avoidance of discord) is a more weighty consideration than positive politeness (seeking concord)”. Although Leech’s terms are not coterminous with those of Brown and Levinson, the underlying implication in both theories is that distance and formality, which are characteristic of negative politeness, constitute a powerful determining factor of politeness.
11. This reinforces Mills’ (2003: 100) observation that Brown and Levinson’s model allows for “the analysis of politeness which is representable”.
12. Such issues have been addressed in recent literature (Bousfield and Locher 2008).
13. See Blum-Kulka’s (1992) related distinction between ‘nimus’ and ‘adivute’ in Hebrew.

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3. Linguistic politeness theory and its aftermath: Recent research trails

Richard J. Watts

Abstract

This chapter surveys the development of politeness theory as one of the main areas of interpersonal pragmatics during the 1990s and the present decade. It begins with a critical assessment of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and some of the major criticisms of their model in the early 1990s before dealing with some of the developments in politeness research in the light of this criticism. Particular attention is given to the link between politeness and power, politeness and gender, politeness and face, and politeness and culture, and more recent theoretical approaches to politeness in the first decade of the current century are dealt with in some detail.

1. Introduction

Theories of linguistic politeness, one of the major areas in interpersonal pragmatics, arose from relatively humble beginnings within linguistic pragmatics. They stem from a remark made by Grice (1975) to the effect that the conversational maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation and Manner) in “Logic and conversation” are not the only ones that need to be considered in a model of utterer’s meaning. One of the additional maxims that Grice tentatively envisaged in “Logic and conversation” was a “politeness” maxim.

Grice’s distinction between what he chose to call “utterance meaning” and “speaker’s meaning” received very short shrift in a significant collection on semantics by Steinberg and Jacobovits in 1971. In fact, Grice’s ideas were taken up by some of the generative semanticists well before “Logic and conversation” appeared in print, which accounts for the fact that Robin Lakoff’s first articles on politeness date from 1973. “Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena”, which was the title of Brown and Levinson’s contribution to Goody (1978), caused a sensation in pragmatic circles, not so much because it was a straightforward application of Grice’s theories to “politeness phenomena”, but because it shifted the pragmatic focus to include Erving Goffman’s social interactionism in the form of a new conceptualisation of the notion of face and it placed those phenomena within a cultural framework. In addition, it also took the bold step of claiming universality for forms of linguistic usage such as politeness. Since the

Brown and Levinson model still figures so prominently in research in the 1990s and 2000s, it will be dealt with critically in the current chapter (cf. also Chapter 2 in this volume by Sifianou).

The book publication of Brown and Levinson in 1987 underwent a not insignificant change in its title: “Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena” became *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Section 2 of this chapter will discuss why this change was in fact quite significant. It will deal with two of the criticisms which had been voiced prior to the end of the 1980s, and it will trace out some of the work on language usage and politeness that occurred since its first appearance in 1978.

Section 3 will focus on new (and somewhat controversial) concepts within politeness theory such as “politic behaviour” and first-order politeness, introduced in Watts (1989 and 1992), first-order versus second-order politeness (first suggested in the “Introduction” to Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992), and the controversy over the status of the terms “positive” and “negative” face. Penelope Brown turned her attention to politeness and gender after the 1987 publication (cf. 1990, 1991), and Section 4 will consider how conceptualisations of politeness were connected to issues of gender, power and face as the 1990s progressed.

In Section 4 I shall also review work in the 1990s and 2000s on impoliteness phenomena focusing on the central tenet of more modern research that “impoliteness” is not simply the opposite end of a behavioural spectrum to “politeness”, i.e., that it is not the negation of supposedly positive values attached to “politeness”. This will lead me to a consideration of research in Section 5 which has necessitated newer forms of social theory in which social interaction, or social practice, takes centre stage. It is with different ways of looking at “politeness” as constructed through what I shall loosely call “discourse” that I shall be concerned in that section. Finally, I shall end the chapter with a tentative set of predictions relating to the different pathways that politeness theory may take in the future, necessitating rather different types of research which will ultimately create synergies with other disciplines.

2. Early criticisms of Brown and Levinson

Early approaches to politeness have been dealt with by Maria Sifianou in more detail in Chapter 2 of the present volume. Nevertheless, it is instructive to note that the way in which Brown and Levinson (1978) addressed what they were doing in that article represented, at that time, only one out of a number of possible ways to approach “politeness” phenomena. They originally interpreted their task as addressing “universals in language usage” and saw “politeness” phenomena as a paradigm case in which such universals might be found. The universal aspect of human behaviour that they chose to elucidate was that of “face”. The term was taken from

Goffman's seminal 1955 article "On face work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction", reprinted in Goffman (1967).

We need to bear in mind that Goffman, at that early stage in his work, was greatly influenced by Durkheim's insistence on the sacredness of the individual human being and the interactional rituals developed in different socio-cultural environments to uphold that sacredness. Looking at "politeness" phenomena as a set of rituals opened up another way of carrying out research on "politeness" in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The major work on politeness as ritual was Holly (1979), which was based on Goffman's early work on social interaction. It was followed by an article on ritual and politeness by Werlen (1983) and by Werlen's book on the ritualistic underpinnings of language in 1984. Unfortunately, this approach to linguistic politeness was largely restricted to the German-speaking sector of academia and has not enjoyed the attention it deserves.

Interest in the universality of various forms of language usage led to two related directions of empirical research, inspired not only by Robin Lakoff's early work on politeness and by Brown and Levinson (1978), but also by Leech's work on the relationship between direct and indirect forms of speech act in 1983. The first form of empirical research led to an intensive study of how different speech acts and speech events with face-threatening potential are realised. This led to a focus on apologies (e.g., Clark and Schunk 1980, 1981; Owen 1983; Trosborg 1987), requests (e.g., Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson 1985; Faerch and Kasper 1989), compliments and their responses (e.g., Pomerantz 1978; Manes and Wolfson 1981; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1987) and thanking (e.g., Held 1988). The second strand of empirical research was to test the claims for universality by carrying out cross-cultural and contrastive studies involving speakers of different languages, and most of the references given above deal with this aspect of politeness research.

There was also an interest in the relationship between "politeness" and gender (cf., e.g., Brown 1976, 1980, 1990, 1991; Ide et al. 1986), triggered off by Robin Lakoff's claim that women were more polite than men (1975), and in forms of linguistic address, which derived from the link between ritual and "politeness" (Braun, Kohz and Schubert 1986; Braun and Schubert 1986). Apart from the early work by Brown and Ford (1961) and Brown and Gilman (1960), which predate the beginning of a pragmatic interest in politeness phenomena, it is interesting to note that the 1980s work on address terms was restricted to German-speaking scholars, and was thus limited in its availability to non-German-speaking researchers until Friederike Braun published on the same subject in English in 1988. Further work was carried out by Arndt and Janney (1985), in which non-linguistic aspects of "politeness" were investigated, a clear distinction was drawn between tact and politeness, and a conscious effort was made to broaden politeness research to include interdisciplinary overlaps between linguistics, psychology and human biology.

Fraser and Nolen (1981) suggested looking at "politeness" as part of what they called a Conversational Contract (CC), so that everything that was produced in in-

stantiations of social interaction which conformed to the CC could not, in fact, avoid being polite. This approach tended to reduce “politeness” to a quality of social interaction which goes largely unnoticed, but it proved to be a major inspiration for those working on politeness beyond 1987, as we shall see in later sections of this chapter.

Ide and her co-workers (Hill et al. 1986; Ide 1988, 1989) had raised objections to the applicability of Brown and Levinson to Japanese politeness honorifics, on the grounds that “politeness” needed to be looked at from within the social structures of the speech community itself. Work by Ide’s team made a further serious attempt to extend the study of politeness beyond pragmatics and to see it in terms of larger socio-cultural structures.

During the 1980s, there were, to my knowledge, only two serious criticisms of Brown and Levinson, one of them a review of Goody (1978), in which the Brown and Levinson text originally appeared, and the other a review article of the 1987 book with a focus on the original text and the new introduction. The review of Goody’s book was by Richard Schmidt, who describes the Brown and Levinson article as presenting “an overly pessimistic, rather paranoid view of *human social interaction*” (1980: 104, my emphasis). It is significant in Schmidt’s case that he takes the article to be dealing with “human social interaction” rather than “politeness”. The review article was by Coupland, Grainger and Coupland (1988), and it begins by immediately referring to the extended chapter in Goody (1978). I shall focus briefly on their trenchant criticism.

While admitting the “originality, insightfulness, and range” of the approach taken by Brown and Levinson in 1978, Coupland, Grainger and Coupland contend that the republication of the original text in book format is in fact “a reappraisal, concerned as much with the explanatory limitations as with the explanatory powers of the model” (1988: 253) but that this only becomes evident by constant cross-referencing between the text and the long introduction to it:

The status of claims made in the body of the text – the original account – is now unclear without constant cross-referencing to the introduction where ... *there are some significant retreats and reinterpretations*. (Coupland, Grainger and Coupland 1988: 35, my highlighting)

Among the elements which were underplayed in the original text and are explicitly mentioned in the introduction are “the influence of third parties on strategy selection” (1988: 254) and “fundamental criticisms” of the original politeness hierarchy. The two main desiderata raised by Coupland, Grainger and Coupland (1988) are the following:

1. the need to distinguish ontologically between positive and negative politeness rather than seeing them as two sides of the same coin, and
2. the need to consider contextual factors within the ongoing discourse in greater detail.

An analysis of how politeness functions must take into account discursive factors of the overall social interaction. In turn those discursive factors are closely intertwined with what the interactants are trying to achieve through the interaction and how the context is ongoingly constructed by the participants. Coupland, Grainger and Coupland show what they mean by analysing how politeness can be used to exert power over addressees in the context of nurses caring for the elderly. What they imply throughout the review article is that Brown and Levinson's text is focused more on facework than politeness and they conclude by saying that

[f]or the discourse analysis of talk in context, it is safer to assume that the proper treatment of the social person is merely one among many options of social policy and practice and that interpersonal politeness will itself often function as a complex sociolinguistic variable in the fulfilment of other strategic intents. (Coupland, Grainger and Coupland 1988: 262)

I shall now review some of the criticisms of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory raised in the early part of the 1990s.

3. Criticism of politeness theory in the first half of the 1990s

3.1. The question of positive and negative face, and positive and negative politeness strategies

After 1987, the publication of Brown and Levinson in book form quickly achieved the status of "politeness model" *par excellence* regardless of the fact that a number of researchers had chosen to take Leech as their model (cf., e.g., Held 1989, 1991, 1996; Haverkate 1988, 1990, 1994; Gu 1990). Coupland, Grainger and Coupland (1988) had already noted the important ontological difference between "positive face" and "negative face" and the politeness strategies addressed to them. But even as early as 1987 at the International Pragmatics Association conference in Antwerp, Matsumoto had delivered a lecture criticising the validity of a distinction between positive and negative face in relation to Japanese honorifics, thus explicitly picking up on Hill et al.'s (1986) insistence on different cultural approaches towards politeness phenomena. Matsumoto's argument is that "preservation of face in Japanese culture is intimately bound up with showing recognition of one's relative position in the communicative context and with the maintenance of the social ranking order" (1988: 415) and that it is thus possible to propose that "all utterances in Japanese can be considered face-threatening" (1988: 419). If this is the case, Hill et al.'s (1986) notion of "discernment politeness" does not represent face-threat mitigation in Brown and Levinson's sense, and negative face in the way in which they describe it – "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his [sic] actions be unimpeded by others" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62) – is not applicable in a Japanese setting.

The non-applicability of negative face and, as a consequence, of negative politeness strategies is also raised by Chinese researchers. Gu (1990) maintains that the notion of a “negative face” threat in Chinese refers to the inability of the individual to “live up to what s/he has claimed or when what self has done is likely to incur ill fame or reputation” (1990: 242). In a similar vein, Mao (1994: 460) points out that Chinese face “encodes a reputable image that individuals can claim for themselves as they interact with others in a given community”.

Criticism of negative face and negative politeness strategies has not only been voiced by Asian scholars. Nwoye (1992: 310) describes Nigerian Igbo society as “egalitarian” and contends that “concern for group interests rather than atomistic individualism is the expected norm of behaviour”. De Kadt (1998: 177) describes face in Zulu as a “mutual construct”, in which “[a]n interactant will be expected to produce certain other behaviours”. Mursy and Wilson (2001) make similar claims with respect to the inapplicability of “negative face” in Egyptian Arabic.

The examples could be multiplied in the literature, but there is little sense in continuing this list. The major point that emerges is that the concept of “face” used by these scholars is far closer to Goffman’s original definition (cf. the discussion in Watts 2003: Chapter 5) and that a binary distinction between positive and negative face – and between “positive” and “negative” politeness – cannot ultimately be upheld. This is important, as specific forms of speech act which are conceived of as threatening “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” in Western societies may, in certain contexts, be uttered without any form of mitigation whereas the same speech acts in other contexts may require varying degrees thereof. It is also clear that speakers may simulate mitigation intending to achieve other kinds of effect in the hearer, and those effects may highlight the negative assessment of alter’s actions.

The major question here is simple: What does this have to do with “politeness”? If Coupland, Grainger and Coupland (1988) are right and positive strategies are conceptualised as “doing more global contextualising facework in the environment of an FTA”, what is interpreted as “polite” is always constructed discursively, and often individually, by all participants in emergent social interaction. In addition, face mitigation strategies embedded in speech acts that could be perceived as threatening the addressee’s freedom of action (or face) are part and parcel of all those forms of social interaction which do not offend against the canons of “good taste” and “good behaviour”. This corresponds closely to Fraser and Nolen’s position that any sequence of social interaction which abides by the Conversational Contract is by definition “polite”, which, if understood literally, would empty the notion of “politeness” of any real significance (Fraser and Nolen 1981; Fraser 1990). There is also a complex supplementary question which could be asked: What is the status of “politeness” as a “universal of language usage”, and how are we to interpret that universal, as a linguistic universal or as a universal of human social interaction? These questions will concern us in the following subsection.

3.2. Politic behaviour and the distinction between first-order and second-order politeness

As a consequence of misgivings concerning the use to which the Brown and Levinson model was being put (and still is being put) by researchers into politeness phenomena across a wide range of languages and by researchers into other aspects of socio-communicative verbal interaction who simply assumed that the last word had been spoken on “politeness”, a group of scholars pooled their resources to produce a collection of papers entitled *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice* published in 1992. The collection was edited by Watts, Ide and Ehlich, and as collections go, it appeared to present a somewhat disparate set of contributions (cf. the review by Jucker in 1994). Nevertheless, the book was re-issued in 2005 with a new introductory chapter by Watts and an extended bibliography of work on politeness reaching up to 2005. In the new introduction I set myself the task of assessing why the book had been so successful and I conclude that the majority of contributions posed the following problems for the pragmatic explanations of polite language behaviour offered by Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson:

1. the question of the universality of politeness (cf. the previous subsection);
2. the necessary distinction between “first-order politeness” as a normative, moral concept and “second order politeness” as a term in a theory of politeness;
3. the cultural and historical relativity of “politeness”;
4. the concept of “face” as a basis for politeness theory;
5. the rationalist, essentialist approach taken towards conceptualising “politeness”;
6. the need to approach politeness phenomena as a social as well as a pragmatic phenomenon;
7. the need to introduce some other concept than “politeness” to cover behaviour which conformed to social expectations of interactional appropriateness.

Since 1992, these points have all been dealt with by various researchers in various ways. The first question posed at the end of the previous subsection concerns whether and how face is related to “politeness”; the second tackles the issue of whether “politeness”, when viewed as a social, sociolinguistic, socio-cultural, perhaps even socio-biological category, can be considered a universal of human behaviour.

Two important innovations in politeness research were introduced in Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992), the concept of “politic behaviour” and the distinction between “first-order and second-order politeness”. Politic behaviour was first introduced in Watts (1989) but it was elaborated in Watts (1992). In social practice, participants have a relatively clear idea of the kind of behaviour which is appropriate to each newly contextualised instantiation, which includes the language usage that is ap-

appropriate. The construction of those forms of appropriate verbal behaviour that participants have made over the course of time is similar enough to allow perceptions of inappropriateness or undue appropriateness. Meier also deals with the notion of appropriateness in a series of articles (1995, 1996a, 1996b), which is similar to my term “politic behaviour”. Eelen (2001) criticised the term (and my term “social equilibrium”) on the grounds that it revealed a top-down Parsonian view of social structure. However, in Chapter 6 of Watts (2003) I show that far from being a structuralist notion, it is closely connected with Bourdieu’s (1990) notion of the *habitus* and is constantly open to revision in all forms of social practice.

Both “politic behaviour” and “appropriate behaviour” come close to what Fraser and Nolen (1981) call the Conversational Contract. Although “incidents” of inappropriateness do occur (and probably more frequently than we suppose), they are generally excusable and repairable for the simple reason that participants would prefer to maintain the social equilibrium required by the form of social practice indulged in.

I chose to call appropriate verbal behaviour “politic” for three reasons. Firstly, it is relatively close to the term “polite”, secondly it introduces the notion of behaving in accordance with what Coupland, Grainger and Coupland (1988: 262) call “the proper treatment of the social person” as “one among many options of social policy and practice”, and thirdly we actually use “politic” as a first-order term, cf. *That was a very politic way to refuse the invitation* or *That wasn’t a particularly politic thing to say*, without implying that the utterance was polite or not polite. When behaviour is perceived to be “polite”, it is more than merely politic, which leads to the interpretation that it was said in order to create interpersonally particular communicative effects.

The distinction between first- and second-order politeness represented a more fundamental break with the models of politeness that had been proposed up to the end of the 1980s. Many of the articles in Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992) noted that there is often no translation equivalent for “politeness” in other languages, and that the closest one could get often displayed different connotations for the term in English (cf. Ide et al. 1992). In addition it was clear that, even in English, the ways in which politeness has been conceptualised over a period of 300 years differ quite considerably. For example, what was understood by “polite behaviour”, “polite society”, “polite conversation” in 18th century England now has to be explained to modern readers of 18th century texts to insure that misunderstandings do not occur. It was also noted that attempts to define what modern scholars themselves understand by “politeness”, even though their definitions overlap to a certain extent, still remain somewhat vague.

Why was this so? Attempts to define the term fail for the simple reason that politeness is not an essential quality or feature of forms of human behaviour that can be objectively isolated. Instead, individual interlocutors decide for themselves whether certain forms of behaviour can be labelled “polite”. Eelen (2001), in his

critique of politeness theories on the market at the end of the 1990s, suggested that whether or not a stretch of behaviour was considered polite may therefore be discursively disputed – at least potentially.

Werkhofer (1992) suggests that the Brown and Levinson model is not only essentialist; it is also built on rationalist principles. Focusing on how interlocutors construct their interpretations of the social interaction as it emerges, leads the researcher into taking a cognitive, constructionist perspective on politeness. What is universal about politeness is to be found not in language usage as such but in assessments of what it is about polite behaviour which is part of the general human condition. In the following section, I shall review developments in politeness research in the 1990s which explore other avenues of research.

4. Post-Brown and Levinson developments in politeness research

During the course of 1990s and shortly after the turn of the millennium, empirical work on politeness was overwhelmingly framed within the Brown and Levinson model although there were clear exceptions to this tendency. We witness a burgeoning of articles on politeness in business discourse (Henry 1995; Billow 1995; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1996, 1997a, b; Pilegaard 1997; Yeung 1997; Spencer-Oatey 2000; Spencer-Oatey and Jianyu Xing 2000), in various workplaces (Lambert 1996; Grainger 2002, 2004), in political arenas (Johnstone, Ferrara and Bean 1992; Haroche 1993; Harris 2001), in academia (Johnson 1992; Johnson and Roen 1992; Koutsantoni 2004), in legal settings (Bogoch 1994; Sanderson 1995; Kurzon 2001), in administrative discourse (Pan 1995; Graham and David 1996; Morand 1996a, b), in conflict management and trouble talk (Bayraktoroğlu 1991; Hayashi 1996), and in language teaching (Bamgbose 1994; Person et al. 1995; Conlan 1996; Hinkel 1996; Meier 1997).

The evidence indicates that the 1990s heralded a period of what Kuhn (1962) calls “normal science”, in which a model exists which provides the theoretical groundwork for empirical studies. However, it would be wrong to assume that any model is the last word in theory. Even as empirical research was being carried out in these and a number of other areas of social life, questions inevitably occurred. Some of these had already been raised in Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992), but they also began to appear in work by those who believed either in the Brown and Levinsonian rational, predictive approach to politeness or in the more solidly Gricean pragmatic approach to politeness phenomena proposed by Lakoff and Leech. I shall present work from four of these “problem” areas in the following subsections, politeness and power, politeness and gender, politeness and face, and politeness and culture. Tackling these effectively takes the researcher beyond the scope of pragmatics and into social theory and sociolinguistics.

4.1. Politeness and power

The first half of the 1990s saw a sudden increase of interest amongst sociolinguists, discourse analysts, philosophers and sociologists in the phenomenon of power. Fairclough's influential book *Language and Power* (1989) explored the interconnections between institutional practices and wider political and social structures. Power for Fairclough is understood in a top-down fashion, as what Ng and Bradac (1993) call "power-over". The micro-analysis of ways in which power is constructed in emergent social interaction, very similar to what Ng and Bradac later called "power-to", was dealt with in Watts (1991). The philosopher Wartenberg published *The Forms of Power. From Domination to Transformation* in 1990 and went on to edit a collection of contributions entitled *Rethinking Power* on the subject in 1992, in which power is also considered as something inevitable and by no means negative in all human interaction. Diamond develops Watts' approach to the study of power in *Status and Power in Verbal Interaction* (1996).

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) had introduced power as one of three social variables responsible for the degree of polite mitigation carried out in situations of face-threatening, the other two being social distance and the degree to which the act was considered serious in the culture involved. Two things need to be mentioned here. Their notion of power is a rudimentary notion of one participant (either speaker or addressee) having power over the other, i.e., it was "power-over" rather than "power-to". The other two variables have been criticised elsewhere so I shall refrain from mentioning them in detail here (see Brown and Gilman 1989 for a critique of social distance and Watts 2003 for a critique of the degree of severity of a face threat).

The question of how politeness could be used to exert power in situations in which power differentials in the Brown and Levinsonian sense are in evidence occupied researchers throughout the 1990s. Pan (1995) looked at political settings in China and showed how the top-down exercise of power was disguised as politeness. Researchers into courtroom language noticed how politeness in a hierarchical power setting could be used without impunity and quite explicitly to underscore those differences (Sanderson 1995; Kurzon 2001). One of the first researchers to question the power and social distance variables within the framework of business discourse was Spencer-Oatey (1996).

As soon as researchers began to take more seriously the criticism that stretches of real oral discourse should be used to locate politeness phenomena beyond the level of the speech act, they began to use the stringent methods of Conversation Analysis to carry out their analyses (cf. Lerner 1996; Okamoto 1999; Held 1999; Kasper 2006). I wish to refer to this development as the "discursive turn", and it led scholars to the realisation that politeness strategies could be used in emergent discourse to manipulate others in various ways. It was thus no accident that empirical research on managerial and business communication – and indeed workplaces in

general – began to reveal the subtle exercise of power through the use of politeness strategies (cf. Morand 1996a, b; Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1997a; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Grainger 2004; Locher 2004; Mullany 2004). The “discursive turn” will occupy us in Section 5. For the moment, however, let us turn to another area in which empirical work on politeness was coupled with a crucial social variable – gender.

4.2. Politeness and gender

In her controversial monograph on language and gender, *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), Robin Lakoff posits that women are assumed to be politer than men. We can now understand this as a fruitfully provocative statement which sparked off a wealth of studies into the connections between politeness and gender. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, however, particularly after Judith Butler's book on gender (*Gender Trouble*) had burst like a post-structuralist bombshell onto the scene, Lakoff's statement became more troubling than ever.

One of the major issues was still the definition of that elusive “essence” politeness. Defining it as a second-order term along Brown and Levinson lines meant that it was relatively straightforward to gather a wealth of factual linguistic data and to “prove” (almost never to disprove!) the validity of Lakoff's statement (cf. Holmes 1993, 1995). However, the performative hypothesis states that gender (and thus also politeness) are performatively constructed through emergent social interaction. A second-order definition of “politeness” is thus suspect since it may not reflect the judgments of the participants in the interactions recorded. The researcher simply says “politeness is defined as X”, and then, having found a quantitatively representative corpus of instantiations of X, proceeds to show that women use X more frequently than men.

By the end of the 1990s, we discover that the notion of gender as performance constructed through a multitude of instantiations of social practice had led to a much more complex array of possible genders such that the old dichotomy between “female” and “male” no longer held good. It was suggested that individuals of either sex might vary their gender performances from one moment to the next. Work carried out during this first decade of the new millennium on gender and politeness shows a more careful approach to both variables, gender and politeness, a recognition of the need to take first-order politeness into consideration and a discursive approach to the subject (Christie 2000, 2002; Mills 2002, 2003, 2004).

4.3. Politeness and face

There is by now a sizeable amount of work on “face”, inspired largely by the work of Goffman and not necessarily dependent on the link that Brown and Levinson make with politeness (Tracy 1990; Holtgraves 1992; Ting-Toomey 1994; Wood

and Kroger 1994; Penman 1990, 1994; Longcope 1995; Lambert 1996; Lee-Wong 1999). In the introduction to the 1987 book, Brown and Levinson define their notion of face as follows:

Central to our model is a highly abstract notion of ‘face’ which consists of two specific kinds of desires (‘face-wants’) attributed by interactants to one another: the desire to be unimpeded in one’s action (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face). This is the bare bones of a notion of face which (we argue) is universal, but which in any particular society we would expect to be the subject of much cultural elaboration. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 13)

They appear to have veered away somewhat from the impression that they give in the body of the book that face is equivalent to a notion of “self”, i.e., a possession of the individual and to have taken note of the social attribution of face in interaction suggested in Goffman’s original 1955 article.

One of the most interesting contributions to face and facework is by Tracy (1990). Tracy has been concerned less with politeness than with the ways in which interactants negotiate meaning and construct social identity in emergent social practice. In the 1990 article, however, she deals with the crucial notion of “face” and she makes a clear distinction between “face” and “facework”.

For Tracy *face* is a “social phenomenon; it comes into being when one person comes into the presence of another; it is created through the communicative moves of interactants” (1990: 210). *Facework*, on the other hand, “references the communicative strategies that are the enactment, support, or challenge of those situated identities” (1990: 210). She locates approaches to the study of face in the late 1980s with “the sociolinguistically based [sic] politeness theory” of Brown and Levinson and with sociopsychological approaches to discourse, and she classifies politeness theory as using “simplistic, unelaborated notions about identity” (1990: 210).

Tracy’s (1990: 211) criticism reveals that “[Brown and Levinson’s] concept of ‘politeness’ is used in three related but conceptually distinct ways, only one of which bears a resemblance to the everyday meaning”. We need to stress here that only what Brown and Levinson call “negative politeness” based on mitigation of a negative face threat is what we would normally consider “polite”, and even this is dubious in the work of Asian and African scholars. More important, however, is the implication that it is the “everyday meaning” of politeness that should concern researchers.

For the purposes of the present chapter, however, it is important to note what Tracy (1990) says about the nature of facework:

One way to conceive of facework is as a more elaborated and discourse-oriented notion of the commonplace claim that all messages have a relational load (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967). (Tracy 1990: 217)

Here we see the first indication of two desiderata: (1) politeness should be examined as it is perceived to arise in discourse, and (2) politeness can only be a part of the relational load of social practice.

4.4. Politeness and culture

Research work throughout the 1990s and the beginning of the present decade was characterised by a focus on linking politeness to a concept of “culture”, which is hardly, if ever, defined adequately, and on cross-cultural distinctions in how polite behaviour is conceptualised by different cultural groups. Although we insisted in the 1992 book (Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992) that there was a great deal of relativity in how politeness has been understood from culture to culture and from one historical age to the next, it was not our intention to place this fact into the centre of attention.

Although no one today would deny the existence of cultural distinctions from one social group to the next, there is a danger of simplifying and generalising over these complex distinctions to create monolithic notions such as “British culture”, “Greek culture”, “Israeli culture”, “Japanese culture”, or even more locally focused communities such as Nwoye’s “Igbo culture”. In doing so, we are acquiescing in the construction of Anderson’s “imagined communities” (1983), even to the extent of equating a “nation” with a culture, and running the danger of raising stereotypical forms of behaviour to the status of differential characteristics in defining “politeness”.

Overuse of the term “culture” stems from the desire to define an objective essence in the real world that can be labelled “politeness” and that will vary in accordance with differences in imagined communities. The cultural and historical relativity of politeness ultimately relies on a second-order view of the term and is equivalent to hopping from the pragmatic frying-pan into the cultural fire.

5. Recent developments in politeness research

One of the most radical changes in politeness research in the current decade has been the shift from a focus on “politeness” as a category to be defined, explained and operationalised in a rational theory of human behaviour (“second-order politeness”) to a quality of emergent social practice in a constructionist theory of human behaviour (“first-order politeness”) assigned to interactants involved in that practice by co-interactants. As we have seen, there were certainly moves in this direction in the early 1990s (see Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992), but the change was provoked by Gino Eelen’s influential book *Critique of Politeness Theories* (2001). Eelen criticises most models of politeness that had appeared before the end of the 1990s on the grounds that they do not seem to have noticed that polite-

ness is an evaluative, moral quality assigned to the behaviour of others in interaction.

If that is the case, those evaluations are made individually within the framework of instantiations of emergent social practice by the participants themselves. It is obvious that the judgments are made on the basis of socialisation, i.e., they are not only individual but also social judgments. Eelen posits that such moral judgments of others' behaviour are discursively disputable, i.e., it is perfectly possible for interactants to disagree about whether an action or an utterance is definable as polite. Whatever politeness is perceived to be is thus constructed in emergent interaction, is a first-order assignment of judgment and is open to dispute. It is not an objectively definable entity to be used in a rational predictive theory of how to perform politely. Eelen's book thus opened the way towards looking at politeness as emergent performance, in which what is or is not perceived as polite is constructed discursively. In this section, I shall briefly review work carried out in this spirit.

5.1. Politeness and Communities of Practice

One of the most important books on politeness to emerge during the current decade was Mills (2003). The importance of Mills' work lies in its use of the concept of Communities of Practice, its insistence on taking a discursive perspective on how politeness is co-constructed by interactants, its clear focus on first-order conceptualisations of politeness and its consequential use of an understanding of discourse based on the work of Michel Foucault ([1969] 1972). We shall look at each of these interlocking elements in turn.

It is useful to start with the final element in the list above, viz. the basis of Mills' study on the work of Michel Foucault. Foucault's (1972) characterisation of *a* discourse is that it contains a dispersion of elements displaying discontinuity from previous discourses rather than continuity. It is also constructed from groups of statements that may appear in any order and display any correlation of internal disunity among the groups of statements. For Foucault the way in which objects, forms and themes of the discourse appear depends on conditions external to the discourse itself, i.e., on historical factors that it is difficult to understand from within our own discourses. However, the discourse itself is the result of the formation of a group of statements that may provide the illusion of coherence in that it is different from other groups of statements.

The notion of politeness itself thus takes on radically different, discontinuous meanings within different discourses and among participants working from within different discourses. It is never a stable concept and contains within itself the potential for discursive dispute, as suggested by Eelen (2001). As such it can only ever be a co-constructed concept and is not amenable to rationalist/essentialist theorising.

The co-construction of what politeness “is” depends on the historical development of communities sharing a mutual engagement in a common enterprise and using a shared repertoire of statements, modes of behaviour, reifications, etc. As Wenger (1998: 73) puts it “[p]ractice resides in a community of people and the relations of mutual engagement by which they can do whatever they do.” This can now be related to Fraser and Nolen’s (1981) concept of the Conversational Contract, and it is more than likely that the “right”, “appropriate”, “politic” ways of members doing linguistically what they do goes unnoticed until one member does more than is necessary (cf. Watts 2003).

An approach that sees politeness as being co-constructed by members of a Community of Practice can only be discursive and is necessarily a first-order term. It is also clear that this way of approaching politeness is entirely in accord with Tracy’s (1990: 217) insistence that facework should be seen “as a more elaborated and discourse-oriented notion of the commonplace claim that all messages have a relational load”.

5.2. Impoliteness

In Watts (2003: Chapter 1) I expressed my surprise that so little work had up till that point in time been done on impoliteness. Like Eelen, I consistently refer throughout the book to “(im)politeness”, although I now take a rather different line on this point as is evident from the conclusion to this chapter. For a long time impoliteness was avoided as a topic of research, although isolated attempts were made to remedy this situation (cf., e.g., Fraser 1975, 1998; Lachenicht 1980; Austin 1990; Beebe 1995; Kienpointner 1997; Stewart 1997; Culpeper 1996, 1998; Tracy and Tracy 1998; Harris 2001; Pearson, Andersson and Wegner 2001). One reason for this neglect was the tendency for researchers to see impoliteness as the lack of politeness.

As the decade progressed, researchers into impoliteness – or perhaps more correctly “rudeness” – began to take on some of the insights provided by the constructionist paradigm. The situation has burgeoned and the latest sign of a rebirth of interest in the facets of rudeness as a form of linguistic behaviour is the publication in 2008 of a set of articles on different aspects of rudeness/impoliteness which the editors, Bousfield and Locher, have entitled *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*.

One of the insights of this book is that it much easier to spot examples of rudeness in social interaction than examples of politeness, an insight which is fully supported by a large-scale research project currently run from the University of Lancaster under the direction of Jonathan Culpeper on impoliteness in the public domain in Britain (cf. Chapter 5 by Bousfield).

5.3. Politeness and relational work

Over the last few years Miriam Locher and I have been exploring the possibilities of seeing politeness as just one facet of a whole complex of forms of human behaviour that become evident when two or more persons are involved in social practice (cf. Locher and Watts 2005, 2008). In their “Introduction” to the 1987 book publication of the 1978 article, Brown and Levinson (1987: 45–47) consider the possibility of developing a theory of a universal “symbolism of exchange” in which interpersonal rituals are involved in the exchange of goods. Malinowski (1923) suggests that the more sacred exchanged goods are, the more intricate these rituals will be. In Watts (1992) I posit that the most sacred thing of all to exchange is the “social person”.

The important realisation is, as Tracy (1990) says, that “all messages have a relational load”, an idea that goes back to Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (1967). Within politeness research it was Holly (1979) who split Goffman’s facework into what he called *Beziehungsarbeit* (translated by Held 1992: 143 as “relational work”) and *Imagearbeit* (“image work”, *pace* Held 1992: 143). Three things are significant here. Firstly, all social practice involves the participants in ritualistic forms of behaviour when exchanging more or less “intimate stuff”, the most important of which is “the social person”. This is what we want to call, following Holly, “relational work”. Secondly, and significantly, the exchange can only take place in emergent social interaction. Thirdly, since, as individuals, we are all historically positioned, i.e., each of us has her/his own unique life-story, we store in cognition those forms of behaviour which have served us well in the past and may do so in the future. We have learnt these in a myriad of communities of practice.

We are not implying that all forms of social practice are harmonious and cooperative, nor that it is our only aim in social practice to create social equilibria. There are countless forms of socio-communicative interaction in which we are in competition with others or in which it is our aim to destroy the other’s sacredness. For the future much more research needs to be invested into forms of relational work in an attempt to create a model of emergent social practice.

Relational work certainly implies the study of how individuals evaluate their own and others’ behaviour. Was it appropriate, polite, obsequious, rude, abrasive? Have the participants created a sense of “rapport” (cf. Spencer-Oatey 2005)? Have they broken an unspoken behavioural frame, and if so, how? Have they blatantly tried to exert power over others? Have they been able to position themselves and others in order to augment the value of their own “goods”? How has facework been managed during the interaction and how have the participants constructed their own identities and the identities of others through the emergent interaction (cf. Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 2008)? We are only at the beginning of these investigations, and politeness is only one facet of how we relate to others and others relate to us.

6. Conclusion: Possible directions in the future

I may have given the impression in this chapter that new orientations towards the study of politeness phenomena have outgrown the more “traditional” approaches represented by Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson. A glance at more recent articles on the subject shows that all three models, but particularly the Brown and Levinson model, are still very much in use. We are still far from a paradigm change in politeness theory. However, many of the recent theoretical approaches actually gain their impetus from more general paradigm changes. The shift in focus from quantitative research methods in the social sciences, in which stress is laid on representative data, has been towards qualitative methods stressing the significance of the data themselves in developing new theories. The use of the stringent local analysis of social interaction provided by Conversation Analysis has become significant, as has the careful and detailed ethnographic study of different forms of community. Certain techniques which were once anathema in the social sciences, such as the location and interpretation of narrative sequences in social interaction, have now become central to qualitative methodology.

The more general shift from rationalist approaches which rely on the assumption of objectively given phenomena in the world beyond us, to the cognitive, constructionist belief that we produce our own internal worlds through our interaction with others in the physical world has begun to effect our approach to politeness. Language is a crucial component in that interaction, and the construction of our worlds is primarily carried out discursively in emergent social practice.

Discursive approaches to politeness are thus high on the research agenda. Arundale (1999, 2006) has presented a new way of combining face and politeness by seeing face as both relational and interactional and thus presenting new ways of conceptualising politeness as conflict avoidance, which is very reminiscent of Tracy’s earlier work on face (1990).

The variation of approaches to politeness is now considerable, but if Brown and Levinson continues to be chosen as the preferred approach, it is necessary to calibrate their statements in the “Introduction” to the 1987 book with the body of the text, and in doing so to display an awareness that that text was not changed from 1978 to 1987 (see the criticisms by Coupland, Grainger and Coupland 1988 and Tracy 1990). This would allow us to see Brown and Levinson as thinking constructively beyond their own model.

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4. Politeness in East Asia

Shigeko Okamoto

Abstract

The chapter reviews the research on politeness in East Asian languages. It first summarizes the tenets of the studies that challenged the universal applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory from the perspective of politeness in East Asian languages. These studies have made important contributions to the research on politeness in general but also presented a number of limitations. The second part of this chapter discusses these limitations that have been recognized by recent studies, including the lack of clear distinction between norms and practices, the cultural essentialism, and the static and idealistic view of linguistic politeness. The third part of this chapter reviews the recent studies of politeness that attempt to overcome these limitations; focusing on Japanese honorifics as expressions of politeness, it discusses two kinds of research: one that examines politeness and honorifics in actual discursive practice and the other that examines the societal norm construction for politeness and honorific usage.

1. Introduction

While early studies of linguistic politeness represented by Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and Leech (1983) have made invaluable contributions to the field, they have also been contested from a variety of perspectives in ensuing studies (e.g., Fraser 1990; Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992; Eelen 2001; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; Kasper 2006; Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume). In particular, Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness has been most influential and instigated not only numerous studies endorsing their theory but also the greatest amount of criticism (e.g., Watts 2003; Eelen 2001; Werkhofer 2005; Kasper 2006; Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume), which "itself is something of a tribute to B & L" (Leech 2007: 168). Its criticisms include a number of interrelated issues:

- (a) the use of context-independent isolated sentences rather than situated discourse as data;
- (b) its treatment of the speaker as a goal-oriented rational actor;
- (c) its focus on the production of an utterance as a politeness strategy rather than the interpretation and evaluation of an utterance;
- (d) the assumption that certain speech acts are inherently face-threatening;

- (e) the idea that certain linguistic structures as politeness strategies are inherently polite or impolite, and hence can be ranked in the abstract;
- (f) the view that linguistic politeness is rule-governed and predictable in that the speaker computes the weightiness of the face-threatening act (FTA) as a function of three contextual factors, (power relations (P), social distance (D), and degree of imposition (R)), which in turn determines linguistic structures, or politeness strategies, to be taken;
- (g) the narrow and static view of social contexts and variables that are assumed to exist prior to, or outside, the interaction;
- (h) the lack of sociopolitical perspective, and
- (i) its claim for universality.

Among these criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theory, the last issue, namely their claim to universality, has prompted a particularly vibrant debate. A number of researchers working on politeness in non-Western languages have challenged Brown and Levinson's theory from the perspective of cultural relativity. This chapter focuses on the current research on politeness in non-Western, particularly East Asian, languages. It first introduces and appraises the studies that question the universality applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory (Sections 2 and 3); it then reviews more recent studies that employ new approaches to politeness (Section 4), followed by brief conclusions (Section 5).

2. Challenge to Brown and Levinson's universality claim from the East Asian perspective

Brown and Levinson's claim for the universal applicability of their theory has received considerable criticism, especially from scholars examining politeness in East Asian languages. These scholars argue that Brown and Levinson's theory has a Western bias and hence is inappropriate for explaining politeness in languages such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (Matsumoto 1988, 1989; Ide 1989; Gu 1990; Mao 1994; Pan 1995; Wierzbicka [1991] 2003; Yu 2003; Byon 2006; see also Chapters 2 and 3 of this volume for related discussion). This Western bias has been argued particularly with regard to the notion of face as a matter of individuals' wants and desires and that of politeness as a matter of strategies for doing FTAs.

2.1. Concepts of face

First, the critics of Brown and Levinson's theory assert that the notion of face is not universal but culturally mediated. Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) define face as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consisting in two related aspects": negative face and positive face. Negative face is character-

ized as “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition”; and positive face is defined as “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants” (1987: 61). Brown and Levinson (1987: 13) claim that their notion of face is universal, although they note that it is expected to be “the subject of much cultural elaboration”. Their characterization of face, however, has been criticized as being based on the conceptualization of self as an independent individual – a notion that may be applicable to Western cultures which emphasize individualism, but not to East Asian cultures which tend to be group-oriented (Hill et al. 1986; Matsumoto 1988, 1989; Ide 1989; Gu 1990; Mao 1994). In particular, the notion of negative face is said to be unsuitable for East Asian cultures.

For example, Matsumoto (1989: 218) argues that in the Japanese cultural tradition, “a person’s main concern is not to claim and preserve his/her own territory by expressing him/herself clearly, but rather to become and remain accepted by the other members of the group.” Ide (1989) also claims that

[i]n a Western society where individualism is assumed to be the basis of all interaction, it is easy to regard the face as the key to interaction. On the other hand, in a society where group membership is regarded as the basis for interaction, the role or status defined in a particular situation rather than face is the basis of interaction. (Ide 1989: 241)

Similarly, Gu (1990: 241–242) asserts that “the Chinese negative face seems to differ from that defined by Brown and Levinson. For example, offering, inviting, and promising in Chinese, under ordinary circumstances, will not be considered as threatening H’s negative face, i.e., impeding H’s freedom.” Mao (1994: 460) contends that the Chinese concept of face (*miànzi* and *lián*) differs from that defined by Brown and Levinson in that it “emphasizes not the accommodation of individual ‘wants’ or ‘desires’ but the harmony of individual conduct with the views and judgment of the community.” Echoing with Mao’s argument, Yu (2003: 1685) maintains that “while Brown and Levinson’s face can be deemed an individualistic, self-oriented image, Chinese face is communal, interpersonal” and further claims that “Chinese sociocultural norms actually place much greater emphasis on positive politeness [...] than on negative politeness” (cf. Haugh and Hinze 2003). Byon (2006: 268) presents a similar discussion regarding politeness in Korean, noting that the Korean concept of face is closer to that of the Chinese than that defined by Brown and Levinson because the Korean culture is collectivistic and values “face or self-image in relation to others”. Further, he states that the Korean concept of face comprises two aspects: “an individual’s need to abide by cultural norms and show one’s desire to be part of the group” and “an individual’s need to express one’s moral sense regarding role and place” (Byon 2006: 268). As will be discussed in Section 3.2., these studies all resort to cultural essentialism, characterizing Eastern societies as collectivistic rather than individualistic.

2.2. Discernment politeness

The second argument for the claim that Brown and Levinson's theory has a Western bias concerns the motivations for politeness, an issue closely related to the conceptualization of face discussed above. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 65), "certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten face, namely those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker." They then make "a distinction between acts that threaten negative face" (e.g., requests, suggestions, offers) and those that threaten positive face (e.g., criticisms, complaints, disagreements) (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65–66). Politeness is considered a matter of showing sensitivity to individual negative or positive face wants, which can manifest as strategies for dealing with FTAs. In other words, politeness is motivated by one's desire to minimize the impact of FTAs. Again, this notion of politeness has been criticized as Eurocentric in that it may be suitable for Western cultures that value individualism, but not for East Asian cultures that emphasize the importance of group conformity. The advocates of this view emphasize that politeness in East Asian languages is not a matter of one's volitional strategy but rather a matter of observing societal norms of behavior, or "discernment" (e.g., Ide 1989). It corresponds to what Fraser (1990) calls "social-norm" view of politeness.

As supporting evidence for the notion of politeness as a matter of observing societal norms, Matsumoto (1988, 1989) discusses the use of honorifics, one of the most important means for expressing politeness in languages like Japanese and Korean. She points out that every Japanese utterance requires one to choose an appropriate form of the predicate with or without an honorific, and hence that honorifics may be used "even in the absence of FTAs" (1989: 217), as in the statement *Kyoo wa doyoobi desu* 'Today is Saturday,' in which the copula *desu* is in an addressee honorific form. She (1989: 217–218) emphasizes that "[t]o be accepted in the society or in the group, it is likely that a Japanese has to acknowledge his/her understanding of the situation and of the relation among the conversational participants and must indicate that understanding by the choice of appropriate honorifics and speech level. Failure to do so is almost certain to result in loss of face." Matsumoto's observation that honorifics are used even in non-FTA situations is, perhaps, one of the most compelling arguments against the universality claim of Brown and Levinson's theory. Note, however, this argument becomes void if one assumes that there is no faceless social interaction (e.g., Locher 2004; also Usami 2002 for a related discussion).

In similar fashion, Ide (1989) argues that the use of honorifics and other formal forms in Japanese is governed by rigorous situation-based rules, or social conventions. Given certain social situations, the use of honorifics is regarded as obligatory even in the absence of FTAs; honorifics grammatically encode social relations pertaining to the context, such as status difference and degree of intimacy (Ide 1989;

Tokunaga 1992; Ide and Yoshida 1999). Ide (1989: 223) treats this kind of linguistic politeness as a matter of “discernment,” or *wakimae*, which is defined as “the speaker’s use of polite expressions according to social conventions rather than interactional strategy.” According to Hill et al. (1986: 348), volition “allows the speaker a considerably more active choice, according to the speaker’s intention from a relatively wider range of possibilities” of linguistic expressions of politeness, whereas discernment refers to “the almost automatic observation of socially-agreed-upon rules”; that is, in the discernment aspect of politeness, “the speaker can be considered to submit passively to the requirement of the system. That is, once certain factors of addressee and situation are noted, the selection of an appropriate linguistic form and/or appropriate behavior is essentially automatic.”

Brown and Levinson’s notion of politeness as a matter of strategies has also been regarded as inadequate to explain politeness in Chinese. Gu (1990: 256), for example, asserts that what counts as polite is “culture-specific and language-specific.” On the basis of the use of self-reference and address terms, he emphasizes that it is particularly important to observe the norms of politeness stipulated according to hierarchical social structures, because failure to do so will incur social sanctions. In the Chinese context, explains Gu (1990: 242), politeness exercises its normative function in constraining individual speech acts as well as the sequence of talk exchanges. Mao (1994: 459) also underscores the normative aspect of politeness in Chinese, noting that “the tendency to act primarily in compliance with the anticipated expectations of communal norms rather than personal desires continues to be observed by the mainland Chinese, and even by the most rapidly modernizing segments of the Chinese population.” Likewise, Yu (2003: 1686) argues that Brown and Levinson’s politeness is motivated in individual wants and desires, “whereas the Chinese, being communal, simply think of politeness as addressed to the expectations of society at large”.

Byon (2006) deploys a parallel argument for politeness in Korean. He asserts that Koreans regard “discernment politeness” as more important than “volitional politeness” (Byon 2006: 258, 262). Discernment politeness, explains Byon (2006: 258), “is controlled by the cultural norms of the society” and “is often realized in the form of honorifics”. It serves to index social meanings involved in contexts such as speakers’ stance (e.g., politeness, humility) and social variables involved in interactions (e.g., rank, age) (Byon 2006: 258).

3. Politeness in East Asian languages: Critical discussion

Those studies reviewed in Section 2 have contributed to the field by providing a new, or relativistic, perspective and stimulating ensuing research on politeness in both Western and non-Western languages. At the same time, however, they have also been subject to criticism for a variety of reasons, including their methodologi-

cal weaknesses, cultural essentialism, and the context-independent, static view of politeness (e.g., Okamoto 1999; Usami 2001, 2002; Pizziconi 2003; Cook 2006). In this section, I discuss these problems associated with the line of research described in Section 2. Note, however, that some of these criticisms also apply to early research on politeness, including Brown and Levinson's.

3.1. Methodological issues: Description and prescription

Those studies that have challenged Brown and Levinson's universality claim are largely based on researchers' own introspections or self-report survey data (cf. Mao 1994 for an exception). The former mainly use isolated sentences constructed by the researchers themselves as examples, while the latter are usually drawn from the responses to questionnaires, in which the respondents are given hypothetical situations and asked to write what they would say in each situation (i.e., to perform DCT, or Discourse Completion Tasks) or to choose from a set of sentences provided to them which they would use in each situation (e.g., Hill et al. 1986; Ide 1989; Byon 2006). The use of questionnaires as a data collection method is common because it enables the researcher to obtain a large amount of data relatively easily, as compared to collecting naturally occurring speech data. However, the validity of such data as examples of actual speech practice is questionable, partly because the respondents may vary widely in imagining a certain situation: for example, for a situation in which one must borrow a pen from one's boss on the job, respondents may picture quite different images of the workplace, boss, and subordinate, which in turn affects their responses. It has also been shown that the responses to survey questions are likely to differ from naturally occurring speech data; compared to the latter, the responses given in the former are simpler, shorter, and more formal sentences; they also lack interactional features, such as particles, hesitation markers, or hedges (see, for example, Byon 2006 for a summary discussion of the weaknesses associated with the use of DCT as a data collection method).

Further, it has been recognized that both types of data – i.e., isolated sentences constructed by researchers themselves and self-report survey data – tend to correspond to normative linguistic usages, reflecting what the researchers or respondents think as socially desirable or expected speech behavior, rather than what speakers say in real-world situations. But linguistic norms, or prescriptions of socially desirable usages, and actual uses must be clearly distinguished from each other, because the two often diverge from each other considerably (e.g., Silverstein 1979; Irvine 1992; Eelen 2001; Watts 2003; Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2004). This issue has also been noted by some of the researchers who themselves use a self-report survey as their data collection method. For example, Hill et al. (1986: 353) state that “[u]sing a questionnaire with self-reported data is often considered less ‘real’ than collecting instances of actual speech,” but that “[u]sing self-re-

ported data enables us to obtain more stereotypic responses.” Likewise, Byon (2006: 253) states that using DCT means that “the normative or stereotypical expressions of a certain speech act in a given language can be identified” and that it “provides researchers with the informants’ conceptions of the socially and culturally appropriate responses for a given context.”

Yet, it is often the case that self-reported data are casually treated as equivalent to actual speech data. For example, in reporting one of the survey results with regard to the use of request forms (for borrowing a pen in various hypothetical situations), Ide (1989: 238, emphasis mine) states, “formal expressions *are used* for addressees with high power and distance, while non-formal expressions *are used* for addressees with little power and distance”. Similarly, Byon (2006: 264, underlining mine), describing one of his survey results, states that “Korean speakers use direct requests (e.g., *basic directive* and *performative*) more often than indirect requests (e.g., *ellipsis*)” even when talking with a higher-status person. By phrasing their conclusions this way, these authors make generalized claims about language use without clarifying the fact that their conclusions are based on their informants’ *reports* of their language use. As discussed above, one of the major arguments against Brown and Levinson’s universality claim is that in certain East Asian languages, discernment, or the observation of cultural norms, rather than volitional strategies is most important for linguistic politeness. In other words, based on the data that tend to show how respondents or researchers think one should talk in certain situations – that is, one’s discernment – it is claimed that the (actual) use of politeness expressions in East Asian languages is a matter of discernment and not volitional strategy. It is precisely here that the distinction between norms and practices or that between prescription and description disappears.

Note that in Brown and Levinson’s theory speakers are assumed to choose appropriate politeness strategies, or expressions, on the basis of the weightiness of the FTA, determined by the consideration of three contextual factors (P, D, and R). In the case of discernment politeness, speakers are said to choose appropriate expressions in response to such contextual factors as status difference and degree of intimacy. In other words, both Brown and Levinson’s notion of politeness strategy and the notion of discernment assume that speakers are constrained by certain contextual factors. The two notions then do not seem to be as divergent as they are claimed to be. Both Brown and Levinson and their Eastern critics tend to present normative usages as strategies/rules of politeness. That is, as discussed by Eelen (2001: 180), “the theories end up laying out the norms of politeness, stipulating ‘how to be polite’, and in so doing cannot escape the normative prescriptivism that is associated with such practices in everyday reality. As such, the scientist becomes a moral judge, an arbitrator of what is ‘appropriate’, ‘good’ or ‘correct’.”¹

3.2. Cultural essentialism and language ideology

As discussed above, scholars working on politeness in East Asian languages have criticized Brown and Levinson's universality claim as being Eurocentric. Watts (2003: 13) also points out that "[t]o use a lay concept in one language (i.e., *politeness*) as a universal scientific concept for all languages and cultures is particularly inappropriate" (Watts 2003: 13). Ironically, however, the Eastern critics of Brown and Levinson's theory seem to succumb to the same ethnocentrism in that their arguments are couched in "Eastern" cultural values, such as the importance of interdependence and hierarchical relationships. That is, "[a]ny restrictions to a specific cultural viewpoint is likely to obfuscate rather than clarify the concept of 'politeness'; they seem just as firmly stuck in a cultural mould as those they are criticizing" (Watts 2003: 99).

One recurrent theme in arguments against Brown and Levinson's universality claim is the contrast between Western and Eastern cultural values, the former emphasizing the importance of independence and individualism and the latter that of interdependence and group harmony as well as hierarchical structure within a group. Expressions such as "the Japanese cultural tradition," "Chinese face," and "the Korean language and culture" are juxtaposed with their "Western" counterparts. Such a dichotomy assumes an intra-cultural homogeneity; that is, within each culture, its members are presumed to share the same cultural values/norms and, therefore, behave in the same way. This is the very assumption underlying the notion of discernment, defined as "the almost automatic observation of socially-agreed-upon rules," thereby "the speaker can be considered to submit passively to the requirement of the system" (Hill et al. 1986: 348). The characterization of "East" and "West" in terms of interdependence and individualism has previously had wide currency in psychology (e.g., Markus and Kitayama 1991) as well as in linguistics. "The result is essentialism: the assumption that a group contains features emblematic of all its members. This assumption is perilous because it can easily lead people to be viewed as exchangeable 'carbon copies' and promote disregard for heterogeneity, agency, and individuality" (Gjerde 2004: 139). Consequently, this binary approach has come under sharp critique in recent years (e.g., Takano and Osaka 1999; Sugimoto 2003; Gjerde 2004).

The same kind of criticism applies to the Eastern critique of Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness. It disregards culture-internal diversity as well as the speaker's agency. As discussed above, cultural norms and actual practices are not isomorphic. There are a multitude of factors related to social and contextual diversity that influence one's actual linguistic practices, which cannot possibly be reduced to a set of simple rules or maxims (see Section 4.1. for further discussion). Moreover, native speakers' understandings of cultural norms themselves may not necessarily be the same, as suggested by such phrases as "socially-agreed upon rules" and "shared cultural norms." In fact, self-report survey data about the use of

certain expressions in hypothetical situations normally show variation among the informants in their responses, suggesting the existence of differing understandings of linguistic norms. But such variation in their responses is dissolved into statistical averages. Cross-linguistic differences observed in “average” behaviors of speakers in the East versus those in the West are then explained as reflections of “cultural differences.” Eelen (2001: 166) argues that cultures, which are never clearly defined, seem to be “tailor-made to account for the ‘average’ behavior of a ‘group’” (see also Chapter 3 of this volume).

The notion of culture entails shared values. “Cultures are by definition internally homogeneous – at least as far as politeness is concerned – because they are the level on which the politeness system is shared” (Eelen 2001: 165). However, people’s beliefs about language use, such as their ideas about what is (im)polite behavior, may vary widely within a “culture” (Mills 2003; Locher 2004; Okamoto 1999, 2004; Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2008; Chapter 3 of this volume), because language ideologies, or rationalizations of perceived language structure and use (Silverstein 1979: 193), reflect the interests of certain social groups and are always contested and negotiated (Irvine and Gal 2000; Kroskrity 2000). Eelen (2001: 174) contends that “[p]oliteness always involves an evaluative act where behaviour is judged in terms of (in)appropriateness, in terms of ‘(im)proper’, ‘well/(ill)-mannered’ conduct” and hence “it constitutes a moral judgment, where the evaluator imposes a moral order on the evaluated” (see also Haugh and Hinze 2003; Mills 2003; Watts 2003; and Chapter 3 of this volume). The evaluation of social conduct as proper or improper is based on one’s ideology. It is a subjective judgment and hence may vary among individuals as well as across time (within each “culture”).

As discussed above, informants’ responses to survey questions concerning hypothetical situations (e.g., Hill et al. 1986; Byon 2006) suggest the existence of variation in people’s ideas about what is (im)polite. Another example of such variation concerns (diachronic) change in the use of honorifics. It has been said that the use of honorifics in Japanese has changed particularly after World War II, as post-war Japan has become more “democratized” with the increasing use of honorifics based on degree of intimacy rather than hierarchical relationships (see Section 4.2. for further discussion). This change is analogous to the change in the use of T/V pronouns in European languages (Silverstein 1979). Another example would be the use of the term *tongzhi* ‘lit. comrade’ in Chinese, which was favored as an honorific title after the Communist Revolution (1921–1949) but has come to be disfavored as a general title in the last two decades and instead used by gay-right activists to refer to themselves; but it is now used to refer to gays and lesbians in a derogatory, or impolite, way (Wong 2005). Gu (1990: 247–248) notes that many classical address and reference terms for politeness came to be seen as either too self-denigrating (e.g., *nùcai* ‘slave’) or too other-elevating (e.g., *dàren* ‘great person’) in modern China and neutral expressions have come into use. In the last few

years, however, “winds of change have begun to blow in the opposite direction,” as can be seen in “the resurrection of some classical deferential (i.e. elevative) terms” (Gu 1990: 248). These examples indicate that people’s beliefs about societal norms for linguistic politeness, or what is (im)polite behavior, may vary both diachronically and synchronically.

3.3. Discernment politeness and indexicality

The idea that members of a culture share linguistic norms and speak in the same way in like situations usually goes in tandem with the notion that certain linguistic forms directly index,² or encode, such social structures as status difference and *uchi/soto* ‘in-group/out-group’, relationship; it is the social structures of the context³ that prompt speakers to use expressions of politeness as indexes of those social structures. Ide (1989: 230) states that “[h]onorifics and other formal linguistic forms, in which the relative rank of the speaker, the referent and the addressee are morphologically or lexically encoded, are used so as to comply with such rules of politeness” as “Be polite to a person of a higher status; be polite to an older person”. If, for example, the subject of a sentence refers to a higher-status person, the use of honorifics for that person is considered obligatory. Comparing this process to the subject-verb agreement in European languages, Ide (1989: 227) argues that it is “the socio-pragmatic equivalent of grammatical concord and may thus be termed socio-pragmatic concord”, and that “the use of honorifics can be simply socio-pragmatic concord, which operates just as automatically as grammatical concord, independent of the speaker’s rational intention” (Ide 1989: 242). Wetzel (1994a: 83) likewise notes that “Japanese verbs obligatorily ‘conjugate’ for *uchi/soto* in much the same way that Indo-European languages conjugate for person” (see also Tokunaga 1992; Sukle 1994).

Treating linguistic forms as direct indexes of certain social structures is based on a static view of language use in that it assumes a fixed relationship between a linguistic form and its social meaning(s). Such a view cannot account for wide synchronic variation in actual practices of linguistic politeness as well as in the speakers’ understanding of norms of politeness. Nor does it allow diachronic variation, or change in the use and meanings of such forms as honorifics in Japanese and address and reference terminologies in Chinese, as discussed earlier. Further, such a view can explain neither the multiplicity and ambiguities of social meanings of linguistic expressions as they pertain to politeness nor the creative use of language to construct social identities and relationships. The following section discusses these points.

4. Toward a dynamic and empirically grounded view of linguistic politeness

As discussed in the preceding section, the limitations of the relativist approach to politeness largely stem from a static and idealistic view of language use – a view also shared by the universalist approach represented by Brown and Levinson’s theory. In order to overcome such limitations, researchers are increasingly exploring new approaches based on a more dynamic and empirically based view of language use. A central issue addressed in recent studies of politeness is a clear distinction between (prescriptive) norms and practice, which in turn allows us to consider a number of theoretical issues, including the relationship between norms and practice, the issue of interpretation of indexical signs, the role of ideology in the construction of societal norms for linguistic politeness, and the creative use of indexical signs. To illustrate this point, in this section I focus on politeness as it relates to honorifics in Japanese, because they are most prominent in the argument for discernment politeness. Drawing on recent studies, I first discuss politeness and honorifics in actual practice (4.1.) and then politeness and honorifics in the construction of societal norms (4.2.).

4.1. Politeness and honorifics in discursive social practice

Recognizing the methodological weaknesses associated with the use of constructed sentences and self-reported data, an increasing number of researchers examining politeness have started drawing data from actual conversations carried out in diverse social situations. Usami (2001, 2002), for example, primarily employing quantitative analyses of recorded conversations, emphasizes the importance of examining politeness at the discourse level rather than the sentence or utterance-level. Arguing against the cultural relativist approach to politeness, she offers an account based on the notion of markedness and asserts that the participants of a conversation usually adhere to “unmarked politeness,” which is realized by a default, or unmarked pattern of use of honorifics and other features related to politeness (e.g., backchannels). The unmarked pattern of use is identified by the frequency of use of a particular linguistic feature; for example, if honorifics (as opposed to plain forms) are used more than 50 percent of the time in a given conversation, the use of honorifics is considered unmarked (Usami 2001: 27). If the speaker deviates from the unmarked pattern, it is said to bring about one of the following three special effects: (1) “plus politeness,” which corresponds to Brown and Levinson’s positive or negative politeness, (2) “minus politeness,” that is, rudeness, or (3) a certain discourse function – for example, emphasis (Usami 2001: 28). Usami’s account may be intuitively appealing, but as she herself seems to recognize, it also leaves many questions unanswered. For example, is the unmarked pattern of use considered the societal prescriptive norm and hence relative to cul-

ture? If so, is such a norm shared by all speakers? If it is not, which is quite possible due to ideological differences regarding language use (see below), how can the “special effects,” which seem to work as implicatures (in the manner of Gricean conversational implicatures) of the deviation from the unmarked pattern, be dealt with? Further, if, for example, the use of plain forms is marked, how do we know which of the three special effects is brought about by the use of plain forms in a given situation? In general, how can the ambiguities, plurality and diversity of situated meanings of honorifics (see below) or other features related to politeness be explained?

Other discourse-based studies present accounts of politeness based on qualitative analyses, although some also incorporate quantitative analyses (e.g., Cook 1996, 1998, 2006, 2008; Okamoto 1998, 1999, 2004, 2008a; Geyer 2008a, 2008b). These studies demonstrate that politeness in Japanese cannot be considered simply a matter of discernment. Although they differ in many ways, they all view politeness as discursively and interactionally constructed (see Locher 2004 and Chapters 3 and 11 of this volume for related discussions), that is, as a dynamic process inseparable from the specific context of speech. As discussed earlier, the notion of discernment politeness assumes that speakers use honorifics when a certain social structure – i.e., status difference or degree of intimacy – is present in the context, because the social rule of politeness tells them to do so. However, recent studies based on actual conversations have found many cases that do not conform to the canonical social rules of politeness, as envisioned by the notion of discernment. In my recent study (Okamoto 2008a), for example, I examined three dyadic conversations in which the speakers are in some kind of hierarchical relationship in terms of age and social role, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1. Participants of the three conversations analyzed

Conversation	Participants (all native speakers of Japanese)
1	OY: 38-year old; male; professor at a junior college in Japan IT: 23-year old; female; graduate student of an American university IT is OY's former student and is visiting him at his office.
2	IK: 58-year old; female; housewife, but helps her family business KH: 25-year old; female; tour guide of a local travel bureau KH is IK's daughter's friend and is visiting IK's home.
3	YK: 50-year old; female; employee of a local government office MS: 35-year old; female; employee of a local business office MS is YK's friend and is visiting YK's office.

Each conversation was carried out in a private setting without the presence of the researcher; the participants were not given specific topics to talk about but rather chose their own topics.⁴ For each speaker I analyzed the use of addressee honor-

ifics and plain forms for the first 60 relevant tokens (i.e., tokens where the use of addressee honorific is possible) in main and dependent clauses. The results are summarized in Table 2:

Table 2. Use of addressee honorifics (AH) and plain forms (PLN) by each participant

Conver- sation	Partici- pant	In dependent clauses			In main clauses			In main & dependent clauses		
		AH %	PLN %	Total % (tokens)	AH %	PLN %	Total % (tokens)	AH %	PLN %	Total % (tokens)
1	OY	0	100	100 (5)	46	54	100 (55)	42	58	100 (60)
	IT	14	86	100 (14)	85	15	100 (46)	68	32	100 (60)
2	IK	5	95	100 (19)	2	98	100 (41)	3	97	100 (60)
	KH	4	96	100 (25)	83	17	100 (35)	50	50	100 (60)
3	YK	0	100	100 (12)	2	98	100 (48)	2	98	100 (60)
	MS	17	83	100 (6)	48	52	100 (54)	45	55	100 (60)

First, let us consider the two most commonly noted factors for the use of honorifics: status difference and degree of intimacy, which are comparable to Brown and Levison's P and D, respectively. How do these factors affect actual speech? If, for example, status difference is the determining factor, honorifics should not be reciprocated; that is, a lower-status person should always use honorifics to a higher-status person but not vice versa. However, according to Table 2, the lower-status person in each conversation did not always use addressee honorifics: IT used them only 68% of the time, KH 50% of the time, and MS 45% of the time. Nor did the higher-status persons use only plain forms: OY used addressee honorifics 42% of the time, while IK and YK hardly used them. Cook (2006), examining student-professor conversations, also shows similar examples in which both students and professors used both honorific and plain forms. Is it then the case that the degree of intimacy is the determining factor? If that is in fact the case, both speakers in each conversation should reciprocate the use of these forms. If the participants do not know each other well, as in Conversations 1 and 2, both of them should consistently use addressee honorifics to each other. If, on the other hand, the participants know each other relatively well, as in Conversation 3, both

of them should consistently use plain forms to each other. But Table 2 shows that neither is the case.

This observation, however, does not mean that the speakers are ignoring both the status difference and degree of intimacy. The results shown in Table 2 suggest that the speakers are taking into consideration the status difference in that the lower-status persons in all three conversations used addressee honorifics more frequently than the higher-status persons, although there are wide individual differences. The degree of intimacy may also be relevant in that the lower-status person in Conversation 3 (MS), who is a friend of her interlocutor, did not use honorifics as much as the lower-status persons in the other two conversations. (Note that other factors besides the degree of intimacy may also be relevant, as will be discussed below.)

These observations indicate that we need to examine the data more closely and consider other factors besides status difference and degree of intimacy. For example, Table 2 suggests that the linguistic environment of a given utterance is relevant in that the higher-status persons used plain forms both in dependent and main clauses, while the lower-status persons used them more in dependent clauses than in main clauses. This may be because using honorifics even in dependent clauses may make the utterances sound too polite/formal for the conversations examined here. It may also be related to discourse organization in that dependent clauses tend to convey background information, as explained by Cook (2006)⁵ with regard to similar examples in the student-professor conversations she analyzed (see also Maynard 1993, 2004; Makino 2002).

Further, the lower-status persons in my data (Okamoto 2008a) sometimes used plain forms for backchannels (e.g., IT: *Ara, honto* 'Oh, really?'; MS: *Soo soo* 'Right, right'). Further, they also used plain forms when they repeated the utterances made by their interlocutors, as illustrated in Example (1). It seems that MS in (1) did not use an honorific (i.e., *Un, pera pera desu*), because her utterance serves like a backchannel for supporting YK by repeating only the important content of YK's utterance. Cook (2006: 278) observed similar uses of plain forms by students in her data, as illustrated in Example (2). She explains that the student's repetition (i.e., *sanwari*) in (2) overlaps with the professor's utterance, in which *sanwari* is embedded in a dependent clause, and that the professor and student jointly construct an utterance.

(1) [Conversation 3: YK and MS talking about MS's friend who is studying in the United States.]

YK: *Ja moo eigo pera pera ja.*

'Then, she speaks English fluently/*pera pera*.'

MS: *Un, pera pera.*

PLN

'Yes, fluently/*pera pera*.'

(2) [Based on Example (5a) in Cook 2006: 278]

Professor: *sanwari [sukunaku tomo sanwari] tte iu koto wa nippon no ip-paasento ni mitanai*
 ‘3%, at least 3%. That means compared with Japanese (Christians) which is less than 1% ...’

Student: *[so sanwari]*
 PLN
 ‘yes 3%.’

The lower-status persons in my data also used plain forms in main clauses (Okamoto 2008a). In such cases plain forms were often used for particular speech acts or activities, such as exclamatory utterances (e.g., IT: *Wa:: sugo::i!* ‘Wow awesome!’; MS: *Oishii!* ‘Delicious!’) and soliloquy-like utterances (e.g., IT: *Ue no hito na n janai kana::* ‘I wonder he is a senior.’). In such utterances, one may find it unnecessary to be polite or formal. Geyer (2008b), analyzing the discourse in faculty meetings at schools, observed the use of plain forms in monologue-like utterances used for mitigating certain speech acts (e.g., noncompliance). Cook (2006) also found that a student, talking with his professor, used plain forms when he expressed his conviction about certain matters as though he were talking to himself (see also Maynard 1993, 2004; Makino 2002).

Note also that when a lower-status person used plain forms in “main” clauses, many of them ended in a continuative form (i.e., *-tte*) or are followed by a conjunctive particle (e.g., *kedo* ‘but’, *kara* ‘because’) used utterance finally. For example, IT in (3) ends her utterance with the continuative verb form *omotte* ‘(I) thought and’ rather than the final form with an honorific (e.g., *omoimashita* ‘(I) thought’ or *omotte kimashita* ‘(I) thought and came’), which may allow her to avoid sounding too assertive by using a declarative sentence.

(3) [From Conversation 1: OY and IT meet after a long absence.]

OY: *Natsukashii desu nee.*

‘It’s been a long time since I saw you last.’

IT: *Hai, nanka kaette kite zehi O-sensei o tazunete miyoo to omotte.* [laugh]
 PLN

‘Yes, when I came back, I somehow thought I would visit Prof. O-tte’

The higher-status persons also used plain forms in these contexts listed above, but they, especially IK in Conversation 2 and YK in Conversation 3, were much less constrained and used plain forms in almost any contexts.

Many other examples of “deviant” uses of honorific and plain forms have been observed in other studies. For example, in familiar conversations in which plain forms are mainly used, honorifics may sometimes be used when the utterance involves a certain speech act, such as a request, apology, or sarcasm (e.g., Sukle 1994; Cook 1996). Types of speech activities and genres may also affect the choice

of honorific and plain forms. Cook (1996, 2008), for example, observed that students in elementary schools used honorifics when engaging in the *happyoo* 'presentation' activity but used plain forms when talking to their teacher individually. Geyer (2008b) reports that teachers at faculty meetings used addressee honorifics in official talk (e.g., reporting), while they shifted to plain forms in unofficial talk (e.g., joking). Conversational setting may also be important: for example, honorifics may not be used toward a person of power (e.g., customers), as seen in the speech of vendors in casual market places, as opposed to that of salespersons in more formal department stores (Okamoto 1998). Emotions may also be relevant (e.g., Maynard 2004). For example, one may express anger by using honorifics to a familiar person or by using plain forms to a higher-status person or person one does not know well, as in Cook's (1998) example in which two persons who hardly knew each other used plain forms when quarreling.

As evident from the foregoing discussion, the use of honorific and plain forms is quite complex and their meanings are often ambiguous and multiple and may vary depending on the context. For example, the meanings of addressee honorifics used in Conversation 1 may differ depending on the speaker: The addressee honorifics used by IT seem to indicate her acknowledgement of, or deference to, OY as a higher-status person as well as her understanding of the lack of intimacy between them, while those used by OY may be construed not only as his acknowledgement of the lack of intimacy but also as his attempt to reduce the hierarchical distance by reciprocating honorifics to some extent; it would, however, not be taken as a sign of his deference to IT as a higher-status person. Some of the plain forms used by IT may serve particular discourse pragmatic functions (e.g., making an exclamatory or soliloquy-like utterance, conveying background information); IT's plain forms could also be interpreted as her attempt to avoid making her utterances too stiff and formal by using honorifics constantly, but they would not implicate her power as a higher-status person. On the other hand, many of the plain forms used by OY may not only serve discourse pragmatic functions but may also implicate both his power as a higher-status person as well as his attempt to show friendliness.

These observations suggest that one cannot directly link an honorific (or plain) form to a particular social structure like status difference or degree of intimacy. As we saw above, there are numerous factors that may influence the choice of honorific and plain forms, including social relationship, speech act/activity, emotion, discourse organization, setting, genre, and linguistic context. It is also possible that different individuals perceive the features of a given situation differently, which may result in different uses of honorifics. Furthermore, even if different speakers perceive all the relevant features of a particular situation in the same way, that does not mean that they will use honorifics in the same way, because they may have differing ideas about "correct" honorific use, or "appropriate" politeness (see Section 4.2. for further discussion). In other words, one cannot always predict the use of honorifics because of the subjective nature of the perception of the context as well

as the assessment of “correct” honorific use for a given situation. An alternative account that has been proposed to cope with these issues is to treat honorifics as expressions of the speaker’s affective stance (Ochs 1993), or attitude, toward the relevant person or situation. That is, honorifics may be regarded as expressions of the speaker’s deferential attitude (Ochs 1993; Cook 1998; Okamoto 1999; see also Chapter 11 of this volume for a discussion of deference), the presentational mode of self (Cook 1996, 2008), or formality as one’s restrained attitude toward a given situation (Okamoto 1999), which in turn may serve to implicate or constitute specific contextual features, such as social relationships, speech act/activity, setting, genre, and discourse organization. Speakers may differ in relating the affective stance, or pragmatic meanings of honorifics, to specific contexts due to their differing attitudes toward honorific use (Kikuchi 1994; Okamoto 1999). For instance, some may consider showing deference or restrained attitude appropriate when making a request or apology to a familiar person and use honorifics, but others may not; some customers may use plain forms to salespersons, while others may use honorifics toward them (Okamoto 1998). Such differences may then lead to different perceptions, or evaluations, of politeness in regard to the same expressions used in a given situation (see below for further discussion).

The foregoing discussion suggests that speakers do not passively observe such rules of politeness as “Be polite to a higher-status person” (see also Okamoto 1998, 1999; Pizziconi 2003; Cook 2006, 2008). Speakers, for example, often shift between honorific and plain forms when talking with the same person in the same conversation. They are active agents who use honorific and plain forms strategically based on their consideration of multiple contextual factors as well as what they believe to be the societal norms. Such use of these forms allows one to use language to construct desired identities, interpersonal relationships, and social acts (Okamoto 1997, 1999, 2008a; Cook 1998, 2006, 2008; see also Chapter 8 of this volume for a discussion of the social constructionist approach to interpersonal identity). Furthermore, if we consider politeness from the perspective of interpretation of expressions rather simply as a matter of speaker’s choice, it is possible that the expressions used by a particular speaker may not be perceived in the same way by all participants of the conversation as socially appropriate, (im)polite, (un)feminine, etc. (see Section 4.2. for further discussion; see also Haugh 2007 in which he discusses the interpretation of politeness as implicature emerging in the interaction between the participants).⁶ In the relativist argument, discernment and strategy are treated as contrastive notions. However, they are neither contrastive nor mutually exclusive in that even if speakers choose expressions strategically, that does not mean that they are free to use any expressions; rather, they consider and negotiate what they think is normally expected in a given situation. Such consideration, however, must involve a multitude of factors and situational concerns. Further, speakers may not always share the same idea about linguistic norms, or what is expected, appropriate, or polite in a given situation.

4.2. Politeness and honorifics in the construction of societal norms for speech

As mentioned, it is important not to confound norms with practices. Norms should be studied as norms, which may have a greater or lesser effect on one's speech in specific social situations. Eelen (2001: 186) argues that "rather than letting moral issues inform our research efforts, we should turn them into an object of study" by examining issues such as how (dominant) societal norms are constructed, what they are for, and how they are received and influence actual speech practice. This section addresses these issues with regard to the use of Japanese honorifics as expressions of politeness, because it offers an excellent site for considering the construction of linguistic norms.

Even though Japan has become more democratized after World War II, honorifics are considered to be essential for Japanese social life. In a 2004 public opinion poll, when asked "Is *keigo* 'honorific language' still necessary?" 96.1 percent said "yes" (Wetzel 2008: 121). "A 1997 public opinion poll showed that 84.4% of those surveyed thought training in the use of honorific language in the home was important" (Carroll 2001: 93). Note also that although the use of honorifics may have become more "democratic" (see below), status-difference is still far from becoming irrelevant for the use of honorifics. In a 1995 government survey 91.3 percent of the respondents agreed that "one should use honorific language to one's superiors" (Carroll 2001: 91). The nonreciprocal use of honorifics seen earlier in actual conversational data (Section 4.1.) also indicates the importance of status difference in the use of honorifics. Although there were large individual differences, lower-status persons generally used honorifics much more than higher-status persons. Thus the "democratization" of honorific use may be realized more in the use of honorifics by higher-status persons toward lower-status persons, as in professors' use of honorifics toward students seen earlier, rather than the use of plain forms by lower-status persons toward higher-status persons, although again there are many cases that do not conform to this pattern, as discussed earlier.

Japanese strong awareness of the importance of honorifics is also evident in numerous self-help books on honorifics published with such titles as *Keigo wa kowakunai* 'Honorifics are not frightening' (Inoue 1999), *Suberanai keigo* 'Honorifics that will not fail you' (Kajiwara 2008), and *Atama ga ii hito no keigo no tsukai-kata* 'How smart people use honorifics' (Hongo 2006). Many of them become best-sellers; for example, Hongo (2006) sold more than 300,000 copies. The abundance of such self-help books indicates that many people feel insecure about the "correct" use of honorifics and make conscious efforts to use honorifics "correctly" (Okamoto 1999: 54). Moreover, as the titles of these books indicate, the ability to use honorifics skillfully is seen as an important element for one's socio-economic status. Miller (1989) argues that the knowledge of honorifics is not equally distributed in the society and that it is seen as "linguistic capital" for improving one's social status. The belief that one should use "correct" honorifics or be socially

sanctioned then contributes to the production and reproduction of the class-based ideology of honorifics.

Despite this enormous emphasis on the importance of “correct” honorifics, however, people do not always agree on what is the correct usage. The discernment politeness assumes the existence of “socially-agreed-upon rules of politeness” but the view of honorifics as polite expressions seems to betray such assumption. In fact, one of the self-help books (Kajiwara 2008) has a section called “*Tadashii keigo*” *wa korokoro kawaru* “‘Correct honorifics’ change frequently’ where the author discusses the changes in the government policy on honorific usage over time. I argue that the view of honorifics is closely related to the sociopolitical climate of the time and is subject to variation; thus it must be considered in relation to its historical context. Honorifics in Japanese started to receive scholars’ special attention when Japan embarked on developing *hyoojungo* ‘Standard Japanese’ as *kokugo* ‘National Language’ in the early 20th century as part of the nation’s modernization process. The speech variety presumably used by “educated Tokyoites” was designated as Standard Japanese, or *kokugo*. The existence of a highly complex honorific system, which other languages like Chinese and English lack, was emphasized as an important aspect of *kokugo* and the “superb” Japanese culture that values deference (Takiura 2005; Wetzel 2008). This nationalistic view of honorifics was particularly popular during the war years (Carroll 2001).

After World War II the National Language Council (*Kokugo-shingikai*) issued recommendations on honorific usage, *Kore kara no keigo* ‘Honorific language henceforth’ in 1952, stating: “To date, honorific language has developed mainly on the basis of superior-subordinate relations, but from now on, honorific language must be established on the basis of mutual respect which values each person’s basic humanity” (a translated quotation from *Kore kara no keigo*, Carroll 2001: 91; see also Kikuchi 1994; Wetzel 2008). The same Council in its 1996 report notes that the contemporary honorific usage has become simpler, that the use based on status difference has decreased while that based on degree of intimacy has come to be considered more important, and that the addressee rather than the referent has become more important in the use of honorifics (Bunkacho 1996; see also Minami 1987; Kikuchi 1994; Carroll 2001). In its 1998 report, the Council emphasized the importance of expressions of respect (*keii hyoogen*) (see Chapter 11, this volume, for the notions of respect), including honorifics and other linguistic expressions, for ensuring “smooth communication,” but did not make any specific recommendation. This was criticized sharply for being vague. In response, in 2006, a government committee on honorifics under the National Language Division (*Kokugo-bunkakai*, formerly *Kokugo-shingikai*) issued guidelines on honorifics and presented a new 5-way categorization of honorifics rather than the traditional 3-way categorization, which was criticized by many for being confusing (Kajiwara 2008; Wetzel 2008).

The changes in the national language policies regarding honorific usage and the public’s responses to the policies indicate that there exist many disagreements

about honorific use not only among policy makers themselves but also among ordinary Japanese. Kikuchi (1994: 377) states that because there are individual differences regarding questions such as how polite one should be, how much honorifics should be used, and what is considered “excessive” honorifics, the use of honorifics indeed constitutes one’s persona (*hitogara*). Differing opinions about honorific use are often expressed in the media. Some think *Kore kara no keigo* issued in 1952 was too liberal, being strongly influenced by the postwar emphasis on democracy, while others regard the “decline in the use of honorific language” as a good sign that the society was becoming more democratic (Carroll 2001: 97–98). A writer to the readers’ column in a major newspaper complained about the teachers who did not use honorific suffix – *san* toward their students as being arrogant and rude, but a student disagreed with him, saying that she liked such teachers because she felt closer to them than to those who used the suffix. A writer of a newspaper column criticizes politicians’ “excessive” uses of humble honorific forms as being insincere but reports that his friend perceives them positively as gentle and as a sign of good upbringing (Okamoto 1999).

Surveys also reveal different attitudes toward honorific use. Wetzel (1994b: 126), conducting a subjective reaction test, found that, in general, speakers who used “correct” honorifics were judged as more polite and more intelligent than those who did not use honorifics. She also reports that her post-test indicated class-based variation: that is, representatives of a higher socioeconomic class were more outspoken and ready to negatively judge “incompetent” or “insufficient” honorific use than those of a lower socioeconomic class (Wetzel 1994b: 133).

Wetzel (1994b) also observed some interesting variation related to gender. For example, women were far more likely to notice “errors” in honorific usage than men (122); further, female judges were significantly harsher toward the women who used honorifics “incorrectly” (131). Results of other studies also suggest the existence of gender differences in societal norms for politeness. In a 1995 government survey, a far higher percentage of women than men agreed that “depending on circumstances, one should use honorific language to younger people” (Carroll 2001: 92). Ide (1990) reports that when informants were asked to assess the politeness levels of different sentences, women gave lower levels of politeness for almost all sentences than men did. Thus, to express the same level of politeness, a woman has to use a politer linguistic form, or a higher level of honorific, than a man would (Ide 1990: 67). Kawanari (1993), reporting the results of a survey based on discourse completion tests, states that compared to men, women gave responses that were generally more indirect and polite, containing more honorific expressions (see also Ogino, Misono and Fukushima 1985). The results of these studies suggest that women are expected to speak more politely than men using honorifics and other expressions, and that the ideology of honorifics and politeness is not only class-based, but also intertwined with gender, in particular the concept of femininity. Studies of Japanese women’s language also treat politeness, expressed

through honorifics and other means, as one of its most important aspects (e.g., Ide 1982, 1990; Ide and Yoshida 1999). Ide (1990: 63) notes that “among various features which make women’s speech feminine politeness in speech stands out in Japanese” (see Chapter 9, this volume, for a review of research on gender and politeness).

Women’s social conduct, including speech, has been subject to evaluation much more than men’s since pre-modern Japan. A number of studies have examined the construction of societal norms for women’s speech from a historical point of view (e.g., Sugimoto 1997; Nakamura 2001, 2007; Endo 2006; Inoue 2006; Bohn and Matsumoto 2008; see Okamoto 2008b for a summarizing discussion). According to studies such as Sugimoto (1997) and Endo (2006), since pre-modern Japan women have been instructed to speak gently, politely, and in a refined manner. Women’s discipline books in the Edo period (1600–1867) emphasized the importance of speaking politely and in an elegant manner and recommended women to use *yamato kotoba* ‘Yamato language,’ which derived from *nyooboo kotoba* ‘court ladies’ language’ and included the polite prefix *o-* for nouns and a variety of indirect expressions. Even after Japan entered its modern era, women continued to be told to speak politely and elegantly. Furthermore, with the emergence of Standard Japanese, defined as the speech of upper- and middle-class residents in Tokyo (Carroll 2001), the model speech for women started to be drawn from “feminine” speech forms in Standard Japanese, which were repeatedly presented in textbooks, manner books, women’s magazines, novels, and so on (Sugimoto 1997; Nakamura 2001, 2007; Endo 2006; Inoue 2006; Bohn and Matsumoto 2008).

The situation does not seem to have changed much today. There are numerous self-help books for women’s speech with titles such as *Onna no miryoku wa hanashi-kata shidai* ‘Women’s attractiveness depends on how they talk’ (Kanai 1994) and *Josei no utsukushii hanashi-kata to kaiwajutsu* ‘Women’s beautiful ways of speaking and conversational skills’ (Shimodaira 2004). These books usually contain a section on honorifics and emphasize their “proper” use (Okamoto 2004; Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2008). *Josei no hinkaku* ‘Women’s dignity’ (Bando 2006), a self-help book, which became a best seller selling over 4 million copies, also includes one section on “classy ways of talking” and its first sub-section is *Keigo no tsukai-kata* ‘How to use honorifics’. There the author criticizes those women who have an erroneous understanding of gender equality and think that women need not use “polite expressions, honorifics, and feminine language (*teineina kotoba ya keigo ya onna-rashii kotoba*)” (Bando 2006: 63). Stereotypical feminine and polite speech in Standard Japanese is normally used for heroines in TV dramas, films, Anime, and novels (Kinsui 2003; Shibamoto Smith 2004; Mizumoto 2006). Complaints about real women’s speech are often expressed in the media: for example, young women who use “rough” language are condemned for being “unfeminine”; women who cannot use honorifics “properly” are blamed for their ignorance and improper upbringing (Nakamura 2001; Okamoto 2004, 2008b;

Inoue 2006). These observations indicate that since pre-modern Japan, politeness and class-status have been regarded as constituting the ideal form of linguistic femininity (see Chapter 9, this volume, for a discussion of gender and social class).

Despite these concerted efforts to teach Japanese women to speak politely, gently, and femininely, real women's speech has been shown to often "deviate" from the prescribed norms and exhibit wide variation related to social and contextual diversity (e.g., Gendai Nihongo Kenkyukai 1999; Usami 2002; Okamoto 1997; Abe 2004; Matsumoto 2004; Miyazaki 2004; Sunaoshi 2004; Mizumoto 2006; Okada 2008; see also Chapter 9, this volume, for a discussion of diverse sociolinguistic identities). The fact that there are so many self-help books on women's speech indicates that there are many women who want to "improve" their speech. Complaints about real women's speech also suggest the existence of women who do not speak as expected. Furthermore, not everyone may consider the stereotypical women's speech as feminine. For example, according to Mizumoto's (2006) survey, men considered stereotypical feminine speech based on Standard Japanese as "feminine" and as associated with "mature women," while women said they use such a speech style when talking with older persons and superiors or when they want to mock such a style when talking with their friends (see also Inoue 2006). In a T.V. drama, in which a geisha who speaks an old-fashioned Kyoto dialect is portrayed as feminine, a down-to-earth Osaka woman tries to emulate this Kyoto woman's demeanor, including her speech, but her male friend tells her that she does not need to change because she is already feminine in her own way (Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith 2008). These observations suggest that the relationship between politeness, honorifics and femininity is not given but constructed as part of the prescriptive norms for women's behavior.

Through the literature review in this section, we have seen how the societal norms for Japanese linguistic politeness as it pertains to honorifics are constructed and how in this process, politeness, honorifics, and class-status are linked to each other to shape a (hegemonic) language ideology, which often serves as a basis, or prescriptive norm, for evaluating the linguistic behavior of Japanese. The foregoing discussion also illuminates how politeness and honorifics are ideologically linked to femininity as well as to women's class-status. "Feminine" speech is not naturally endowed to women, as is often thought; it is a cultural construct based on the ideology that women should speak politely and elegantly, which is then related to the use of honorifics and other linguistic forms. Further, the discussion in this section has elucidated the fact that (hegemonic) societal norms may change over time and also that speakers may vary in their understanding of societal norms, or what the appropriate expressions of politeness, should be for a given situation. In sum, societal norms of politeness cannot be adequately understood without considering its ideological underpinnings embedded in its social, political, and historical context. Examining the norms of politeness in this way is imperative not only

for gaining their deeper understanding, but also for explicating diverse actual linguistic uses and interpretations in which individuals negotiate what they apprehend as the norms of politeness for a given situation.

5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have reviewed the research on politeness in East Asian languages. Studies that challenged the universal applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory from a perspective of politeness in East Asian languages have contributed to the field by stimulating the research on politeness in general but they also show a number of limitations, such as the lack of clear distinction between norms and practices, the cultural essentialism, and the static and idealistic view of linguistic politeness. I have then reviewed the recent studies of politeness that are based on a more dynamic and empirically based view of politeness. Focusing on Japanese honorifics, I have discussed two kinds of research: one that examines politeness and honorifics in actual discursive practice and the other that examines the societal norm construction for politeness and honorific usage.

Research on politeness in East Asian languages raises a number of important theoretical and methodological issues relevant to the study of politeness in general. These issues include: the importance of distinguishing norms and practice and considering the relationship between the two; the need for examining politeness in actual interactions as discursive social practices as well as investigating how societal norms for politeness are constructed in sociopolitical and historical contexts and how language ideologies mediate expressions of politeness and their social meanings, giving rise to differing views of politeness; and the need for examining the interpretation of politeness expressions with regard to its multiplicity and ambiguities. Further research is called for to investigate these issues as they relate to East Asian languages and other languages.

Notes

1. Recent studies such as Fukada and Asato (2004) and Leech (2007) claim that politeness in East Asian languages is not unique and hence that the East-West division is not necessary. However, these studies are also based on example sentences constructed by the researchers themselves and hence suffer from the same methodological weakness discussed above (see Cook 2006 for a critical discussion of Fukada and Asato 2004).
2. See Ochs (1993) and Chapter 9, this volume, for the notions of direct and indirect index.
3. The social structures of a given context may be perceived differently by different individuals (see Usami 2001a: 17 for a relevant discussion), but in the argument for discernment politeness, such variability is hardly discussed, suggesting that the existence of objective social structures of a context is taken for granted.

4. The speakers spoke freely about the topics relevant to them in a private setting. In this respect, the conversations can be considered close to naturally-occurring conversations, although they may not be completely free from the “observer’s paradox.”
5. Cook (2006) notes that plain forms are grammatically expected in dependent clauses, but honorifics may be used in such clauses, particularly in very polite/formal speech.
6. Haugh (2007) emphasizes the interactional and emergent nature of the interpretation of politeness, noting that conversational participants may differ in interpreting particular utterances with regard to their politeness and may modify their interpretations as the conversation proceeds, and that politeness as implicature is achieved through such adjustments of utterance interpretations.

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5. Researching impoliteness and rudeness: Issues and definitions

Derek Bousfield

Abstract

Through the discussion of approaches which are concerned with impoliteness/rudeness and the consideration of interactional data of a conflictual nature, this chapter seeks to define and differentiate the two main concepts under consideration and place them within a wider model of interpersonal face threat, face attack and face damage. Here I consider some of the main issues facing the researcher who is interested in impolite, rude, or otherwise aggressive language use. These issues include problems with definitions, consideration of what constitute appropriate research paradigms (discursive, theoretical, postmodern, interactive or a 'hybrid'), and, within this, whether offence or rudeness/impoliteness in the linguistic sphere is post facto negotiated by the interactants themselves, and/or pre facto constructed, projected and anticipated given producer (e.g., speaker) knowledge of situational schemata of which the receiver (e.g., hearer) can, plausibly, have a relatively full understanding. Finally, this chapter suggests that a prototype model be adopted as most appropriate for the future of research into impoliteness, rudeness and associated phenomena. The line taken in this chapter, next to offering an overview of issues in current research, is to challenge areas of received wisdom, provoke discussion and debate in both 'received' and contentious areas and, hence, stimulate new consideration and research into the phenomena under scrutiny.

1. Introduction

Within academic scrutiny the study of what might be labelled 'impoliteness' and/or 'rudeness' is a relatively new endeavour which, even following recent strides, is still very much in its infancy. Despite an early start (Lachenicht 1980) the first convincing studies that were applied to real-life data on the subject(s) came more than a decade and a half later, with Culpeper (1996) outlining 'impoliteness', and Kienpointner (1997) outlining 'rudeness'. At this point, the seeds of a definitional struggle were quietly, but assuredly being sown. This is just one of many issues that face those interested in conducting research into and concerning 'impoliteness', 'rudeness', 'aggressive language', 'the causing of offence' or linguistic behaviour which may be otherwise recognised (if not termed) as socially-

negative face-work. On this issue, it appears that the terms ‘impoliteness’ and ‘rudeness’ themselves, whilst undergoing individual definitional evolution, do, as Locher and Bousfield (2008: 4) point out, “[...] appear to occupy very similar conceptual space.” In essence what we seem to have, within English at least, are *exceptionally* near synonyms with regards to interpersonal, socially proscribed and contextually evaluated behaviour which causes offence. Whether or not these terms are seen to be near synonyms to fluent but non-technical (i.e., ‘lay’) users of language, rather than to fluent, technical (academic) users remains to be seen and is of no small importance when we consider the adjunct issue of the im/politeness₁ (lay understandings) and im/politeness₂ (theoretical, or academic understandings) distinction (see the discussions in Sifianou, this volume, Watts, also this volume; and Section 2 below).

Furthermore, whilst not exactly the proverbial ‘elephant in the room’, issues over the definitions of ‘impoliteness’ and ‘rudeness’, the differentiation to be made between the two terms, and which of these concepts is the most appropriate when applied to *intentionally* offensive utterances (and indeed whether or not we can even consider ‘intention’) remain largely untouched and most definitely unresolved in the growing literature on ‘impoliteness’ (see Section 3, below, where these issues are discussed in more detail). Despite the relative paucity in terms of the number of studies dealing with ‘impoliteness’, ‘rudeness’ and associated phenomena when compared to the wealth of available work on ‘politeness’, research into impoliteness/rudeness has, nevertheless, begun to blossom, not only in terms of pragmatic (see Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Culpeper 1996, 2005; Bousfield 2007a, 2007b, 2008a) and relational (Locher and Watts 2008) approaches to these phenomena, but also in terms of studies exploring the intersection of impoliteness with power (see, for example, Bousfield and Locher 2008). There is also a widening range of interest both from other research paradigms and within other text types and discourses. These include the study of impoliteness in media discourse (Lorenzo-Dus 2009), political discourse (Garcia-Pastor 2008; Tracy 2008), emotionally charged argument sequences (Kienpointner 2008), in bilingual code-switching sequences (Cashman 2008), in classic and contemporary literature (Bousfield 2007c; Culpeper 1996; Rudanko 2006), in relation to threats (Limberg 2009), and within computer-mediated communication (Graham 2008; Haugh 2010). The theoretical study of impoliteness is now gathering interest from researchers working from different points within an eclectic range of different methodological and epistemological perspectives including sociolinguistics (Holmes, Marra and Schnurr 2008), conversation analysis (Hutchby 2008), cognitive psychology (Jay and Janschewitz 2008), conceptual blending theory (Watts 2008) and, later from a macro socio-cultural perspective (Mills 2009). Despite this growing range of works it should be noted both that (a) the broadening range of work on the phenomena under scrutiny is merely a drop in the ocean when compared to the vast range of work conducted and published to date on ‘politeness’, and (b) there are

some far-reaching and fundamental differences in approaches to the study and conceptualisation of impoliteness/rudeness which deserve (necessarily only partial) consideration here in this chapter – if only to make researchers interested in studying in these areas aware of some of the core issues. On this point, it needs to be noted that, despite Locher and Bousfield's (2008: 7) observation that there appears to be in process something of a rapprochement between epistemologically diverse perspectives on human interaction concerned with 'impoliteness', Bousfield and Culpeper (2008: 163) admit that there remains fundamental disagreement on some of the basics. This chapter seeks to illuminate and attend to *some* of these fundamental differences.

To this end, in Section 2 this chapter (re)considers the distinction that is to be made between so-called 'first order' and 'second order' approaches to impoliteness/rudeness research, including issues and problems with each broad area of conceptualisation (the main criticisms of 'classic' second order approaches and more recently stated concerns over apparent contradictions in first order approaches) in relation to studies of impoliteness/rudeness. In Section 3 the debate over, and the distinction between the terms 'impolite' and 'rude' in English is considered. This is done in relation both to the dispute over first and second order theorising as well as to the perception and usage of these lexemes by lay users of the language. In Section 4, I begin to make the case for a prototype approach to accounting for 'impoliteness', 'rudeness' and associated phenomena that attract different terminological nomenclature. In Section 5, this chapter continues the case for a prototype approach to labelling interactional phenomena impacting upon interlocutors' notions of 'face', and in Section 6 I summarise pertinent arguments of the chapter in order to outline areas for future research and consideration.

2. 'First order' and 'Second order' approaches

Both Watts and Sifianou (this volume) point to the distinction to be made between research which seeks to scrutinise first order or *emic* politeness (Politeness₁) and research which theorises on second order, or *etic* politeness (Politeness₂). This distinction – initially identified by Craig, Tracy and Spisak (1986) and expounded in some detail in Watts, Ehlich and Ide (1992; see also Eelen 2001) – centres around the notion that what academics study in terms of 'politeness' (Politeness₂) is not necessarily what lay users of a language themselves would actually understand by the term 'politeness' (Politeness₁). Given that much research on impoliteness/rudeness grew out of interest in the concept of politeness, where debates rage around the very heart and soul of how we conceptualise that phenomenon then, clearly, impoliteness/rudeness is also going to be affected by the *emic/etic* distinction and debate. Hence such issues are deserving of the researcher's careful consideration. Essentially, many researchers have hitherto adopted a standpoint in

terms of whether their work is rooted in a first order or a second order approach (though see the alternative interactional approaches being developed by Arundale 1999, 2006 and Haugh 2007, 2010). Locher and Bousfield (2008: 5) sum up the apparent differences between the *emic* (first order) and *etic* (second order) approaches:

First order concepts are judgements about behaviour, such as *impolite*, *rude*, *polite*, *polished*, made by the social actors themselves. They arrive at these judgements according to the norms of their particular discursive practice. We are, in other words, dealing with a lay-person's understanding of the concepts italicised above. Second order approaches use the concepts and consider them on a theoretical level. These theories do not disregard first order notions as, in fact, it is argued that the second order theories are necessarily informed by first order notions in the first place. (Locher and Bousfield 2008: 5)

We should explore some comments and queries made upon the claims and assumptions behind each approach if for no other reason than identifying the main issues regarding each school of thought.

As Haugh (2007: 296) notes, early critiques of the core second order approach to politeness – that of Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) – tend to centre on a series of specific points. Haugh (2007: 296) explains that such critiques include disputes over their conceptualisation of the notion of 'face' (e.g., Matsumoto 1988) which – despite Brown and Levinson's insistence to the contrary, is distinct from Goffman's (1967) original exposition of the concept. Also central, Haugh (2007: 296) informs us, is Brown and Levinson's overreliance on analysing interaction at the utterance level (see Kasper 1990) and not analysing an entire interaction from beginning to end, or over a series of linked interactions. The main of the remaining current criticisms of studies in the second order (*etic* or 'theoretical') approach to im/politeness (and rudeness) come from first order researchers. I have space to discuss only a few here and, as such, I will concentrate on those pertaining to or impacting directly on the study of impoliteness/rudeness both as concepts, and in relation to work that has been published.

First, Eelen (2001) notes that second order models accounting for interpersonal communication (such as Brown and Levinson 1987; Leech 1983) are conceptually biased towards 'politeness' at the expense of 'impoliteness' or 'rudeness'. This is despite Craig, Tracy and Spisak's (1986) early observation and convincing argument – which is oft taken up by later researchers – that the approaches to the dynamics of human communication must consider hostile as well as supportive, collegial interaction (see also Kasper 1990 for a very clear discussion on this point). The fact that many theorists working on the most recent evolutions of second order approaches have increased research into 'hostile' communication (see, for example, the work of Lachenicht 1980; Culpeper 1996, 2005; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Bousfield 2007a, 2007b, 2008a) shows that this point is being attended to in so-called second order theorising.

There are other issues worth considering here. Werkhofer (1992: 155) raises a number of far reaching concerns about Brown and Levinson (1987). One of the severest is with regards to the concept of a ‘model person’ that is used – or was used – in second order politeness theorising. Amongst other things, this led (early) second order theorists to assume that politeness is a ‘norm’ across most, if not all discourses, and that impoliteness is an aberration or deviation from the expected and accepted polite norms of interaction rather than carefully crafted and negotiated behaviour with particular instrumental perlocutionary effects in its own right. For example, Leech (2005: 18; see also 2007) in a ‘reboot’ and updated clarification of his original (1983) Politeness Principle notes that “[...] impoliteness is a non-observance or violation of the constraints of politeness.” Such a position raises two further linked issues which require consideration: First is the question of whether the behaviour under academic scrutiny is actually what the participants themselves would call ‘impoliteness’. Second is the fact that lay users, themselves, do generally view some words (at least) as having stable, even inherent semantic meanings. This does not sit well with the fact that first order researchers note that there are no concrete absolutes in terms of semantically stable meanings from one context to another (and, hence, we must view every utterance from the perspective of the lay users themselves against their socially agreed norms within their communities of practice). I explore each of these issues in more detail below.

The first issue relates to first order researchers (see, e.g., Mills 2003) challenging second order theorists’ (e.g., Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003) concentration upon certain types of discourse, more specifically the language interactions therein, when they study ‘impoliteness’. The intentionally aggressive language used in army training discourses, Mills (2003) argues, is sanctioned and is thus ‘normal’ – hence, it can not be ‘impoliteness’ since impoliteness, according to Mills, is a break, or deviation, from normal behaviour. Culpeper (2005) responds by pointing out that linguistic behaviour which is *sanctioned* in some discourses (e.g., aggressive or ‘impolite’ language in army training discourses) is not necessarily also *neutralised* (see also an associated and extended argument made in Bousfield 2007b) in terms of its (face-damaging) effects on the intended addressees. What this means is that face-damaging behaviour can be ‘normal’ in a given community of practice. One just has to consider abusive relationships to think of situations in which linguistic (and potentially physical/sexual) ‘hurt’ or ‘aggression’ is a staple of regular, even daily existence for some individuals. Just because it is normal (as in *and only in* the sense of ‘commonly or regularly occurring over a period of time’) does not in any way either *sanction* or *neutralise* the harm caused. By the same token, face-threat can be normal and central to the discourse type and be *sanctioned*; or be normal and central to the discourse type and *not sanctioned*, and in neither case need it be necessarily *neutralised*. Indeed, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) identify a wide range of dis-

courses in which impoliteness would appear to play a ‘central role’. Their observation prompted Locher and Bousfield (2008) to note that impoliteness is virtually “ubiquitous”, in terms of it being possible (in some cases, probable) wherever human linguistic communication occurs and there is no suggestion that it does not cause harm. All this seems to suggest that impoliteness/rudeness is not the aberrant, deviant, or ‘marginal’ (Leech 1983: 105) linguistic behaviour first suspected or implied in traditional, and in some recent discursive (Mills 2003) and maxim-based (Pfister 2009) approaches. Indeed, I argue in Bousfield (2008a) that all impoliteness/rudeness is instrumental in that it is co-constructed within a specific context for (extra-) linguistic reasons, that is, for reasons beyond its own mere occurrence. Or to put it another way:

[...] people employ certain strategies [...] for reasons of expediency – experience has taught us that particular strategies are likely to succeed in given circumstances, so we use them. (Thomas 1995: 179)

Thomas’ position echoes the original definition and explanation of Brown and Levinson (1987) on *rationality* (by which Brown and Levinson mean humans are endowed with ‘ends-means’ reasoning, not that every human is a fully rounded rational being at all times; this is a subtle distinction which appears to have been misunderstood in many critiques of their work). Following Thomas’ line allows us to apply *rationality* (the ability to ‘ends-means’ reasoning) to face-aggravating, rather than just face-maintaining behaviour. The aggressive linguistic behaviour deployed in army training data that has been termed as ‘impoliteness’ by Culpeper (1996) and others, including myself (see Bousfield 2007a, 2007b, 2008a), may be more common in that particular community of practice than in others (such as, for example, in *Kindergarten* interactions). However impoliteness in army training settings is primarily deployed for a purpose beyond that of *just* damaging the face of the recruits. Such intentional/projected face damage is *rationally* (again, only in the sense of ‘ends-means’ reasoning) attempted as a means to ‘encourage’ the recruits to *learn* how to be model soldiers. Impoliteness is used precisely because it *is* face damaging. To adapt and apply Thomas’ line, experience has taught the trainers that such linguistic, face-damaging strategies (i.e., the means) are most efficient in acquiring their desired results, (i.e., the ends). That is, when recruits’ faces are threatened/damaged by one of the army trainers, following a perceived infraction or lack of required achievement or behaviour on the recruits’ part, the recruits will attempt to avoid future damage to face and, thus, will seek to quickly improve. It was the recognition of the centrality of ‘impoliteness’ in such communities of practice as army training that led Mills (2003) to astutely question whether such aggressive linguistic behaviour is to be termed ‘impoliteness’. The issue here was that ‘centrality’ was seen to be normative and, hence, robbing of the instrumentality of the impoliteness used. Thus noted, this is an issue that still needs to be considered in more detail (see Sections 4 and 5 below).

The second issue points to a minor paradox (essentially, a recursive, zero-sum argument). This paradox arises out of the fact that first order researchers quite rightly require the proper study of impoliteness/rudeness to be from the perspectives of lay users themselves, or “the various ways in which [im]polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by various members of sociocultural groups” (Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992: 3). However, this position risks neglecting the fact that the selfsame members of those sociocultural groups tend to have an idealised, socially constructed idea of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in a specific situation and within a given community of practice. Such a position is similar to an idealised, if tacit, *Model Person* (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987). There is a wealth of evidence to suggest that members of such groups *do* indeed have a generic model person at least tacitly in mind. As but one such example, note the following taken from a comments section of an online newspaper report (on a private citizen in the UK being arrested for swearing). Grammatical and semantic issues have not been amended and the quotation is as originally posted by its author:

Swearing either at people or within another persons hearing is disrespectful and an indication of one's limited vocabulary. Should people not have pride anymore in their command of the English language? Or are we happy to accept that other English speaking countries, South Africa for example converse in our language better than the average Englishman.

Maxwell H Fisher, Nottingham England

(<http://www.metro.co.uk/weird/article.html?in_article_id=17006&in_page_id=2#StartComments>, accessed on 28 December 2009)

Maxwell H Fisher here is just one of a plethora of people who is concerned about what he sees as ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ or ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ linguistic behaviour regarding language which could be (and has been) termed as offensive. Fisher, as a (presumably) lay user of language is implicitly invoking the idea of a *Model Person* with his view on what type of behaviour is disrespectful. Further, there is no caveat offered by Fisher with regards to the situations within which his comments and beliefs hold. We must assume that he means his beliefs hold *generally* – that is we have a lay person constructing the notion of what constitutes a model person from at least one perspective and concerning one type of behaviour. Yet the notion of this type of model person is one for which first order theorists have roundly criticised early second order theorists (Brown and Levinson 1987). Hence, this is a minor paradox in first order research. This is linked to a different, much wider “first order paradox” which I explore below, and as the discussion has moved on to issues within first order consideration, I turn to that topic more fully now.

Of the so-called first order (lay user) approaches, we find a number of theoretical assumptions which seem to make a *purely* first order approach as ultimately self-defeating as a *purely* second-order approach. In this vein Haugh (2007) issues a series

of systematic challenges to first order research. The full discussion is an absolute read for those interested in im/politeness research as Haugh discusses some of the major epistemological and ontological issues concerning first order approaches. To relate them all here would be both counter-productive (when Haugh himself very clearly explains these issues) and consuming of too much space. What I will do here is note one area which leads, logically, to a fundamental paradox in first order conceptualisations. However, see Haugh (2010), in which the interactive approach he propounds – partially as a reaction to early first order research – is exceptionally similar to the perspective on the discursive approach developed and refined by Locher (2008), whose own work has evolved out of first order conceptualising.

Haugh (2007: 298) notes that one main question facing the differentiation that is made between first order and second order approaches is whether such a distinction has really been successful in avoiding the constant vacillation “[...] between the way in which politeness is understood as a commonsense term that we all use and think we understand in everyday social interaction and a more technical notion that can only have a value within an overall theory of social interaction” (Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992: 4). What Haugh is questioning is whether studying im/politeness from a discursive approach is *really* studying first order (‘lay’) understandings and usages of im/politeness. Haugh (2007) notes:

In the discursive approach, politeness is defined as “linguistic behaviour that carries a value in an emergent network in excess of what is required by the politic behaviour of the overall interaction” (Watts 2003: 62), “behaviour which is perceived to be beyond what is expectable” (Watts 2003: 19), or behaviour that “is perceived to be salient or marked” (Locher and Watts 2005: 17). Politic behaviour, which is crucial to understanding politeness in the discursive approach, is defined as “linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of ongoing interaction” (Watts 2003: 19). A number of researchers, however, have argued that this conceptualization of politeness is not in fact a first-order notion, rather it is a theoretical notion masquerading as a lay conceptualization [...]. (Haugh 2007: 299)

Given this, there appears, within first order accounts and arguments concerning politeness and impoliteness/rudeness, to be a second paradox (wider and more far-reaching than the one discussed above) in thinking and conceptualisation. Bear in mind that Watts (2005) is merely one of a tranche of first order proponents who insist – correctly – that the study of politeness must necessarily focus on “[...] how participants in social interaction perceive [im]politeness” (2005: xix) and that it should concentrate on “how people use the terms that are available to them in their own languages and [...] the discursive struggle over those terms” (2005: xxii). With this position in mind we should also consider first order research’s underlying linguistic conceptualisation, originating from an understanding of Saussurean linguistics, in that “[s]entences are not *ipso facto* polite [...]” (Fraser 1990: 233).

Herein lies the root of this fundamental first order paradox: On the one hand the proper study of im/politeness should be how language users themselves under-

stand, use, label and otherwise orient to the concepts of im/politeness as dictated by the situational contexts in which they find themselves, yet on the other there is an insistence that words and phrases have no inherent meaning (that words are not inherently polite, impolite, rude or otherwise) in and of themselves. Whilst both positions are – from an *academic* standpoint – irrefutable, the fact remains that there is evidence to suggest that non-technical, non-academic, or ‘lay users’ themselves do, actually, consider that some words and phrases (at least) have inherent meanings. Whilst we may not need to look further than the words of Maxwell Fisher (above) for an indication of this position, further evidence can be seen from the headlines of recent news stories and the actions of police forces in the United Kingdom. A brief look at just a few of the many British news reports over the past two years shows that the use of taboo language in the UK is both being interpreted as illegal and never too far away from the surface in the British public’s consciousness. The following headlines and sub headers were chosen within moments from a wide range of reports which are available online:

- (1) TEENAGER FINED £80 FOR SWEAR WORD. A teenager is refusing to pay an on-the-spot £80 fine imposed by a police officer who overheard him swearing in a private conversation with friends. (BBC News 20th February 2006)
- (2) DRIVER FINED FOR SWEARING AT SPEED CAMERA. (MSN News 1st February 2006)
- (3) MAN FINED FOR SWEARING AT TV. A Man has been fined £80 for swearing at his own television while drunk. (Telegraph.co.uk 7th December 2008)
- (4) MOTHER FACES JAIL FOR SWEARING AT NEIGHBOURHOOD YOBS.¹ (Mail Online 11th September 2006)

The fact that the headlines of the stories are reported thusly does reveal something interesting in the way in which society is being encouraged to view certain lexemes/linguistic behaviour – in this case, swearing – as being inherently ‘offensive’. At best, there is a clash of expectations, norms and appropriacy between members of different communities of practice (CofP) here. In effect, members of *nested* (societally subordinate) CofPs (as in the situation in (1) above)² are operating in contradistinction to members of hierarchically higher/authoritarian (superordinate) CofPs (as in the British English speaking society at large, and the guarantors of that society – the police force). British police, and to a lesser extent the British legal establishment, would appear to hold both the lay and legal belief that words and phrases can and do have stable meanings. This is indicated both in historic English law and in recent and current UK law for the usage of certain ‘genres’ of words and phrases.

Consider, for example, the wording of section 4A (5) of the UK’s Public Order Act (1986; which is also included, wholesale, in section 154 of the later Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994)), which states that:

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if he:
 - (a) uses threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour, or disorderly behaviour, or
 - (b) displays any writing, sign or other visible representation which is threatening, abusive or insulting, within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress thereby. (UK's Public Order Act 1986, Section 4A (5))

Further, the act states that this offence has the following statutory defences:

- (a) The defendant had no reason to believe that there was any person within hearing or sight who was likely to be alarmed or distressed by his action.
- (b) The defendant was in a dwelling and had no reason to believe that his behaviour would be seen or heard by any person outside any dwelling.
- (c) The conduct was reasonable. (UK's Public Order Act 1986, section 4A (5))

While the law quoted here does not refer to any specific linguistic items *per se* (and, indeed, could not when we consider the semantic changeability of taboo words over the centuries) but rather to the perceived and potential impact of linguistic and other behaviour, the point is that, *currently*, the use of items from the set of lexemes which make up the lay understanding of 'taboo language' are being legally prohibited by the interpretation of the law that British police forces seem to be taking (and in many cases these interpretations are being upheld in court). With this in mind then it becomes abundantly clear that for *some* lay users of language within the British legal and wider societal communities of practice (at least) some words are indeed believed to have an inherent, and offensive meaning'; that their use/utterance deviates from that of 'model' and legally acceptable behaviour. This is perhaps unsurprising when we consider Leech's (2007) argument that there are two discrete but linked 'scales' regarding im/polite utterances:

- *Semantic (or absolute) [im]politeness scale*: We can order utterances on a scale of [im]politeness out of context. For example, out of context, on an absolute scale of politeness, we can judge that *Can you help me?* is more polite, as a request, than *Help me*, and is less polite than *Could you possibly help me?*. [...]
- *Pragmatic (or relative) [im]politeness scale*: This is [im]politeness relative to norms in a given society, group, or situation. Unlike the absolute scale, it is sensitive to context [...]. Hence it is possible that a form considered more [im]polite on the *absolute [im]politeness* scale is judged less [im]polite relative to the norms for the situation. (Leech 2007: 174, italics in original, [im] are my additions)

All this is related to the discussion made in Section 3 (below).

3. 'Impolite(ness)' versus 'Rude(ness)': The terminological struggle

As Watts (2003: 12) points out the terms *politeness* and *impoliteness* are ones which are, and are likely to remain, at the centre of a definitional struggle. But there is another struggle. Across impoliteness/rudeness research concerned with the English language, there is no clear agreement over how to define or differentiate 'impoliteness' and 'rudeness'. Of those few (see, e.g., Bousfield 2008b; Culpeper 2008; Kienpointner 2008; Terkourafi 2008; Watts 2003) who have both recognised and explicitly mentioned the 'impoliteness' versus 'rudeness' definitional and terminological issues within the English language, Kienpointner (2008: 245), for example, effectively and idiomatically kicks it into the long grass when he says "[f]or the purposes of this paper, I will use 'impoliteness' and 'rudeness' as synonyms [...]". He (2008: 245–263) demonstrates that these 'synonymous' concepts refer to "prototypically non-cooperative or competitive behaviour", the enactment of which:

- [a] destabilizes the [possibility of creating, or maintaining] personal relationships [...];
- [b] creates or maintains an emotional atmosphere of mutual irreverence and antipathy, which primarily serves egocentric [(self's) not superegocentric (other's)] interests;
- [c] is [at least] partially determined by concepts of power, distance, emotional attitudes and cost-benefit scales^[3] [...]. (Kienpointner 2008: 245)

Clearly, whilst points (a) to (c) are both helpful and progressive to research on impoliteness and rudeness, the deferment of the differentiation to be made between the terms, is not.⁴ Other researchers attempt to tackle this issue directly and adopt a stance on the definitions of impoliteness and rudeness based around the thorny concept of 'intentionality'.⁵ These include Terkourafi (2008)⁶ (on one side), and Bousfield (2008b) and Culpeper (2008) (on the other).

Citing historical evidence in support of her argument Terkourafi (2008) considers 'rudeness' to be the intentional face threatening/damaging variant of non-cooperative, competitive, or conflictual discursal exchanges, and 'impoliteness' to be the unintentional one; Bousfield (2008), Culpeper (2008), Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003), however, disagree. For them the polarity has always been (essentially) the other way around in that it is 'impoliteness' that constitutes the intent to threaten/damage face (at least linguistically), whereas 'rudeness' is the unanticipated, accidental or otherwise 'unintentional' (see Goffman 1967: 14) variety. Their reasoning is based primarily on a reversal of conceptual focus which has previously been entirely (and is still largely) centred on the concept of 'politeness' – being the use of face-enhancing, or face-damage/threat-mitigating linguistic behaviour.

A potentially pertinent example can be found in Bousfield (2008a: 126–127) which is re-presented, below. However, in reconsidering this example, we should

bear in mind that the definition of impoliteness developed throughout Bousfield (2007b, 2008a, b) is:

[...] the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive face threatening acts (FTAs) that are purposefully performed:

- 1) Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation [...] is required and/or,
- 2) With deliberate aggression, that is with the face threat exacerbated, ‘boosted’, or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted.

Furthermore, for impoliteness to be considered successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker [...] to ‘offend’ (threaten/damage face) must be understood by someone in a receiver role. (Bousfield 2007b: 155)

Indeed, the definition of impoliteness that I have attempted to develop is one which is, strictly speaking, “second order” but which is, nevertheless, informed by first order actions and responses to the language used. Given this we should now consider the example mentioned which was earlier scrutinised in Bousfield (2008a: 126–127). Here, in considering previously un- or under-regarded impolite phenomena I discuss the concept of *criticism* and note the following instances within an exchange which is taken from Extract 1 of *The Clampers*, a BBC TV documentary regarding London’s parking officials – those individuals charged with applying legal penalty notices to illegally parked vehicles. *Criticism* is defined (Bousfield 2008a: 126–127) as an act dispraising the hearer, some action or inaction by the hearer or some entity in which the hearer has face expectations invested.

[1]⁷ **Context:** *Ray and Miguel, clamping supervisor and assistant respectively, have arrived to remove the clamp from a van. The van’s owner is waiting for them. After engaging Ray in an impolite round of haranguing, challenging, complaints and accusations, the van’s owner finally tries to close the conversation as Ray is still trying to speak. S1 is Ray, the clamping supervisor, S2, the van’s owner, S3 – Miguel – does not speak throughout this portion of the extract. Up to this point they have been arguing over the fact that S2’s van has been clamped, the legality of that particular instance and the ethics of clamping in general. S1 (the clamping supervisor) has tried to keep the exchange limited to the incident at hand and has repeatedly informed S2 of the actions he needs to take in order for S2 to make these comments and complaints. He tries again as this fragment of the extract starts:*

[...]

20. S1: you need to contact the council and make your =
 S2: = I have just gone down there
21. S1:
 S2: and paid them and I have my form but that doesn’t make up for the time
22. S1:
 S2: I’ve lost the inconvenience and the hassle and what is basically government

23. S1: well I fully appreciate what you're saying but what I'm
S2: legalised extortion does it I'm sure
24. S1: saying to you I can take your notes I can take your notes on board but there's
S2: you do I'm sure you hear it ten times a day
25. S1: nothing I personally can do I simply work do my job for the council
S2: just do your job I don't
26. S1: I do my job for the coun if you want me to explain then if you want be
S2: care what you do
27. S1: like that then I can walk away I don't have to talk to you if I don't want to if
S2:
28. S1: you're going to be rude to me yeah I that's fine then
S2: I don't really want to talk to you you're
29. S1: sir I
S2: not going to do anything about it are you

[...]

What is of particular interest here is the response that S1 makes (in staves 26–28) to S2's offensive comments in staves 20–23 (off-record *criticism*, see Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003) and 25–26 (*snub*, see Culpeper 1996). In his own *criticism* in staves 26 to 28, S1 explicitly labels S2's linguistic behaviour (specifically relating to the *snubs*) as 'rude' rather than 'impolite' when he says "I don't have to talk to you if you're going to be *rude* to me, yeah?" At least in this case, it would appear that phenomena that I (Bousfield 2008a) assumed to be 'impolite' may well be labelled as 'rude' by the interactants themselves. This would suggest that Terkourafi (2008, see above) may well be correct in her claim that intentionality is linked to rudeness rather than to impoliteness.

However, Culpeper (2008) makes an interesting argument regarding the terminology which is appropriate for intentional face attack which relates to the arguments being made here in this chapter:

My decision to use *impoliteness* to label cases of intentional face-attack and *rudeness* to label cases of unintentional face-attack was done because I as the researcher thought it a useful distinction to make; in other words, I did this in the spirit of defining impoliteness², without consideration of the lay-person's usage of these terms. I also intended my usage to have an inter-textual dimension as a counterpart to classic studies of politeness. Given that it is those classic studies of politeness that highlight the role of intention and are generally geared towards politeness², then impoliteness, as opposed to rudeness, would seem to be a better term for "intentional face-attack" with respect to the academic field. (Culpeper 2008: 32, italics in original)

Whilst this appears to be an argument in favour of a second order perspective on the phenomena scrutinised, Culpeper (2008) nonetheless makes a convincing argument for the use of the terms on a first order informed basis, too:

With regard to the lay person's usage of the terms *impoliteness* and *rudeness*, [...] *The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (Sinclair 1987) (a corpus-based dictionary and hence one more likely to reflect "real" usage and meanings), would seem to support my usage of the terms. Its definition of *impolite* is that "someone who is impolite is rather rude and offends people". For *rude* it is that "if someone is rude, they are not polite in their behaviour towards other people", and (the second listed meaning) that "rude is used to describe words or behaviour that are likely to embarrass or offend other people, usually words or behaviour relating to sex or other bodily functions". Here, it is "someone who is impolite" who "offends people", whereas with *rudeness* it is "behaviour towards other people" that is "not polite"; in other words, it is the term *impoliteness* that better allows for the attribution of intention to a person and not *rudeness*. (Culpeper 2008: 32–33, italics in original)

Following Culpeper (2008) here, I consider *impoliteness* to be the intentional damage inflicted upon a recipient's face expectations, and *rudeness* to be an associated phenomenon which, nevertheless, constitutes the unintentional damage inflicted upon a recipient's face expectations (see Table 1, below). However, this stance immediately raises two issues. There are some, such as Mills (2003), who would insist that only members of a community of practice can judge whether an utterance is polite or impolite (or rude), and those, such as Hutchby (2008), who would insist that such judgements can only be made given what the next speaker does with his or her turn in response to the suspected 'impolite' turn.

Indeed, the interaction in Example [1] could be considered to fit the broadly Conversation Analytic (Hutchby 2008) and Discursive (Mills 2003; Watts 2003) line that what is 'offensive' (be that 'impolite', 'rude' or 'verbally aggressive') can only be garnered from how real-time interactants themselves orient to the utterances in question in terms of an explicit uptake in following turns, (which would suggest, on the surface of it, that 'rude' is the preferred term in this case). However, such a position risks ignoring the vast majority of possible participants in any given interactional exchange given a system which socialises new members into the accepted way of doing things. After all, one of the largest and certainly most significant systems that does socialise behaviour and understanding, is language itself. It stands to reason that, if we are socialised into *structural* understandings of 'talk in interaction' (e.g., openings & closings), then, surely, we can be (and are) socialised into understanding and constructing and projecting *meaning* through usage of lexemes, phrases and other pragmatic systems of communication (including the intersection of impoliteness and intonation, see Culpeper 2005; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003) in 'talk in interaction', too.⁸ Indeed, discursive approaches (see Locher 2004, for example) to im/politeness acknowledge the importance of learning behaviour through socialisation which produces schemata or 'frames'.

Despite this there appears to be an assumption within some quarters of discursive research (see, for example, Mills 2003) that 'lay users' and 'analysts' are to be treated as separate entities. In a development of this, Mills (2005) – as mentioned above – argues that it is only those members of specific communities of practice

that are being investigated who are able to truly judge whether particular acts are polite or impolite. However, Mullany (2008), who is also a first order theorist, argues that researchers having a relatively fulsome understanding of the holistic situation in which any exchange takes place by,

[...] using all verbal, non-verbal material and observations that are open to them to come up with what they consider to be the most justifiable reading of what has taken place within an interaction, then it is perfectly acceptable for analysts to play a role in judging whether or not (im)politeness has taken place. (Mullany 2008: 237)

As Mullany (2008: 237) further notes, “Holmes and Schnurr (2005: 122) point out [that] arguing against doing this ‘seems to us like shooting oneself in the foot’.” Indeed, as sociolinguists and pragmaticians, uncovering and illuminating patterns of human behaviour in the communication of meaning is valuable as it tells us a huge amount about different peoples, cultures, communities and events. If only real-time participants themselves can analyse and understand what is meant, then any interpretation – both of analysts and real-time, speaking ‘lay’ participants too – will be questionable. This is because, as Holmes and Schnurr (2005, as quoted in Mullany 2008: 237) point out, most lay participants tend to be *underlexicalised* in the metalanguage required to articulate their intentions and interpretations. Hence, we must ask ourselves whether it is even possible to study *im/politeness* or *rudeness* without taking a second order stance albeit one which must necessarily be informed by first order research and lay users’ behaviour. This first order informed, second order approach is precisely what I am attempting here in this chapter.

Ultimately, what Mills’ position risks ignoring is that analysts just as well as lay users have the ability to observe and to learn from observation, as noted above and by other first order researchers. The process of observing members of communities of practice engaging in different types of activity with other members of those communities of practice teaches us how the ‘norms’ of the communities are negotiated and shared. As analysts, we can then use this knowledge in interpreting how given utterances function within the community of practice. Hence, with a high degree of accuracy and reliability, following Mullany (2008: 237), that when analysts are using, and not ignoring, “[...] all verbal, non-verbal material and observations that are open to them,” then it should not matter whether we are real-time participants or not. To sum up, there is strong agreement from both first order and second order researchers that, given the necessary familiarity with a community of practice, analysts, as well as participants can also – with, again, a high degree of accuracy – make reasoned and supported judgements about the role and nature of the behaviour under scrutiny. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that it is *necessary* to take a second order stance in order to gain any explanatory power in explicating the nature and role of the phenomena under scrutiny, partly because participants, themselves, may well be *underlexicalised* (Holmes and Schnurr

2005) and even – it follows – potentially under-conceptualised in understanding what has fully occurred in the interaction. To put it another way, should we discount the concept of studying ‘impoliteness’ because of what the participant in extract (2) says? The excerpt is taken from the BBC television documentary programme “Raw Blues” which followed the processes and experiences of trainee police officers in London’s Metropolitan Police force.

[2] **Raw Blues. Context:** *A police exercise in which trainee police officers have to deal with a racially charged scenario. In this scenario a Caucasian man is angry because he thinks a woman’s West Indian husband has taken his parking space. Racial abuse which causes distress is an offence under British law: Section 31(1)(b) of the Crime and Disorder Act (1988) creates the offence of ‘racially or religiously intentional harassment, alarm or distress’. Section 31(1) (b) states: ‘A person is guilty of this offence if he commits an offence under Section 4A of the Public Order Act (1986)’. The police can arrest an individual if they can prove that racial abuse has, in fact, caused such distress. S1 is a male trainee police officer, S2 the West Indian woman apparently distressed by the abuse, S3 is the male individual suspected of causing offence.*

1. S1:
S2: *I don’t like to think that people who are living next to us have such opinions*
S3:

2. S1: what were your feelings I’m trying to
S2: *of me and my family it’s not on*
S3:

3. S1: ascertain exactly what feelings you were feeling at the time did you feel
S2: well
S3:

4. S1: threatened by this gentleman at all sure
S2: *I was upset you know pissed off just upset*
S3:

5. S1: that’s fine I mean you’ve taken offence
S2: *about the whole thing I mean y– you know*
S3:

6. S1: which is fair enough okay
S2: *yeah yeah*
S3:

Edit: *The police recruit approaches S3.*

7. S1: I appreciate that sir she’s
S2:
S3: *I can’t get in my parking space no you don’t appreciate it*

8. S1: <you’re being abusive>
S2:
S3: *ignorant fucking West Indians doing my head in*

9. S1: there you've caused this lady distress and
 S2:
 S3: no no listen I've been I've been casting
10. S1: fine <indistinct>
 S2:
 S3: my opinion that's what I think they're fucking ignorant they're all
11. S1: <indistinct> sir sir I'm actually placing you under arrest this is
 S2:
 S3: ignorant what for
12. S1: what I'm saying to you please I'm placing you under arrest under section er
 S2:
 S3:
13. S1: four ay of the public act of the public public order act okay
 S2:
 S3:

Here, we should note staves 1 through to 6. Bear in mind that neither S1 (the police officer), nor S2 (the West Indian woman) actually use the words 'harassed', 'alarmed' or 'distressed' in their accounts of how S2 is feeling following the verbal altercation that she had with S3 (the male suspect). It is worth noting, here, that the police officer (S1) was not present at the time of the alleged offence. However, we should also note from the interaction in staves 11 to 13 that the police officer arrests the suspected offender apparently because,

(a) the police officer made a judgement about the *intentionality* of S3's linguistic behaviour (at least partially based on S3's behaviour in staves 7 to 11) given his (the police officer's) understanding of the community of practice norms pertaining to the situation which S2 and S3 had constructed for themselves,

and

(b) in S1's (police officer's) understanding – despite the fact that terminological labels such as 'harassed', 'alarmed' and 'distressed' were not used by any participant – distress had clearly been caused (what many second order theorists – and some first order researchers – would describe as 'face damage having been intentionally caused').

Again, interactions and their resulting outcomes such as in this situation would seem to suggest that second order (theorist's interpretative) perspectives on 'impoliteness' might actually be necessary in accounting for such phenomena. The police officer, himself, given the evidence he had before him (the interactions he had and the account of previous interactions that had taken place) and his own 'theoretical approach' (in this case, UK Law), certainly came to a judgement which is not unlike the judgement-reaching processes of 'second order' re-

searchers such as Culpeper (1996, 2005) or Bousfield (this chapter and earlier work).

On this basis of the arguments so far throughout this chapter it seems that, perhaps, a first-order-inspired, second-order approach to accounting for, defining and differentiating such phenomena as ‘impoliteness’, ‘rudeness’ and other, associated phenomena is the one that we should be seeking to construct. To this end, I turn to make some constructive steps in the remainder of the present chapter beginning with making the cause for a prototype approach (Section 4, immediately below).

4. The cause for a ‘prototype approach’ to defining im/politeness

In taking a first step towards making the cause for a prototype approach we should take note of the position of Watts (2008), who states the following:

In previous work, I have suggested the term “first-order politeness”, which in the present context may be usefully replaced by “first-order rudeness”, to refer to an approach which focuses on participants’ own interpretations of politeness and rudeness. Such a focus need not mean that individuals always agree on such first-order evaluations, and it will thus entail a certain amount of healthy relativity. The search for universals thus becomes not a rationalist search for innately pre-given concepts, but rather a search for the common features of the human condition. (Watts 2008: 292)

This is a solid position and one where we must recognise that no one, in today’s research community, would seriously suggest ‘im/politeness’ is made up of innately pre-given concepts or meanings (though see the point made in note 8 on *conventionalisation*). However, I would suggest that community-wide concepts, which, whilst not innately pre-given, are nevertheless *socially conventionalised* concepts which are individually understood variations-on-a-theme. After all, communities of practice are not isolated islands of activity where members of one community of practice have no knowledge of, experience with, or involvement in other communities of practice. Rather communities of practice are linked and even ranked within society (in terms of power, prestige and perceived importance) and share – or at least are cognisant of – many common features (‘cognisant’, albeit with *variations* which are both context dependent and specific to those CofPs). Additionally, it is interesting that first order theorists led by Watts (e.g., 1992, 2003) take issue with the quest for ‘universals’ (an intertextual reference to the title of Brown and Levinson 1987 – a point upon which they have been severely criticised). Watts then effectively re-casts universality, here, as ‘the common features of the human condition’. Indeed, given the propensity for humans to conceptualise the world in terms of schemata (or frames), to combine and participate in communities, and to take part in different types of shared activity (if only for the propagation and protection of the species), these reflect and necessitate the

adoption and creation of common socially-accepted community-wide, and -shared ways of *doing*, *being* and even *thinking*. These points are not lost on Watts (2008), who notes that,

If we use linguistic expressions like *rude* or *polite*, those expressions can only be understood discursively within a socio-cognitive understanding of human language. They can only be socially acquired, individually used terms which are open to the same kind of variability and change that language itself is open to. They can only be interpreted within real-time instances of social practice on the basis of their ontological status in the “conceptual space” of each and every one of us. (Watts 2008: 293, italics in original)

Given the above, in that our understandings of such concepts are socially acquired, they are, to a high degree socially *shared* even if ultimately individually *produced* and *spun*. As such, we must accept that the ‘healthy relativity’ that Watts mentions above cannot actually be taken to mean – and indeed does not license that – the individual is a totally supreme, atomistic individual who is completely unfettered in his/her interpretations, whatever his/her interpretations may be (and, of course, this is not what Watts means). Rather individuals’ interpretations of ‘what was meant’ (either polite or impolite) are ‘variations-on-a-theme’. In short, individuals make judgements in relation to their understanding of norms – which are socially acquired – as to what is im/polite or rude. What this means is that, in any search for ‘universals’, we are attempting to locate this variation-on-a-theme. For it to have any community value, this variation must necessarily have common, or ‘prototypical’ features which are shared by competent language users/members. It is this common, thematic definition that we can seek to identify within given communities of practice and types of schematically and contextually shared activity in which we are engaged. To paraphrase Grimshaw (1990: 281) it must be conceded that we sometimes err through misrecalling, misconstructing or misconstruing the necessary schemata for us to understand the situation. Indeed, the above argument, once accepted, absolutely precludes the possibility of a stable, monolithic, globally ‘universal’ definition.⁹ But, by the same token this argument, once accepted, absolutely insists on the possibility of community-wide ‘universals’. Given that these ‘universals’ are individual-variations-on-a-socially-accepted theme, the search for universals – based on common features of the human condition within socially shared, understood and acquired types of activity – must, therefore, identify and embrace the ‘prototypical features’ of the concepts under scrutiny.

5. Situating impoliteness and rudeness within a nascent prototype approach

Assuming the acceptability of the argument made in Section 4 above, in that (interactional) concepts and labels are socially acquired and, hence, *socially shared*, but *individually understood* concepts and labels, then it stands to reason that we may only more properly understand (and construct a first order informed, second order model of) concepts such as ‘impoliteness’ and ‘rudeness’ from a prototypical perspective. This is perhaps doubly important when we consider that Tracy (2008: 173) argues that the term ‘impoliteness’ is “[...] too tame a descriptor for serious acts of face threat.” Indeed, Archer (2008) sees impoliteness as being a *sub-set* of a wider concept of ‘verbal aggression’ (see also Rudanko 2006 who considers two types of impoliteness). Archer’s (2008) umbrella term would, presumably, encompass what Tracy (2008) describes as the intriguingly but *apparently* oxymoronic named ‘reasonable hostility’ (what is actually also termed within her paper as ‘situation-appropriate face-attack’). As such, it is perhaps appropriate to situate and consider ‘impoliteness’ and ‘rudeness’ within a wider taxonomy of face threat as a step to forming a nascent prototype approach. This is what I begin to attempt, here.

Given the obvious necessity of describing a model of impoliteness which accounts for the role and active engagement of both speaker and hearer (or, more accurately, one which accounts for those in a *producer* role and those in a *receiver* role), I (see Bousfield 2007a/b, 2008a/b for earlier versions and iterations of this definition) define impoliteness as constituting the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive face-threatening acts (FTAs) that are purposefully performed:

- 1) Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation (where mitigation equates with politeness) is required and/or,
- 2) With deliberate aggression, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, ‘boosted’, or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted.

Furthermore, for impoliteness to be considered successful impoliteness, the intention of the speaker (or ‘author’) to ‘offend’ (threaten/damage face) must be understood by those in a receiver role. We can differentiate between two overarching strategies:

(1) On Record Impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to *explicitly* (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs.

(2) Off Record Impoliteness

The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature (cf. Grice 1975, 1989) and can be cancelled (e.g., denied, or an account/post-modification/elaboration offered, etc.) but where "[...] one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others" (Culpeper 2005: 44), given the context in which it occurs.

Lowe (2009) succinctly summarises my (Bousfield 2008b: 132–133) admittedly lengthier and rather more detailed attempt at positioning and explaining impoliteness and rudeness, thusly:

- speaker intends impoliteness and receiver perceives = successful impoliteness
- speaker intends impoliteness and receiver fails to perceive = failed attempt at impoliteness
- speaker does not intend impoliteness but hearer constructs intention = accidental face damage
- speaker does not intend impoliteness but receiver constructs unintentional face damage = incidental face damage (Lowe 2009: 1866)

Within the above approach in order for impoliteness to occur, both the speaker must intend/project offence and the hearer must perceive intent and take offence (*contra* Culpeper 2005). As such, it should now be recognised that the model as outlined above is quite simply not precise or accurate enough and is in need of further refinement and development – which I attempt in part here. The reasons it is not precise enough include the facts that the model:

- a. conflates receiver 'recognition' of producer intent to attack face with 'actual face damage caused'. This is not always the case (see below). It is possible to recognise that face attack was attempted whilst, simultaneously, recognising that you are, nevertheless, not offended.
- b. does not adequately separate a 'lack of intent' to damage face on the part of the producer, from the producer *recognising* that their contribution may, actually, be face-damaging to someone in a receiver role (that is 'incidental' utterances are not fully and adequately considered in the model).

In the more elaborated approach that I present, below, in order for impoliteness to occur, both the speaker must intend and successfully *project* offence while the hearer must also perceive intent and take offence. However, it must be noted that impoliteness is just one possible outcome given producer intent and projectability (broadly, the producer's prediction of how their utterance is likely to be taken given their schematically held fluency in the CofP norms, amongst other contextual variables – see section 6, below), and receiver understanding/perception/construction and face damage taken, as can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Towards a prototype understanding of impoliteness and rudeness.

Scenario	Speaker (Producer) intent to threaten/damage face?	Speaker (Producer) aware of possible face-damaging effects of utterance?	Hearer (Receiver) perceives/constructs speaker's <i>intent</i> to threaten/damage face?	Hearer's (Receiver's) face <i>actually</i> damaged according to hearer?	Outcome for the receiver(s)
1	+	+	+	+	IMPOLITENESS is successfully communicated.
2	-	+	+	+	RUDENESS: INADEQUATE LEVELS OF, OR INEXPERTLY USED POLITENESS which is interpreted/inferred by the receiver as IMPOLITENESS
3	-	-	+	+	ACCIDENTAL FACE DAMAGE as a result of RUDENESS: INADEQUATE LEVELS OF, OR INEXPERTLY USED POLITENESS , 'speaker insensitivity', 'hearer hypersensitivity', a clash of interactant expectations, cultural misunderstanding, misidentification (on either part) of the type of communicative activity engaged in, etc. (see Goffman 1967: 14). IMPOLITENESS is inferred, however.
4	+	+	+	-	IMPOLITENESS attempt fails but is recognised/acknowledged.
5	-	+	+	-	RUDENESS: INADEQUATE LEVELS OF, OR INEXPERTLY USED POLITENESS which is interpreted as an attempt at IMPOLITENESS (actually as failed IMPOLITENESS) OR PATRONISING BEHAVIOUR .
6	-	-	+	-	ACCIDENTAL FACE THREAT as a result of 'rudeness' (inadequate levels of politeness), 'speaker insensitivity', 'hearer hypersensitivity', a clash of interactant expectations, cultural misunderstanding, misidentification (on either part) of the type of communicative activity engaged in, etc. ... (see Goffman 1967: 14). IMPOLITENESS attempt is inferred.

Scenario	Speaker (Producer) intent to threaten/damage face?	Speaker (Producer) aware of possible face-damaging effects of utterance?	Hearer (Receiver) perceives/constructs speaker's <i>intent</i> to threaten/damage face?	Hearer's (Receiver's) face <i>actually</i> damaged according to hearer?	Outcome for the receiver(s)
7	+	+	-	+	IMPOLITENESS attempt fails as it is interpreted as RUDENESS .
8	-	+	-	+	RUDENESS: INADEQUATE LEVELS OF, OR INEXPERTLY USED POLITENESS.
9	-	-	-	+	INCIDENTAL FACE DAMAGE as a result of perceived 'rudeness' (inadequate levels of politeness), 'speaker insensitivity', 'hearer hypersensitivity', a clash of interactant expectations, a cultural misunderstanding, a misidentification (on either part) of the type of communicative activity engaged in, etc. ... (see Goffman 1967: 14). IMPOLITENESS is not inferred.
10	+	+	-	-	IMPOLITENESS attempt fails and is <i>not</i> recognised by the receiver(s).
11	+	-	-	-	Producer's HOSTILITY or AGGRESSION is not communicated – it is successfully masked by POLITENESS or a 'non-communication of the FTA' for example.
12	-	+	-	-	POLITENESS: in that the speaker has recognised and attended to (e.g., mitigated) the potentially face damaging comments sufficiently so that face-damage is not recognised or at least, intentionality is not inferred or taken.

Here in Table 1 – and taking a wholly deductive approach – I have identified twelve possible scenarios. These are not meant to represent an exhaustive list, merely the ones I suspect are most likely to occur. There are undoubtedly more scenarios than are represented here and this table, itself a development of that structure originally suggested in Bousfield (2008b), will itself need to be further developed as new

situations come to light following future research. The scenarios, and their outcomes (see the final column), are based on the following:

- (1) speaker intent/projectability;
- (2) speaker awareness of possible face-damaging effects of their utterance(s);
- (3) hearer perception/construction of the speaker's intent/hurtfulness of their words, leading to;
- (4) hearer face actually being, or not being, damaged.

Hence, the outcomes described in the last column take *both* the hearer's (or receiver's) uptake and the speaker's (or producer's) intentions/projections as described in the first columns into account. The second order labels that I have assigned in the final column are therefore the result of this co-consideration and co-construction of the producer and receiver, and such labels are listed next to the first order (lay users' own) projections and perceptions that have informed them. One reason, of many, behind the blending of first and second order concepts based on producer projections and receiver perceptions, here, is an attempt to ensure that future research does not over privilege what either the speaker does (as is the case in early second order im/politeness research) or the hearer does (as is the case in first order and conversation analytic approaches to im/politeness research). The co-consideration of producer and receiver activities means that even in, e.g., scenarios 1–3, where the receiver results are the same, the differing nature of the producer's stance in each case means that we are experiencing different behaviour when the interaction is considered *holistically* from a second order perspective. Hence a (sometimes only *partially*) different second order label in each scenario.

Despite the separation of the scenarios into twelve apparently distinct types, the outcomes in the final column are best seen, not as discrete categories, but rather as points of reference, all of which interconnect within a metaphorical multi-faceted structure (rather than being on the classic metaphorical two dimensional, polar cline). This is because the interrelationship between politeness, politic behaviour, impoliteness, rudeness and similar, whilst being illuminated, is nevertheless still open to much future research. In order to position ourselves for future research in these areas we require an open, yet robust model which takes account of *all* sides, and not merely just one side, of communication. The above model is, merely, another step along the way towards a more explanatory approach. Additionally, it may, perhaps, lay the foundations for achieving Culpeper's (personal communication) aspiration for a *predictive* theory, at least in part (see Section 6, below).

6. The outlook for research on impoliteness and rudeness: Can we ever move towards a predictive theory?

The above model which I began outlining in Bousfield (2008a, b) is an extreme functional approach which hinges both on, (1) the producer's *pre facto* projection/anticipation of the likely effects of his/her utterance (based on the producer's schematic understandings of 'ends-means' reasoning within the situations in which they are currently operating) and, (2) the *post facto* assignation or recognition by a receiver that those effects were intended/achieved. Given the discussion made earlier (see also Culpeper 2005; Terkourafi 2008) – that certain forms are conventionalised to such a degree as to have a positive or negative semantic prosody giving a meaning that is (largely) stable, and which functions across multiple different types of activity, or communities of practice (though by no means ever all of them) – then approaches to im/politeness need to accommodate the potential for the concept that 'conventionally-this-form-has-this-function' for specific and dynamic utterances within a given context, using an appropriate approach. An exciting area of support for this position could well come, for example, from the construction grammar area of research. The main proponents of this approach to language, Fillmore, Kay and O'Connor (1988), Goldberg (1995, 2006) and Croft (2001), at the risk of oversimplifying their positions, would suggest that there are a wide range of lexico-syntactic constructions with highly stable pragmatic meanings across many different contexts. The implications for im/politeness research and for im/politeness theorising, if such a position is shown to be correct, would be both fundamental and far-reaching.

However, any approach to im/politeness *theorising* needs to contend with the discursive (Mills 2005) and conversation analytic (Hutchby 2008) approaches to impoliteness which insists that the *post facto* assignation of the concept is the only, viable, way of explaining what is occurring. Under these approaches to interaction, a predictive element to language interaction (a true 'theory', in fact) could never occur. Such approaches are predicated on the supposition that form never has a stable enough function to recognise/systematise and, as such, meaning is always negotiated *in situ*.

However, as I hope I have argued, in at least some cases forms can be taken to have functions which are relatively stable across different types of activity and communities of practice; and in others, *within* communities of practice, that meanings of lexemes revolve around variations-on-a-theme, then, surely, with the forms and contexts known, we could at least attempt to build a partially predictive theory. But what form might a predictive theory (beyond featuring one or more of the models suggested already) take? Discourse Analysts have given us an insight into how an approach to theory building might take place. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) would assume a predictive element to a given form (within a suitable, known context) of a given utterance, hence the Discourse Analysts' notion of *continuous clas-*

sification, in that “[...] the meaning of an utterance is its predictive assessment of what follows” (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975: 12). What Sinclair and Coulthard suggest is that the function (ultimately including ‘the meaning’) of utterances are *prospectively* assigned according to the kind of response that is expected by the producer (with all other things being equal) given schematically encoded understandings of how similar utterances have been taken previously (frames of expectation). This links to the positions of both first and second order theorists such as Culpeper (2005), Leech (2007: 174), Locher (2008) and Terkourafi (2008) (as noted above). The question remains, can we systematise this sort of prospective function-assignment (as a step towards theory building) based on construction grammar, and known activity type and community of practice norms? Terkourafi (2008: 55–56), cites Grice (1989), thus:

[That an utterer] “*U* meant something by uttering *x*” is true *iff*, for some audience *A*, *U* uttered *x* intending:

- (1) *A* to produce a particular response *r*
- (2) *A* to think (recognise) that *U* intends (1)
- (3) *A* to fulfill (1) on the basis of his fulfillment of (2).

(Grice 1989: 92)

As a general, underlying tenet of a true theory of im/politeness, the above may well be a contender. But what about the specifics? Labov and Fanshel (1977) make an interesting attempt at specific types of utterances with predicable (local) perlocutionary effects with their exposition of imperatives operating as requests for action. They state the following rules for valid *directives* or, in Labov and Fanshel’s (1977) terms, *requests for action*:

If *A* addresses to *B* an imperative specifying an action *X* at a time *T*, and *B* believes that *A* believes that

1. a). *X* should be done (for a purpose *Y*) [*need for the action*]
- b). *B* would not do *X* in the absence of the request [*need for the request*]
2. *B* has the *ability* to do *X* (with an instrument *Z*)
3. *B* has the *obligation* to do *X* or is willing to do it.
4. *A* has the *right* to tell *B* to do *X*

then *A* is heard as making a valid request for action.

(Labov and Fanshel 1977: 78, italics in original)

Given the ability to construct directives (and other types of communicative act) based on the co-construction of meaning through producer prospective assignment/projection and receiver inference/uptake of, in the above case, imperatives in appropriate situations, then it may be possible to construct a theory of face threat, attack and damage (including impoliteness and rudeness) along similar lines. However, if construction grammar works as advertised with offensive utterances, then it is entirely feasible that we could build a theory based around the observations made by Culpeper (2005), Leech (2007) and Terkourafi (2008) in that some forms more efficiently achieve a perlocutionary effect than others. These perlocu-

tionary effects may be achieved either by dint of the ‘strength’ of the semantics of the lexemes overriding the ‘strength’ of other situational factors, or by the use of known and regularised lexemes or phrases deployed within a community of practice (where those lexeme and phraseological meanings are, as argued above, variations-on-a-theme). In such a situation we might be able to begin to create a predictive theory, albeit one, where, (to paraphrase Grimshaw 1990: 281) again it must be conceded that we sometime err through misunderstanding of the type of activity in which we are engaged, or through an incomplete understanding of the community of practice in which we are engaged (and our place within it), and so on. With a full(er) understanding of these and other potentially confounding contextual variables, it is, however, at least possible for us to attempt this.

I will end this largely aspirational and hopefully inspirational sojourn with a note of caution. One potential Achilles’ heel here is that it is, presently, not known how many types of discursal, or interactional words, phrases or acts are considered ‘conventionalised’ (and, thus, with stable enough meanings) to systematise. However, this is not just an issue worthy of consideration by those interested in research into impoliteness, rudeness and associated interactional, pragmatic phenomena, I view this – and what it may ultimately lead to – to be a critically pressing priority area for research consideration for social communication specialists, everywhere.

Notes

1. “Yobs” is a negatively charged, highly biased British English colloquial term used to describe young, male, British *ne’er do wells*.
2. According to the news report, in (1), above, the teenager in question was walking to voluntary work in a youth centre when he was met by a friend who asked him “What have you been up to?” He replied “Fuck all, mate” (meaning ‘not very much of anything noteworthy’) whereupon he was stopped and charged under The Public Order Act by the plain-clothed female police officer who was walking behind him. He later successfully challenged the fine in court. He claimed that swearing was a normal part of the language that he and his friends use. Democratically elected district councilor Julie Rook representing Dover District Council’s anti-social behavior unit who works closely with the local police said “Swearing and abusive behavior certainly is not normal behavior and I feel it should never be used in a public place.” This seems to indicate both a clash of expectations in different (and asymmetrical) communities of practice which operate at different societal levels; and a difference of opinion within each as to what words and phrases have stable meanings and what not.
3. Kienpointner (2008) considers this to apply to a ‘discourse community’ but presumably we may want to consider variations within smaller units by considering a given accepted set of agreed norms for a known ‘community of practice’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Lave and Wenger 1991) or ‘Activity Type’ (Levinson [1979] 1992) within speech or discourse communities.

4. Though, it is only fair to point out that the deferment, given the thrust of Kienpointner's (2008) paper, is both rational and all too understandable especially given his acknowledgement that it is "[...] maybe premature to hope for a truly universal definition of 'impoliteness' at the present stage of research" (Kienpointner 2008: 245).
5. For a wider discussion around the attribution of intention, see Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003: 1552), Bousfield (2008a: 74) and especially Haugh (2008).
6. See also Watts (2003), though Watts, unlike Terkourafi, works with a first order approach. Holmes, Marra and Schnurr (2008) consider, too, that intention may be irrelevant for someone in a receiver role to assess an action as impolite, *contra* to the argument made in this chapter.
7. Throughout this paper I have used the stave transcription method for representing interaction. Within this approach (S1), (S2), for example, represent particular speakers; a full stop (.) represents an audible pause of more than 1 second, non-verbal actions, contextual information and transcription difficulties are placed in angled brackets < >.
8. This is not to suggest a position commensurate with that of 'politeness' or 'impoliteness' or 'rudeness' or 'meaning' in general being inherent in certain forms – it does not, though see the discussion in Culpeper (2005) and Terkourafi (2008) about lexical and phraseological efficiencies through *conventionalisation*.
9. It is, perhaps, worth noting at this point that now that we have recognised politeness₁ and politeness₂, impoliteness₁ and impoliteness₂ and, latterly, face₁ and face₂ (see Terkourafi 2008: 50–55), then it surely stands to reason that *every* academic concept/understanding is a second order concept which necessarily differs from lay concepts in every arena of academic scrutiny.

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**Approaches to interpersonal interpretation
drawn from communication studies and
social cognitive linguistics**

6. Relating

Robert B. Arundale

Abstract

Human language use is inextricably linked to phenomena that involve human beings in relationship to one another; however, matters of language use within the relationships that humans create and enact with one another have received comparatively little attention. As a broad framework, a “relationship,” or more dynamically “relating,” is defined as the establishing and maintaining of connection between two otherwise separate individuals. Human relationships have been studied intensely, providing a wealth of resources for conceptualizing relating which can be distinguished with regard to their emphases on relationships as summative or as non-summative phenomena. These different conceptualizations of relating have direct implications for the methodologies employed in research on interpersonal relationships. Employing current conceptualizations and methodologies in examining interpersonal relationships promises important new insights into the interpersonal pragmatics of relating.

1. Introduction

Consider for a moment the proposition that human language use is inextricably linked to phenomena that involve human beings in relationship to one another. Humans have long been seen as distinct from other social animals in their ability to use language to coordinate actions with others of their kind. Indeed, human languages themselves are the continually evolving outcomes of countless daily interactions among human beings. Human infants develop their ability to use one of these languages only in continuing, close interaction with other humans. And humans not only use language most often in the context of their relationships with other humans, but also form and maintain those relationships in using language. Matters of humans as language-using animals, of the evolution of languages, and of human language development have been well studied, but matters of language use within the relationships that humans create and enact with one another have received less attention. This chapter considers frameworks, resources, and methods for research on how humans use language in relating to other humans.

As a broad framework for discussion, I argue in Section 2 that human phenomena at the individual or psychological level function in dialectic relationship with phenomena at the social or communicative level. Phenomena at both levels impli-

cate the other level, so that excluding either level in conceptualizing or in analyzing human interaction is problematic. Against this background, a relationship, or more dynamically “relating,” is defined as the establishing and maintaining of connection between two otherwise separate individuals. In this paper, then, the terms “relating” and “relationship” index phenomena that arise in linguistic and extralinguistic interaction between at least two individuals, the minimum unit of analysis being the dyad, rather than the individual person.

Human relationships have been studied intensely, and social psychologists, communication researchers, and micro-sociologists have provided a wealth of empirical research using different theoretical perspectives: strategic, social exchange, dialogic, dialectic, and more. I characterize these perspectives in Section 3, and although each encompasses several distinct theories that cannot be considered in detail, the perspectives are distinguished with regard to their conceptualization of a relationship either as the sum of two individuals or as a non-summative, integral whole. Sound research on how humans use language in relating to other humans requires that one’s methodology be consistent with the theoretical and epistemological assumptions underlying one’s conceptualization of relating. Specific methodologies cannot be considered in detail, either, but in Section 4, I examine several key issues relevant to determining whether a given method is consistent with studying relationships as summative or as non-summative. Employing current conceptualizations and methodologies for examining interpersonal relationships promises important new insights into the interpersonal pragmatics of relating.

2. Perspectives on individual and social phenomena in examining relating

Human relating is a social phenomenon that encompasses individual phenomena, but there are complex issues involved both in (a) conceptualizing what is social and what is individual in relating, and (b) understanding how the social phenomena in relating are linked to the individual phenomena. This section conceptualizes social and individual phenomena as dialectically linked, and on that basis distinguishes between two different conceptualizations of what is social in relating. Brief illustrations of these conceptualizations suggest how they are useful in distinguishing among the resources available for examining relating in interpersonal pragmatics.

2.1. The individual/social dialectic

Krippendorff (2009: 37–47) argues that from an epistemological perspective, identifying any human event as a social phenomenon rests on identifying two or more individuals linked in some relational state. In addition, from an ontological per-

spective (Krippendorff 2009: 112–130; Stewart 1978) there is no point in human development from procreation onward that individuals exist as human agents apart from the agency of other humans. In the human experience, then, not only are individuals qua individuals dependent upon the nexus that is the social, but also the social qua social is dependent on individuals in nexus. What is individual in nature and what is social in nature are fully interdependent, while at the same time, individual phenomena and social phenomena are distinct and functionally contradictory poles of human experience.

This entwining of the individual with the social can be productively framed as a dialectic, not in the sense of a Hegelian dialectic of thesis and antithesis leading to synthesis, but in the sense of Yin and Yang: two co-existing and opposing elements that each contain aspects of the other and that at points merge into or become one another. Baxter and Montgomery (1996: 8) distinguish a Yin/Yang dialectic from a dualism or a bipolar continuum in that it involves two phenomena “that function in incompatible ways such that each negates the other,” but that are nevertheless unified because they function interdependently in an on-going, dynamic, and interactive manner. In human activity, social functioning is distinct from individual functioning in that social activities cannot be accomplished solely through the agency of one individual, but neither can they be accomplished in the absence of individuals. Individual functioning is distinct from social functioning in that individuals can carry on many activities in isolation from others, but their existence as individual agents capable of performing human activities has its basis in human sociality. The individual and the social are unified, definitionally because what is individual presupposes what is social, just as the opposite is true, and dynamically because individuals in interaction with one another constitute the social, just as social interaction is constitutive of individuals (Arundale 1999: 128; Stewart 1995: 27). The individual/social dialectic provides an abstract framework for conceptualizing both the individual and the social phenomena involved as humans engage in relating to other humans. Within this framework, relationships and the processes of relating among human individuals are social, and more specifically dyadic phenomena, and are outcomes of establishing and maintaining connection between two otherwise separate individuals. That is, the processes of connecting two individuals create the social in relationships, and dialectically, the processes of separating within relationships create the individuals who comprise them.

2.2. The weak and strong senses of what is social in relating

Dyadic relationships can be conceptualized in either a “weak” or a “strong” sense, where the terms “weak” and “strong” specifically do not refer to the “quality” or the “viability” of relationships, as in the expression “they have a strong relationship.” Conceptualizing relationships in the weak sense involves assumptions that privilege the individual pole of the individual/social dialectic at the expense of the

social pole, whereas conceptualizing relationships in the strong sense rests on assumptions that privilege neither pole because both are entailed. Distinguishing between the strong and weak senses of relating is important because, in Conville and Rogers' (1998: *x*) terms, conceptualizations of relationship "emerge out of and, in a sense, 'ride on the back' of the ontological-epistemological assumptions within which they are, knowingly or unknowingly, embedded," such that "definitions are never atheoretical."

When conceptualized in the weak sense, a relationship is understood to be the aggregate of the independent individuals who comprise it, the properties of the social entity being understood as the sum of the properties of the individuals. When conceptualized in the strong sense, however, a relationship is understood to be a single, integral system of interdependent individuals, the properties of the social entity being understood as the non-summativ properties that arise within that system, apart from the properties of the individuals. More specifically, the non-summativ properties of any system of two or more components arise when the state(s) of one component become reciprocally linked to and conditional upon those of other component(s) in space and/or time. For example, as separate components, both sodium and chlorine are unstable elements with distinct properties inimical to human life. However, when an atom of one element becomes reciprocally linked to an atom of the other in the integral system of sodium chloride, the resulting compound is highly stable, with properties qualitatively and quantitatively different from those of either component, and essential to human life. The properties of sodium chloride are non-summativ in that they cannot be reduced to or explained as the sum of the properties of the component elements without leaving key properties of the compound unexplained. Non-summativ properties arise from the reciprocal conditionality or systemic interdependence of the components, not out of their simple co-presence, or from the unilateral effect of one component on another. Co-presence generates only summative aggregations of components, not systems, and aggregated unilateral effects can at best generate mutual dependence, as opposed to systemic interdependence. Importantly, the non-summativ properties of relationships cannot be formally explained within theoretical frameworks that conceptualize relationships as summative aggregations of the properties of individuals (Krippendorff 1970). One key implication is that if relationships are not conceptualized as having non-summativ properties, such properties may not be observed in research, and if observed will not be explainable in terms of the conceptualization.

Within the Western, Cartesian framework that privileges explanations in terms of individual phenomena, one is positioned to conceptualize what is social in relating in the weak sense, as in Goffman's (1967) understanding of face as the image others hold of oneself in public situations. Arundale (2006, 2009) argues that Goffman's framing is social psychological in nature. It is psychological in that Goffman's explanation focuses on the perceptions one individual holds re-

garding how other individuals perceive him or her. It is social at the micro level in that the minimum social unit is understood as the aggregate of self plus other, and at the macro level in that societies are understood as aggregates of individuals, each of whom has been socialized in ways that permit such societies, understood as corporate entities, to “mobilize their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters” (Goffman 1967: 45). Within the non-Western framework of the individual/social dialectic, however, an explanation can privilege neither the individual nor the social, because neither pole can be excluded, which requires at minimum that one address human phenomena at the level of the dyadic system. One is positioned then to conceptualize what is social in relating in the strong sense, as in Arundale’s (1999, 2010) understanding of face as the interactional achievement of connection and separation within relationships. In this framing of face, the dyadic social unit is conceptualized as a system defined by the non-summative properties that arise in the interdependencies among the interacting individuals (as in Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967). Such minimum social systems or relationships are arguably the basis of both human individuality and human sociality. The processes of communicating over time and space within networks comprised of dyadic systems explain, on the one hand, how individual attributes like identity are created, maintained, and modified (e.g., Hecht et al. 2005; cf. Arundale 2006: 200–201), and on the other hand, how societal systems (versus aggregates or corporate entities), together with societal norms, are socially constructed, sustained, and changed (e.g., Arundale 1999: 140–142; Heritage 1984: 179–232, 309–311).

2.3. The weak and strong senses of relating: Some illustrations

There is considerable research in social psychology, micro-sociology, interpersonal communication, and related disciplines that conceptualizes relationships in the weak sense as the summative aggregate of two or more independent individuals’ cognitions and/or behaviors (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 118–119, 212–213; Rogers 1998: 76; Werner and Baxter 1994: 335–337). Such understandings are consistent with Weber’s (1947: 118) minimum criteria for a social relationship: the “mutual orientation of the action of each to that of the others,” together with “a probability that there will be, in some meaningfully understandable sense [imputed to the parties], a course of social action.” Consider three different ways in which relationships have been explained in the weak sense: Yolanda and Xavier are a couple in which she is primary breadwinner and he cares for their young child while she is at work. If one conceptualizes relationships as *mutual dependence on another’s behavior*, one understands Xavier as depending on Yolanda’s behavior in her role as provider of income, whereas she depends on his behavior in his role as provider of childcare, their mutual dependence being defined as the sum of their two individual states of role-defined dependence. If one con-

ceptualizes relationships as closer given greater *similarity in the parties' cognitions*, one compares Xavier's political attitudes, religious beliefs, or cultural values with Yolanda's, their degree of similarity being understood as "the degree of match between two monadic 'containers' of attitudes, beliefs, and values; containers that existed prior to the relationship" (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 90). Lastly, if one conceptualizes relationships as involving *mutual positive affect*, one considers Yolanda's feelings of love for Xavier with respect to his feelings for her, affect being defined as a state located within the psychological or physiological boundaries of each separate individual. These conceptualizations in the weak sense privilege individual phenomena in that they define what is social in terms of what is individual, taking what is individual as the primary mode or order of phenomena. Supplementing such accounts with discussions of the influence of social factors on individuals fails to address the definitional and dynamic unity of what is individual with what is social that is entailed by the individual/social dialectic.

Conville and Rogers (1998) do not employ the strong/weak distinction identified here, but their edited volume on the meaning of "relationship" in interpersonal communication provides multiple arguments for understanding relationships in the strong sense. In contrast to Weber's (1947: 118) criteria, conceptualizing relationships in the strong sense frames relating in terms of the systemic and specifically non-summative patterning of action created and recreated as two or more individuals reciprocally afford and constrain one another's meanings and actions in on-going verbal/behavioral interaction (Cappella 1987; Krippendorff 1970, 2009: 112–130; Werner and Baxter 1994: 338–355). If two persons have never encountered each other before, their interaction creates a new relationship. If they have an on-going relationship, each new interaction re-establishes that relationship, sustaining or modifying it (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 119). When understood in the strong sense, relationships are conceptualized as dynamic states or properties evinced in the patterns of verbalization and/or behavior produced within particular dyads. The strong sense of relating is operationalized in research in examining reciprocal affordance and constraint over time or in identifying non-summative outcomes, properties, or patterning in interaction.

In contrast to the prior examples, consider three different ways in which relationships have been explained in the strong sense. Whereas mutual dependence on another's behavior is a summative property, conceptualizing relating as *interdependence of behavior within a dyad or system* frames relating as non-summative: Yolanda's ongoing financial support and Xavier's continuing childcare interlock in a system of behaviors unique to their relationship, such that her loss of employment or his hospitalization would engender complex shifts in their joint behavioral pattern, shifts distinct from those encountered by other couples with parallel role definitions. Whereas degree of similarity in two person's cognitions is assessed by measuring each individual's psychological states, the partners' *reciprocal knowledge of both similarities and differences* in their political attitudes, religious be-

liefs, or cultural values is a dynamic property of the dyad that both arises in and becomes consequential for their relating as they interact. As they communicate over time, Yolanda and Xavier reciprocally afford and constrain each other's understanding of how her centrist, Catholic, and northern Italian, and his liberal, Catholic, and southern Spanish orientations are factors both in their interaction with and in their understanding of one another. Lastly, whereas mutual positive affect references separate individual's emotional states, the *social meaning of both positive and negative affect* is a non-summative, dyadic property continually enacted "in the communicative practices of relationship partners" (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 90), and is dialectically both an individual and a social phenomenon. As Xavier expresses his affection and his disaffection for Yolanda, and as she does so for him, they create together an understanding of their own emotional investment in their relationship as integral with the other's emotional investment, such that their own emotional investment is individual while their emotional bonding (or lack thereof) is social. Conceptualizing relationships in the strong sense privileges neither the individual nor the social pole of the individual/social dialectic because each pole is defined in terms of the other and is a distinct mode or order of phenomena.

Contrasting the strong and weak senses of relationship makes apparent that in theorizing and studying relating, examining individual phenomena is necessary, but not sufficient in accounting for social phenomena (cf. Krippendorff 1970). The strong sense of relating entails the weak sense, but not the reverse. Stewart (1998) finds early understandings of relationships as constituted in interaction as far back as the Sophists, though more current and influential sources are to be found in Heidegger, Buber, and Bakhtin. Both Stewart (1998) and Rogers (1998) make apparent, however, that the conceptualization of relating in the strong sense which is characterized above arises in the convergence of several lines of theory and research that begin to take shape during the 1960s in the disciplines of sociology, social psychology, and human communication, and that have been pursued intensively since then. The resources for theorizing and studying human relating sketched in Section 3 are drawn from the last half century's work on relationships and relating, and represent both the strong and the weak sense.

3. Resources for studying relating in interpersonal pragmatics

Scholars studying interpersonal and relational communication have created a very large body of theory and research on human relating. Even a modestly comprehensive overview would result in a reference list longer than this chapter, so that this section can but post directional signs for finding one's way across a broad terrain, and point to synoptic resources that in turn guide interested researchers to more specific sources.

Werner and Baxter (1994) provide helpful directions by distinguishing five broad orientations employed in theory and research in interpersonal and relational communication. Researchers who employ a *trait orientation* “focus on individuals and their psychological processes as the unit of analysis, view people as largely independent of their context,” and assume “that the impetus for behavior resides within the individual” (1994: 335). Those who adopt a *situational orientation* “assume that behavior is determined both by aspects of individuals and by aspects of the social and physical environment,” such that “person and situation are treated [both] as separate factors that may jointly influence behavior” (1994: 335), and as factors whose defining properties remain unchanged in the event. These first two orientations are prevalent in theory and research on human relating, although both represent conceptualizations in the weak sense. (Note that Werner and Baxter employ the term “interactional” rather than “situational” for this second orientation. Their usage reflects an older, philosophical use of the term to refer to conceptualizing human events vis-à-vis their contextual frames. The term “situational” is adopted here to avoid confusion with the current use of “interactional” to refer to communication between persons.)

Like the first two orientations, researchers utilizing an *organismic orientation* assume the position of an outside observer, but believe that “the unit of analysis is the total system; individual units are not – and in fact cannot – be studied apart from the whole” (Werner and Baxter 1994: 338) because the interdependence of the parts produces the non-summative properties that characterize the whole. Nevertheless, “the individual elements in the system can be defined and studied independently of each other” (1994: 338) in terms of their contributions to the whole and their reciprocal influences on one another. Those who employ a *transactional orientation* disagree that the parts of a system can be studied independently because a system is a whole that

cannot be broken up into and is not made up of separate parts; the aspects are mutually defining and inseparable and together contribute to the definition and meaning of events [...]. There is no dominant or dominating mechanism that controls functioning; all aspects are equally important, mutually constraining, and events unfold in a coordinated holistic way. (Werner and Baxter 1994: 342)

Researchers who employ a transactional orientation examine change over time in a system’s functioning, with a focus on the “pattern, shape, outline, or recognizable organization in the flow of events” (Werner and Baxter 1994: 344), rather than on the mechanisms that cause or control the change. Lastly, researchers who adopt a *dialectical orientation* share all the commitments of researchers using the transactional orientation, but in addition focus on the dynamic tensions between dialectically organized contradictions in explaining the pattern or organization observed in the flow of events (1994: 355, 370). The organismic, transactional, and dialectical orientations all conceptualize human relating in the strong sense.

Werner and Baxter (1994) use these five orientations to frame their comprehensive overview of theory and research on change over time in interpersonal relating. The distinctions are also a valuable tool in understanding interpersonal and relational research in general, and are employed below in characterizing resources for studying the interpersonal pragmatics of relating. Two definitional points should prove useful, as well. First, although the term “interpersonal” is very commonly used simply in the sense of “two persons,” it is also used in the sense of “between persons,” with considerable variation in what is conceptualized as lying between or as uniting the persons. Identifying how a given theory or study defines “interpersonal” is critical because “two person” definitions uniformly involve conceptualizations in the weak sense and employ trait or situational orientations, while “between person” definitions may involve either the weak or the strong sense, and may employ any of the five orientations. Second, although the term “relational” is now widely used as synonymous with “interpersonal” in the “between persons” sense, as in this chapter, some researchers employ “relational” more narrowly to identify relationships that involve, for example, intimacy, kinship, or established history. Again, given the variation, clarifying how a given theory or study employs the term “relational” is essential.

Giles and Robinson’s (1990) handbook on research at the interface between language and social psychology, with a number of its chapters examining matters of language use in relating to others, as for example through facework, accounting practices, self-disclosure, and deception, and in the contexts of friendship, marriage, later life, and provider-patient interactions. The theory and research examined in these chapters is characterized by trait or situational orientations, and thus relationships are conceptualized in the weak sense. Each of these ways and contexts of relating has remained an active focus of research in language pragmatics, and in interpersonal and relational communication, as well, although these two research traditions have remained relatively independent. As the first chapters of this volume make evident, issues of facework and im/politeness have been an active focus of research in language pragmatics for some time, though they have not figured prominently in research in interpersonal and relational interaction, despite Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 55) early argument that “‘ways of putting things’, or simply language usage, are part of the very stuff that social relationships are made of.” Eelen’s (2001) overview of early politeness theories, and particularly his critique of their tacit Parsonian assumptions, makes evident why these theories employ a situational orientation and thus conceptualize relating in the weak sense. More specifically, Eelen (2001: 213) argues that following Parsons (1966), “the individual is constructed from the position of (and largely to defend) the social/cultural model,” the internalization of social norms being a central component in the individual’s socialization. Norms within this framework are thus “both cultural and individual at the same time,” linking the social and the individual levels non-dialectically such that “the individual becomes a mere reflection of the social” (Eelen

2001: 213). Individuals therefore conform to the social because their cognitive “mechanisms drive them to execute the culture they are part of and over which they are powerless” (2001: 213). Eelen rejects Parson’s position because it fails to adequately address the uniqueness of the individual qua individual. Garfinkel (1967) rejects it because it reduces individuals to “judgmental dopes,” incapable of dealing with the contingencies manifest in everyday interaction.

Parsons’ understanding of society is tacit in the two broad conceptual approaches that Burleson, Metts, and Kirch (2000) present as an integrative framework for theory and research on close relationships: the “strategic-functional” and the “consequential-cultural” conceptualizations of relating. The strategic-functional conceptualization has a long history, is well-defined, and has been much explored. Individuals are understood to have goals or intentions in their relationships with others, together with (a) *strategies* or “generalized action schemata associated with goal attainment” (2000: 246) and (b) tactics or plans for organizing communication sequences, none of which need be conscious. Individuals expect different relationships to accomplish different *functions* in their lives (e.g., providing material, social, emotional and psychological resources), so that types of relationships can be distinguished by the particular combinations of functions they provide. If a relationship is to serve its functions, individuals must be competent in accomplishing instrumental, relational maintenance, and interactional management tasks (2000: 247), which require them to learn a range of communication skills. Individuals initiate relationships using conventional schemata that define relationship functions, but as they engage their strategies in attaining their goals in the relationship, both the relationship and the individuals undergo change, often exhibiting recognizable phases of development. As Burleson, Metts, and Kirch’s (2000) overview makes evident, all of these features of strategic-functional conceptualizations (of which there are many) have been addressed in theory and research in relational communication. Goals, strategies, tactics, plans, and schemata are clearly cognitive phenomena, which along with the individual’s communicative skills, are focused on or directed toward other individuals in one’s perceived social environment. Strategic-functional conceptualizations therefore provide social cognitive or social psychological (see Ickes and Duck 2000) explanations of relating, and employ a situational orientation, although there are trait-oriented explanations as well. These explanations uniformly define “interpersonal” in the “two person” sense, framing relationships in the weak sense because they privilege the individual pole of the individual/social dialectic.

The consequential-cultural conceptualization of relating is the more recent of the two, and less well defined and developed. Two person *relational cultures* are taken to be analogous to national cultures, such that “[m]uch like culture in the broader sense, relational cultures consist of shared meaning systems [...]; characteristic interaction routines and rituals; norms and rules that organize, sequence, and control behavior; and role structures that organize situated identities” (Burle-

son, Metts, and Kirch 2000: 252). All of these aspects of relational cultures are *consequences* of communication, and “although relationship cultures are created by their members, they come to powerfully constrain the ideas and actions of their members” (2000: 257) as they interact with one another and with those outside their relationship over time. Whether in the broader sense or in the relational sense, however, “culture” and individuals are linked in these conceptualizations in the same way they are linked in Parsons’ (1966) view of the social order, implying that the consequential-cultural approaches are (a) subject to the same critiques as politeness theories, (b) employ a situational orientation, and (c) conceptualize relating in the weak sense. Other scholars who understand communication as consequential (e.g., Sigman 1995) and/or who examine relationships as cultures (e.g., Baxter and Montgomery (1996) conceptualize relating in the strong sense because they draw on different understandings of the social order, as in Heritage (1984) or Maynard and Wilson (1980)).

As a sociologist interested in micro-level phenomena, Goffman (1967, 1969) developed a dramaturgic approach to social relationships that has clear affinities with strategic conceptualizations. Goffman’s metaphor of the actor performing in a play was apparent in his early observation that “[e]very person [...] tends to act out what is sometimes called a *line* – that is, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he [sic] expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself” (1967: 5, emphasis in original). Each actor is continually and strategically (1969) positioning him/herself with regard to other’s moves in the contingent flow of interaction in the local social environment, his/her participation in that flow of events being organized in terms of a set of ritually ordered interchange units “impressed” upon him/her during socialization (1967: 45). As Arundale (2006: 197–199, 2009: 37–40) argues, Goffman’s explanation of human action in relating to others is not only social psychological in employing the individual as its unit of analysis and in explaining how that individual is influenced by or influences his/her social environment, but also Parsonian in regard to his understanding of what he called the “interaction order.” Goffman’s broadly ethnographic observations, descriptions, and interpretations of the dynamics of face-to-face encounters continue to be influential in research in interpersonal pragmatics, but conceptualize relationships in the weak sense because they employ a situational orientation.

Burleson, Metts, and Kirch’s (2000) strategic-functional and consequential-cultural conceptualizations of relating represent much of the theorizing and research in interpersonal and relational communication, but there are other conceptualizations that may be usefully distinguished. Langlotz’ (this volume) overview of social cognition approaches in interpersonal pragmatics, together with Enfield’s (2009) argument for introducing “relational thinking” in research in pragmatics, find counterparts in social cognition approaches in interpersonal relationship research, as in Berscheid’s (1994) review, and in edited collections by Roloff and

Berger (1982), Fletcher and Fincham (1991), and Hewes (1995). The latter volume includes McPhee's (1995) considered appreciation of cognitive approaches to social phenomena, together with a critique of such explanations because they privilege individual rather than social processes. Distinct from social cognition approaches, social exchange approaches view interpersonal communication as "a symbolic process by which two people, bound together in a relationship, provide each other with resources or negotiate the exchange of resources" (Roloff 1981: 30). Roloff provides overviews not only of core theoretical approaches, but also of their application in understanding both conflict and relational development, the latter phenomena also being the focus of Burgess and Huston's volume (1979). Whether in research in communication, social psychology, or micro-sociology, social exchange conceptualizations of relating employ a situational orientation, one individual's actions being explained in terms of the rewards and costs of obtaining resources available from the others who comprise his/her social environment. Quite apart from social cognition and social exchange, Antos, Ventola, and Weber (2008) argue for the viability of a linguistic approach to studying interpersonal communication in introducing their handbook of theories, methods, tools, and resources. The editors define "interpersonal" in the "two person" sense, although the individual contributions vary in conceptualizing relating in the weak or strong senses, and differ in which of Werner and Baxter's (1994) orientations they employ.

What then of theory and research on relating that is representative of Werner and Baxter's (1994) organismic, transactional, and dialectical orientations, or in other words, representative of work that conceptualizes relating in the strong sense? The earliest fully developed organismic conceptualization is Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson's (1967) application of systems theory in understanding relationships at the level of the dyad, rather than the individual, and from the perspective of an outside observer. This work generated an important research tradition in interpersonal communication (Escudero and Rogers 2004), and was influential in Pearce and Cronen's (1980) theory of the coordinated management of meaning in relationships. Pearce and Cronen's conceptualization involves one key element of the transactional orientation in that it recognizes there is no dominant mechanism controlling dyadic functioning (1980: 148); instead participants' actions are mutually constraining with the result that "events unfold in a coordinated holistic way" (Werner and Baxter 1994: 342).

Arundale (1999, 2010) draws on Pearce and Cronen, as well as on research on talk/conduct-in-interaction, to develop the conjoint co-constituting model of communication. This theoretical model represents a fully transactional orientation in that it is framed from the participant's perspective, takes the dyad or system as the unit of analysis in examining relating, and focuses on the "recognizable organization in the flow of events" (Werner and Baxter 1994: 344). Because it employs conversation analytic approaches to talk/conduct-in-interaction, Pomerantz and

Mandelbaum's (2005) conceptualization of relationships using Sacks' membership categorization devices also represents a transactional orientation. Membership categorization analysis is being employed increasingly in studies of interpersonal and relationship phenomena, although as Schegloff (2007: 477) argues, not all research drawing on Sacks' contribution adequately grounds participant's orientations to membership categories in the flow of events in talk/conduct. One consequence is that conceptualizations of relating that draw on membership categorization analysis may well be characterized by a situational orientation, as is characteristic of role-based understandings of relationships.

The transactional orientation is apparent as well in a number of dialogic conceptualizations of relating developed since the late 1980s and focused on the creating and sustaining of relationships. Sampson ([1993] 2008) argues for shifting the focus in social psychology away from the individual to an account of human nature in terms of dialogically linked persons. Cissna and Anderson (1994) provide a broad overview of dialogic views of communicating in relating to others, while Stewart and Zediker (2000) examine the dialogic tensions that characterize relating to others in face-to-face interaction. Baxter (2004) focuses directly on relationships in developing a constitutive, dialectical, aesthetic, discursive, and critical conceptualization of dialogue that she argues is essential in understanding the processes of relating. Largely distinct from these conceptualizations, Linell's (1998) "dialogic" perspective on talk, interaction, and context represents a linguistic approach to interpersonal communication (cf. Antos, Ventola, and Weber 2008). That is, while Linell draws on some of the same intellectual roots as other dialogic approaches, he focuses on matters of language and cognition, rather than on forming and maintaining relationships, so that his approach is best characterized as employing aspects of both the situational and the organismic orientations.

Baxter's perspective on dialogue is integral in Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) relational dialectics theory, the most widely referenced of several theories employing the dialectical orientation (Montgomery and Baxter 1998). Relational dialectics theory identifies the participants' engagement in addressing certain dialectical tensions, e.g., both separation and connection as not only defining a relationship, but also shaping its dynamics. Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) original presentation of the theory has been recognized as a comprehensive review and integration of theory and research in interpersonal and relational communication. The theory applies to relationships of all types, and has been employed in research on friendships, marriages, familial relationships, face (Arundale 2010), and more. Theories or approaches employing a dialectical orientation also employ a transactional orientation, and together with those employing an organismic orientation provide conceptualizations of relating in the strong sense.

The breadth and depth in theorizing and research in interpersonal and relational communication across Werner and Baxter's (1994) orientations is indicated not only in the resources cited above, but also in a wealth of handbooks, monographs,

and edited collections published since the 1960s. Each leads in turn to further sources. Berger (2005) provides an overview of current theoretical perspectives on interpersonal communication covering interpersonal adaptation, message production, uncertainty, deception, and dialectic theories, and projects future theory development regarding interaction routines, emotion, and competence issues in social interaction. Baxter and Braithwaite's (2008) edited volume provides more extensive treatments of current theories. Knapp and Daly's (2002) *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* is a third edition whose chapters provide overviews of personality (trait) approaches and of goal/knowledge structures in relationships, as well as of emotional and supportive communication in relating, interpersonal influence or compliance gaining, conflict management, and interpersonal skills, the latter two concerns being the focus of handbooks by Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2006) and Greene and Burleson (2003) respectively. Other chapters in the third edition overview theory and research on interpersonal communication in computer-mediated interaction, in families, in the workplace, in health care, and in romantic relationships, the latter three contexts together with conflict being loci of research in interpersonal pragmatics represented in the chapters by Bousfield, Vine, Davis, and Marley in this volume.

Knapp and Miller's (1994) second edition *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication* also includes overviews of individual communicator characteristics, of situations/goals and power/dominance as factors in interpersonal interaction, of competence in enacting interpersonal skills, and of the centrality of everyday talk in relationship formation and maintenance. Other handbooks address relational closeness and intimacy (Mashek and Aron 2004), divorce and relationship dissolution (Fine and Harvey 2006), and gender issues in interpersonal communication (Dow and Wood 2006), gender issues also being a focus of research in interpersonal pragmatics (Mullany, this volume). Other monographs, edited collections, and reviews examine love, jealousy, and social support (Berscheid 1994), friendship, long distance, and marriage relationships, relational maintenance, change in relationships across the life span, personal networks in relating, the "dark side" of relating as in abuse, deception, manipulation, and "inappropriate" relationships, as well as forgiveness, and more. Searching journal indices, databases, and publisher's websites will access a wide range of theoretical and research articles, one important journal among others being the *Journal of Personal and Social Relationships* of the *International Network on Personal Relationships*.

Against this background, it is apparent that the "relational work" (Locher 2008: 510) persons invest in creating, sustaining, and terminating interpersonal relationships is extensive and multifaceted. One consequence is that dichotomies contrasting "interpersonal" or "relational" with "ideational" or "transactional" functions of language are not viable in research on relationships, both because they derive from Saussure's problematic distinction between *langue* and *parole* (Thibault 2008: 302), and because they are observer distinctions that gloss the

complexities of how participants use language in relating (see Arundale 2006: 202–203). Employing unscrutinized, vernacular understandings is also problematic in studying relating because they reflect the observer's tacit cultural and social class conceptualizations of relationships. Using vernacular understandings in systematic research demands careful ethnographic work, as in Katriel and Philipsen's (1981) study of U.S. Americans. Importantly, the theory and research sketched in this section is primarily the work of Western (and often U.S. American) scholars, and one needs to ask if the conceptualizations of human relating they have created are culture bound. Of course they are, some more so than others. No human constructions can be otherwise. Fitch (1994) examines a number of potential cultural limitations in theory and research in interpersonal and relational communication, and post-modern critiques have made evident that awareness of such cultural framing is a necessity. New, more culture-general conceptualizations of human relating are always possible, but they can be derived only in dialectical interplay with research on culture-specific understandings (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 17).

Much of the theory and research sketched in this section has addressed general properties and processes in interpersonal and relational communication, rather than the details of talk/conduct in direct face-to-face interaction that is the focus of much theory and research in language pragmatics. Sanders (1997: 405–413) represents other scholars studying human communication who argue that studying the details of ordinary interaction is essential in understanding these general properties and processes, potentially leading to new conceptualizations (e.g., Sanders and Fitch 2001). Yet it is also the case that understandings of these general properties and processes of interpersonal and relational communicating are of value to scholars in language pragmatics in understanding of the details of relating in talk/conduct. Drawing these two research traditions together in studying language use in human relating has clear potential for generating synergistic effects. When one employs a given theory or set of research findings regarding human relating, one also adopts a particular conceptualization of relating and its attendant epistemological and theoretical orientations (Conville and Rogers 1998; Werner and Baxter 1994). Given the breadth and depth of theory and research on human relating on which to draw, making one's conceptualization explicit and examining its assumptions informs one's choices in the conduct of research, assures consistency throughout the research endeavor, and opens one's design, methodology, analysis, and interpretations to constructive critique.

4. Methods for studying relating in interpersonal pragmatics

Poole, McPhee, and Canary (2002: 23–25) join other methodologists (e.g., Crotty 1998: 1–16) in arguing that sound research requires that the methods one employs be consistent with the theoretical and epistemological assumptions entailed in one's conceptualization of the phenomenon under investigation. If one conceptualizes human relating in the weak sense, i.e., as the sum of the behaviors or cognitions of two or more individuals, then the methods available for research on language use in human relating include all of those currently being employed in research in language pragmatics. More specifically, Arundale (2008: 232) argues that much research in linguistics and language pragmatics continues to employ (often tacitly) the conceptual commitments of encoding/decoding models of human communication, primary among these being that the psychological states or meanings and actions of the sender and the receiver are independent. Given the wealth of sound research on language and language use, it is therefore not surprising that many of the research methods scholars have developed are well suited to studying individual level phenomena in language use, and hence consistent with examining relating as conceptualized in the weak sense.

If, on the other hand, researchers conceptualize human relating in the strong sense, i.e., as a non-summative property of a system that is not reducible to the properties of the individuals who comprise it, then the methods consistent with the conceptualization are more limited. Only some research into language use employs the conceptual commitments of “interactional achievement” models of communication (Arundale 2008: 241–244), one of which is that the psychological states or meanings and actions of the sender and receiver become interdependent as they engage in talk/conduct in interaction. Generating sound research on language phenomena conceptualized in this manner has required scholars to develop methods for studying non-summative patterning in interaction. Such methods are consistent with examining language use in human relating as conceptualized in the strong sense, but they currently include only a subset of the methods employed in language pragmatics and in research on relationships.

In addition to the strong/weak distinction, however, there is another important issue in considering methods for studying language use in human relating: whether or not the researcher analyses relationships “from the position of the actor,” attending to “the actor's line of conduct as the actor organizes it” (Wilson 1970: 701). That is, in constructing an interpretation of evidence in research involving human beings, the analyst may limit his/her interpreting to his/her own perspective on or understandings of the events under study, or may seek to encompass within his/her interpreting the perspectives or understandings of the participants as they engaged in those events (1970: 701–702). Analysts who employ their own perspective apply their conceptualization of relationships as a tool in examining evidence and in so doing generate an interpretation from the “third person” position of an outside

observer. Analysts who encompass participant perspectives conceptualize relationships as actors' accomplishments, and in examining evidence generate an interpretation that takes into account the "first person" position of the actors themselves. The distinction is important in studying relating, not only because, in Simmel's (1950: 216) terms, a relationship is "inseparable from the immediacy of interaction" between particular actors, but also because the individual/social dialectic makes apparent that individual differences will always be a factor in forming and sustaining a social unit, especially a dyad. Each human relationship is therefore in some measure different from every other relationship, those differences being much more difficult for the analyst to access in taking the position of the outside observer than in taking into account the position of the actors.

One obvious solution is for the analyst to gather data directly from the relational partners about features of their relationship that he/she finds relevant. Studies employing individually based, self-report methods are common in the research on relationships considered in Section 3, and widely used in research in language pragmatics. These methods are consistent with conceptualizations of relationships in the weak sense in that they are well suited to accessing the behaviors or cognitions of individuals. However, researchers employing such methods must address two long-standing questions posed by Knapp et al. (2002), first regarding whether data generated by measurements on separate individuals are viable indices of phenomena that are social in nature (2002: 9), and second regarding whether data that involve recall (Berscheid 1994: 93–96) or prediction, or that are subject to social desirability effects are viable indices of meanings and actions in the moment of interaction (Knapp et al. 2002: 11). Methods that gather data from relational partners as separate individuals are not well suited to accessing the dyadic or social phenomena that are central in conceptualizing relationships in the strong sense, although there is an alternative: gathering data from relational partners working as a dyad. Because these data are co-produced they can be argued to index dyadic or social phenomena in relationships, although they remain subject to recall and/or social desirability effects. Surprisingly few studies in the research literature on relationships employ the latter approach to data gathering, in part because conceptualizations of relationships in the weak sense have so long predominated. Issues regarding recall and desirability effects in self or joint reports can be addressed by gathering data through direct observation or recording of talk/conduct between relational partners, although these data present their own analytic challenges, to be considered below.

Methods involving observer coding of interaction are fairly common in research both on interpersonal relationships and in language pragmatics: a category system is established in advance on the basis of theory or research, and the analyst decides which category applies to each utterance/behavior. However, without a specific warrant that the coding process employed indexes the participant's meanings and actions in the moment of interaction, the analyst's interpretation of the

evidence is one constructed from the perspective of an outside observer, rather than one that encompasses the position of the actors. Such explanations are adequate for certain research purposes: Escudero and Rogers (2004) conceptualize relationships in the strong sense, and argue both that their Relational Control Coding System has greater validity than several other relational coding systems (2004: 44–45), and that even though participants' meanings are "relevant and valuable information," they represent a "locus of meaning" (2004: 44) distinct from that indexed by relational coding schemes such as theirs that have been designed to provide insights apart from the actor's perspectives.

Most of the research methods and analytic techniques employed in studying interpersonal communication are ones that are employed throughout the social sciences, but there are a number such as Escudero and Rogers' (2004) coding system that have been created especially for studying relationships, and that may be of value in research on language use in human relating. Poole, McPhee, and Canary (2002) provide a comprehensive overview of these methods and analytic techniques. Among the methods they examine, the most frequently used are ones consistent with research that conceptualizes relationships in the weak sense, but there are a number which are potentially applicable when relating is conceptualized in the strong sense. Among the latter the authors devote special attention to interaction analysis using coding techniques, gathering participant's reports and recollections, and gathering data on change in time, as well as to analytic techniques for demonstrating interdependence among participants, categorical data modeling, and studying change and development processes. In considering interaction analysis, Poole, McPhee, and Canary distinguish between "observer-privileged" and "subject-privileged" coding systems, although the distinction between outside observer and actor perspectives is not otherwise acknowledged.

Discourse analytic methods are both well-known to and widely used by researchers in language pragmatics, who are likely to be surprised that these methods are used relatively infrequently in research on interpersonal and relational communication. Bavelas, Kenwood, and Phillips (2002) recognize the potential contributions of discourse analysis in understanding the processes of relating and provide a comprehensive introduction to these methods addressed specifically to interpersonal communication scholars. Given that discourse analytic methods are both diverse and broadly applicable in studying language use, however, researchers in interpersonal pragmatics who apply discourse analysis in examining language use in relationships cannot simply assume that their method is consistent with the conceptualization of relating that informs their research. Careful consideration of which of Werner and Baxter's (1994) five theoretical orientations is in use, and whether the observer's perspective is sufficient or the actor's perspectives are needed, will assure consistency in conclusions about relating.

Interpretive methods such as narrative inquiry and ethnography of communication are being used with increasing frequency in research in interpersonal and re-

lational communication, and are employed in language pragmatics in research in interactional sociolinguistics. Bochner (1994) provides an insightful overview of research, purposes, assumptions, and methods of narrative inquiry in interpersonal communication, specifically considering narrative approaches for gathering data from relational partners as separate individuals, as well as from those working as a dyad. The constructionist epistemology (Crotty 1998) basic to research in narrative inquiry also frames research in the ethnographic approach to interpersonal communication, as in Philipsen's (1989) outline. Ethnography of communication specifically privileges actors' perspectives in relating to others through talk/conduct. Narrative inquiry and ethnography of communication are capable of providing deep insights into the meanings and actions participants construct, as well as into the practices they employ, whether in specific situations or in common episodes of interaction, as in Fitch's (1998) work on "speaking relationally" in Columbia. Both methods have potential in research on the interpersonal pragmatics of relating.

Ethnomethodological approaches in inquiry also require that the analyst interpret phenomena from the position of the actor (Garfinkel 1967), as does the approach to understanding talk/conduct-in-interaction employed in conversation analysis (Heritage 1984: 231–292). Conversation analysts have long observed that relationships are not "a reality lying behind and influencing member's face-to-face behavior" but rather are "accomplished within everyday interaction by various speaking practices" (Maynard and Zimmerman 1984: 305). Relating is therefore a phenomenon endogenous in the interactional achieving of talk/conduct, rather than an exogenous factor seen to drive or to shape participants' conversational practices. Conversation analysis focuses on understanding actions in talk/conduct, hence analyses of relational phenomena, per se, lie outside the scope of its core research program. However, analyses of human relating are clearly within the scope of research in language pragmatics that is informed by methods and research in conversation analysis (Arundale 2005). Given its roots in ethnomethodology, two central principles in conversation analysis are that analysts not only ground their understandings in publicly observable participant utterances, but also provide evidence that the phenomena they identify are instrumental in what the participants achieved in their talk/conduct. In examining the "complainability" of conversational actions, Schegloff (2005: 474) argues that "[i]t is not enough for analysts to suppose that the parties, 'can infer it from the context or observe or hear it happening'; what is needed is not supposition, but analysis of the data that ground such a claim in the observable conduct of the parties." The same is true for relational phenomena.

One provides evidence of what the participants achieved by demonstrating both "participant orientation" and "procedural consequentiality," the basis for that demonstration being the evidence the participants themselves provide in the process of "displaying" to one another their interpretation of the other's talk/conduct (Schegloff 1991: 50–53).¹ Those interpretations are evidenced in each participant's

uptake of the other's prior talk/conduct, that evidence being available to the analyst, as well, although he/she cannot reconstruct from it all aspects of the participant's interpretations. The evidence provided by participant uptake is the central warrant in the analyst's argument that his/her interpretation is viable with respect to what the participants interactionally achieved in the moment of interaction. Because participants themselves are not necessarily conscious of the interpretations they display, demonstrating participant orientation and procedural consequentiality involves neither self reports nor questioning the participants about their interpretations (Schegloff 1996: 173, note 6). Instead, the analyst examines specific instances of actual talk/conduct, and argues that his/her understanding is consonant with the participants' achieving by (a) formulating or characterizing the phenomenon of interest as influential in or as arising in talk/conduct-in-interaction; (b) demonstrating from the details of each specific instance of talk/conduct that the *participants are oriented to the phenomenon* in that at the moment of talk/conduct it is "relevant for producing and interpreting conduct in the interaction" (Schegloff 1991: 51, 65); and (c) demonstrating from the details of the talk/conduct that the *phenomenon is consequential in "how the interaction proceeded* in the way in which it did, how it came to have the trajectory, the direction, the shape that it ended up having" (1991: 53, emphasis added).

Schegloff (1991: 64–66) maintains that when talk/conduct is an object of study in its own right, demonstrating participant orientation and procedural consequentiality is essential in any argument that an exogenous phenomenon (e.g., gender, context, or social structure) is influential in or arises in interaction. Arundale (2010) argues that if these three requirements apply to exogenous phenomena, they must also apply to relational phenomena understood to be endogenous to the achieving of meaning and action in talk/conduct.² Accordingly, an analyst's argument that his/her understanding of relating in talk/conduct is viable with respect to the participants' understandings involves these four procedures (cf. Arundale 2010):

- (1) formulating the relational phenomenon as achieved in interaction coordinate with the achieving of meaning and action, not only conceptually in view of alternative framings, but also operationally in the specific instances of talk being examined;
- (2) demonstrating for each specific instance of talk/conduct that the participants are oriented to or engaged in achieving the meaning(s), the action(s), and the relational phenomenon being examined;
- (3) demonstrating for each specific instance that the meaning(s), the action(s), and the relational phenomenon are consequential in the procedural producing and unfolding of the sequence of talk/conduct; and as necessary,
- (4) arguing for any generalizing of (2) and (3) from the specific instances of talk/conduct examined to other talk/conduct not examined, including both provid-

ing an account of the procedural aspects of the production of talk/conduct that provide for its “recognizability” (Schegloff 1996: 173) as the meaning(s), action(s), and relational phenomenon being examined.

These procedures generalize to other phenomena conceptualized as interactionally achieved in talk/conduct. Identity, face, and affiliation/disaffiliation, for example, are widely understood as exogenous factors influencing talk/conduct, rather than as endogenous to it in participants’ achieving of actions and meanings. If (and only if) one conceptualizes identity, face, etc., as interactionally achieved, in the strong sense of interaction as in Arundale (2006, 2009) one may substitute that concept for “relational phenomena” in the above procedures.

Conversation analysts employ a particular mode of arguing that participants orient to an action and that it is consequential in particular instances of their talk/conduct. Parallel modes of argument are possible within the frameworks of other analytic methods that produce evidence of the non-summative (i.e., strong) properties of interaction, the conversation analytic mode serving as a point of reference given the primacy it accords to talk/conduct-in-interaction as the source of evidence (Schegloff 2005). Demonstrating participant orientation (procedure 2) and procedural consequentiality (procedure 3) must be accomplished anew for each specific instance of talk/conduct examined, even if researchers have provided a more general account of recognizability (procedure 4), because what participants achieve in the moment of interaction is their own, new sequence of talk/conduct, even if that sequence is a recreating of a familiar pattern. Because the non-summative properties of talk/conduct arise anew in each interaction, analysts who examine practices or forms identified in previous research on meaning, action, or relating must either establish that they are implicated in the same way in each new instance of talk/conduct, or provide a new analysis.

In demonstrating participant orientation (procedure 2) and procedural consequentiality (procedure 3) for relational phenomena, an analyst will likely draw on the same normative sequential procedures and expectations in talk/conduct that are employed in demonstrating participant orientation and procedural consequentiality for conversational action, but may also draw on features of the situational context currently invoked by the participants in their talk/conduct, aspects of the currently invoked identity of the participants, or the history of the participants’ interaction both prior to and within the talk/conduct being examined. These resources are important because in arguing that the analyst’s understanding is viable with regard to the participants’ achieving, the analyst must take into consideration not only the situational specificity of relating (because it is always a situated accomplishment), but also the particularity of the persons involved, because individual differences may always be factors in relating. Using these additional resources poses challenges, as for example in demonstrating the relevance to interaction of situational norms within a given community of practice, in the constraints imposed by limited

evidence regarding the participants and their specific circumstances, or in identifying resources that may not be normative (in that if they are patterned at all, the “norms” may exist only for a particular set of participants). Having addressed procedures 2 and 3, the analyst may be in a position to generalize his/her findings from the talk/conduct examined to talk/conduct not examined, as in procedure 4. The challenge in arguing any such generalization beyond the particular situations and participants examined is that both across dyads, and within and across social and cultural groups, even the most highly typified forms of relating have myriad instantiations.

Stivers’ (2008) study of nodding as affiliative during storytelling is an excellent example of engaging all four procedures. She examines a number of instances of storytelling in conversation, and concludes that when recipients nod in mid-telling position, they are understood both as aligning with the action of storytelling and as affiliating with the teller’s stance, while nodding at story endings is seen as non-aligning and potentially disaffiliating. Drawing on prior studies and her own findings, Stivers formulates affiliation as the recipient’s claim to understand the events being described, together with his/her endorsement of the teller’s stance toward them. Affiliation is interactionally achieved when the recipient nods at particular points in the storytelling where the teller provides enhanced access to the story’s events, and to his/her stance if not already known. In particular, she argues that nodding is not generically affiliative, but that participants orient to it as affiliative *or* disaffiliative, and that it has different procedural consequences, depending on where it is positioned in the storytelling sequence. Stivers’ account of nodding as affiliative generalizes to other instances not only because the sequential organization of storytelling is well understood, but also because in considering a range of specific examples, as well as possible counter examples, she identifies the features that make nodding recognizable as affiliative or not.

Despite the considerable attention conversation analysts devote to the latter three of the four procedures, procedure 1 is the most critical in research on a relational phenomenon because it is central to whether one’s research methods are consistent with the theoretical and epistemological assumptions entailed in formulating the phenomenon. One brief example must suffice. Maynard and Zimmerman (1984) examine the (re)creating of relationships in managing of topical talk/conduct between acquainted and unacquainted pairs. Drawing on a range of practices evident in the conversations they argue that relating is endogenous to interaction, and formulate an understanding of relating as the contingent accomplishment of “acquaintedness” and “anonymity” (1984: 305). Maynard and Zimmerman relate their findings both to Goffman’s (1967) concepts of ritual requirements and of sustaining the “sacred” nature of selves, and to various social psychological findings. But because both Goffman’s approach and social psychological research not only privilege the individual pole of the individual/social dialectic, but also treat interaction in the weak sense (Arundale 2006, 2009), they do not provide a formulation

of relating as interactionally achieved. Maynard and Zimmerman's (1984) empirical findings regarding (re)achieving relationship in topical talk/conduct stand on their own grounds. Goffman's concepts offer none of the insights into the interactional achieving of acquaintedness and anonymity that might have been derived from the alternative theoretical framings of the dynamics of relating that were available at the time (e.g., Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967; Pearce and Cronen 1980).

5. Conclusion

From the perspective of the individual, relationships have often been conceptualized as things that one has or "owns," as in a personal possession, or as things that one is part of or is "in," as in a container. From the perspective of the dyad or minimum social unit, however, relationships are conceptualized as activities one is continually doing with others, both improvising new patterns and recreating previous ones as in a group of musicians creating jazz (Baxter and Montgomery 1996: 185–186). Conceptualizations of human relating from the perspective of the individual have been well explored, and will continue to be an important resource for understanding. Conceptualizations from the perspective of the dyad have been and are now being developed, and represent important resources for advancing theory and research. Clearly there are theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, methodologies, and methods available for use in understanding a very wide range of relational phenomena that researchers in interpersonal pragmatics are interested in exploring: there is no need to "reinvent the wheel." Perhaps more importantly, however, researchers examining relational issues in interpersonal pragmatics have much to contribute in developing and reshaping these frameworks, findings, methodologies, and methods, given the relative inattention in the interpersonal and relational communication literature to how language is used in relating. There is considerable potential here for convergence in scholarship, and for new insight on the proposition that human language use is inextricably linked to phenomena that involve human beings in relationship to one another. Indeed, examining human relationships from the perspective of the dyad or social unit has already indicated another facet of this linking: that apart from relating with one another in using language, we would not be human beings.

Notes

1. These are sometimes referred to, respectively as “relevance to participants” and “procedural relevance.” I used the latter term in earlier unpublished work.
2. In earlier unpublished work I referred to this as demonstrating “interpretive relevance.” That usage is misleading.

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7. Social cognition

Andreas Langlotz

Abstract

Social cognition *models the human ability to comprehend the social world of experience. Adopting a cognitivist view of information processing, it therefore locates sense-making in the mental capacities of the individual. This approach to social meaning has been fundamentally criticized by social constructionist, discourse-analytical approaches to social psychology, including discursive psychology. As a result, research linking the insights of these research traditions has been sparse. This chapter aims to bridge these seemingly opposed perspectives on how people manage to comprehend their identities, roles, and interpersonal relationships. Based on socio-cultural approaches to human cognition, a socio-cognitive model of situated social cognition is sketched. The model is informed by prominent cognitive-psychological, cognitive-linguistic, and socio-cognitive theories of language and meaning: Barsalou's (2005) model of situated conceptualization, Tomasello's (1999) socio-cognitive theory of human social cognition, Clark's (1996) theory of language use as joint action, and Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) blending theory. To illustrate and substantiate the model with actual interactional data, the complex group and role formation process in an online workgroup is analyzed. The data nicely reflect the creative positioning strategies that were performed by students when re-distributing the social roles within their peer group. To link the interpersonal dynamics of their social sense-making process with a cognitive perspective, their language-based communicative practice is modeled as a cueing activity that is designed for the evocation, alignment, and fine-tuning of shared social conceptualizations. Accordingly, the cognitive construction of social meaning is understood as a situated, socially-distributed, and dynamic mind-language-social environment system.*

1. Introduction: Interpersonal pragmatics and social cognition – an underexplored connection

It is a core insight of pragmatics that communicative intentions are directed at the cognitive states of recipients rather than their physical behaviors (cf. Verschueren 1999: Ch. 6). While communicative acts do not have the power to manipulate objects or interfere with physical actions, they influence and modify the mental representations, motivations, and plans that cause the recipients to act upon physical objects or perform bodily and communicative actions. Thus, linguistic practices

are intimately coupled with the cognitive representations and processes that control human behavior. The same is true for the power of language to influence interpersonal relationships. While utterances cannot unite or separate people physically, they have a direct impact on their conceptualization of social constellations. They motivate interactors to orient towards or away from each other. Approaches to interpersonal pragmatics, politeness and impoliteness research in particular, must therefore have a cognitive dimension. For example, the classical notion of *face* – a person’s idealized “public self-image” (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 61) – must actually be read as a social psychological concept.

In psychology, the field of *social cognition* develops and tests sophisticated models of how people understand themselves and other people by mentally constructing complex concepts of their own and the others’ identity, personality, and character. In interpersonal encounters such concepts underlie and determine human (inter-)actions by motivating the choice of social behaviors (Kunda 1999: 6). For instance, it is a fundamental social psychological insight that the phenomena of racism, sexism, or elitism are closely related to overrated and biased concepts of one’s own positive and superior characteristics, while constructing a stereotypical, denigrating, and weak concept of the other (cf. Wetherell 1996: 188–196). Moreover, such negative stereotypes are usually coupled with false beliefs, negative motivations, and affect, which make them emotion-driven *hot cognitions* (Kunda 1999: 211). Unfortunately, history has provided many examples of how negative stereotypes affect interpersonal relationships and trigger impolite, violent, and abusive interactions.

Given the intimate coupling of social conceptualizations with human interaction, it is astonishing that surprisingly little research linking interactional pragmatics with social cognition has been conducted (cf. Pishwa 2009). This state-of-affairs can be seen as a direct effect of the anti-cognitivist turn in discourse-analytical approaches to interaction (cf. Edwards 1997). Epistemologically, these approaches, including the more recent research in interpersonal pragmatics (e.g., Locher and Watts 2005; Locher 2006, 2008), have embraced both the Wittgensteinian view of meaning as grounded in situated practices (Potter 2001: 41) and adopted social constructionist theories of (social) sense-making (Burr 1995). By contrast, being a direct offspring of cognitive psychology, social cognition has followed the core epistemological assumptions and methods of cognitivism and thus models the mind as a computational device (Kunda 1999: 2; Waskan 2006: 16–24). As an unfortunate consequence, fundamental epistemological controversies between practice-oriented social constructionism and experiment-based cognitivism seem to have prevented a fruitful and extensive dialogue between these research paradigms (van Dijk 2006b: 5). To bridge this lacuna, this chapter attempts to sketch a socio-cognitive approach to the pragmatics of interpersonal relationships (cf. Langlotz 2009).

Informed by the cognitive-linguistic paradigm and more recent trends in socio-cognitive linguistics (Clark 1996; Enfield and Levinson 2006; Tomasello 1999,

2003), this chapter theorizes the socio-cognitive dynamics of situated interpersonal sense-making by integrating concepts from Barsalou's (2005) model of *situated* conceptualization, Tomasello's (1999) theory of *human social cognition*, Clark's (1996) theory of language use as *joint action*, and Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) *blending theory*. These heuristics allow us to comprehend the situated construction of social relationships by identifying the individual cognizer, i.e., the person conducting the cognitive processes, as the medium of meaning-generation. But, unlike traditional cognitive psychology, they model the meaning-generation process as a highly situated and socially-distributed joint activity. Thus, while the cognizing individual constitutes the medium of meaning-generation, the actual sense-making process is managed through the coordinated social interaction of two (or more) cognizers. The mutual and reciprocal influence that the interactors exert upon each other motivates, constrains, and guides their cognitive sense-making processes. This complex socio-cognitive system, rather than the cognitive systems of the interacting individuals alone, thus defines the scope of the creation of social meaning (see Arundale, this volume). In short, the construction of interpersonal meaning must therefore be modeled as a situated social process that is cognitively mediated by cognizing individuals. Thus, to link the cognitive perspectives with the interpersonal dynamics of interaction, it is therefore necessary to re-conceptualize language practices as joint signaling or cueing activities that are designed for the evocation and fine-tuning of socially-shared mental representations of social 'reality'. Accordingly, it is argued that social cognizers can create complex situated conceptualizations of self and other, i.e., both positive and negative face-concepts, which guide and support their interactions.

This chapter is structured as follows. In Section 2, I will present a sequence of computer-mediated interactional data. The data is introduced and described in a first step to provide a concrete basis for the subsequent theoretical discussion on the relationship between interpersonal pragmatics and social cognition. With reference to the data, the model of social meaning construction advocated by social cognition is sketched in Section 3. This is to understand the basic cognitive dimensions of the human ability to make sense of their social experience. On the basis of this presentation, the central epistemological controversy between cognitivism and social constructionist approaches to interpersonal sense-making is then scrutinized in Section 4 by critically reviewing the approach to social psychology that is defended by *discursive psychology* (DP). The purpose of this meta-theoretical discussion is to prepare the field for the socio-cognitive alternatives that offer fruitful links between the two seemingly discrepant research paradigms. To overcome the cognition versus interaction gap, I will outline my own socio-cognitive approach to the situated management of face and identity in Section 5. Finally, in Section 6, this approach will be illustrated on the basis of the data set. In Section 7 (conclusion), I will then summarize the central assumptions, claims, and insights of my socio-cognitive view.

2. An example of social cognition at work: Creative social positioning in an online work group

The following thread of postings is taken from the discussion-forum of a blended learning-environment, a seminar that was partially based on online group tasks (Kerres and de Witt 2003).¹ The students are Swiss 4th semester undergraduates in English linguistics. While most of the students use English at a high level of competence, they are not native speakers of English but mostly use German or the Swiss-German dialect in their everyday conversations (some features of German such as “nääää” or “hehehehe” are present in the extract below). For the purpose of a collaborative writing project, the students were asked to form groups and elect a group moderator. The election task presented a considerable social challenge to them, even more so because it was mediated by means of an electronic discussion forum. On the one hand, they had to raise one of their peers to a higher social position – the group-leader – while still giving him/her the feeling of ‘you are one of us’. On the other hand, the moderator had to adopt the new role while keeping a favorable image with the other group members. Consequently, there is an implicit tension between the instrumental goals of the election process and the joint identity-goals of mutual acceptance, interdependence, and friendship. Moreover, asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) is characterized by the absence of immediate social input other than linguistic cues, which renders social communication more challenging but invites creative linguistic strategies for managing interpersonal relationships (Wood and Smith 2005: 81). So, the data reflect the creative positioning strategies which the students produced when re-negotiating the social order in their work-group. (For simplicity’s sake I will refer to the group as ‘Group 1’). They jointly developed the novel social category *BIRGIT AS A MODERATOR*² without having to meet face-to-face. Following Davies and Harré’s (1990) central notion, this interactional process constitutes a computer-mediated form of *positioning* (cf. also De Fina, this volume, on this concept):

Positioning, [...], is the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. [...]. One lives one’s life in terms of one’s ongoingly produced self, whoever might be responsible for its production. (Davies and Harré 1990: 48)

The positioning process is conducted virtually by employing linguistic and pictorial cues (emoticons) that activate social concepts, as illustrated in (1):

(1)

Group 1

Birgit	1a	Hi
	1b	I would be happy to be the group moderator for group 1 ...
	1c	That is if Alexa, Conny, Joe, Miranda, Tina approve.
	1d	Lydia doesn't get a vote 🙋👎
	1e	Oh alright and Lydia too ... 🙄
	1f	she's going to get me back for that isn't she??? 🙄
	1g	bee
Conny	2a	Of course we approve (at least I do).
	2b	Be ye welcome, future moderator! 🙄
Miranda	3a	hey birgit
	3b	i'm not quite sure if i really want you to be our group moderator ... just joking 😊
	3c	go for it!!! i'll do everything i can to make you feel comfortable in this position 😊
Lydia	4a	🤔 ok, just put this in because it's funny ... somehow it reminds me of you ...
	4b	concerning your desire to be moderator ... weeeeeell ... nobody's listening to you anyway ... but if you really want to do it, go for it.
	4c	🙄 hehehehe
Alexa	5a	Yup! Birgit for president!!! 🙋👎
Birgit	6a	thank you to Conny, Alexa and Miranda 😊😊😊😊🙋👎
	6b	as to you ... you wench ... yesssss you know who you are ...
	6c	I can only answer as follows 🙋👎
	6d	evita was a woman ... I am a woman ... Sweeny Todd was a barber ... I go to the hairdresser ... Fosca in Passion should have her moles removed ... I know a good dermatologist ... Sheep have curly wool ... my hair is full of ringlets!!!!
		That is what you were trying to say wasn't it
	6e	bee

To overcome potential risks of face-threat, the students' postings construct a jocular play with conflict-talk cues and ritual abuse. They stage a fictive group conflict to negotiate and elaborate Birgit's novel group-role and situated in-group identity. In a seemingly paradoxical way, they also communicate a strong sense of group cohesion by doing so: "[...] some friends and colleagues develop a relationship where joking routinely takes the form of verbal attack, competitive word play, teasing, and so on [...]" (Norrick 2003: 1345). Along these lines, humor is employed for rapport building and "doing collegiality" (Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 111).

The positioning process is mediated by their creative play with stereotypical social concepts, role models, and fictive characters. After Birgit volunteers for becoming the group moderator in line (1b) and asks her colleagues for approval in (1c), the other students position her as the *FUTURE MODERATOR* (2b), the *PRESIDENT* (5a), and a *SHEEP* (4a). And Birgit herself evokes the following concepts and images to demarcate her potential moderator position: the *GROUP MODERATOR* (1b), the *BOSSY ACADEMIC* (emoticon in 6c), and finally, she alludes to the role model of *EVITA* and the fictive characters of *SWEENEY TODD*, and *FOSCA* (6d) (cf. Pomerantz and Mandelbaum 2005: 151–155). These concepts are activated to playfully frame potential interpretations of Birgit in her novel position. Following Archakis and Tsakona (2005: 48), their use of "humor and the target of humor in particular [...]" highlights what is considered 'inappropriate' for the members of this group." For instance, it is considered unacceptable by the students to mob one another by calling each other names such as *wench* or by making fun of each other's physical appearance. Thus, the *relational work* (Locher and Watts 2005: 96) performed by the students is closely coupled with a set of role and identity concepts. In terms of face-theory (Brown and Levinson 1987), both *positive face*, the need to be accepted, and *negative face*, the need to preserve one's freedom of action (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62), are bound to a complex process of situated social conceptualization (see Section 6 below). Relative to the example, one can thus redefine positive and negative face in cognitive terms: positive face is the categorization of one's situated identity on the basis of a social concept that is favorable to a positive evaluation by one's interactional partners; negative face is the categorization of one's situated identity on the basis of a social concept that is favorable to maintaining one's power, status, and freedom of action.³ The novel *MODERATOR* concept created by the students effectively balances their face-needs. It is constructed discursively through the play with social concepts and linguistically managed by the students' creative cueing strategies. To shed more theoretical light on the data, this intricate relationship between social cognition and interpersonal pragmatics is scrutinized in the subsequent sections.

3. What is social cognition?

Social cognition models the human ability to make sense of the social world of experience, including interpersonal relationships. It locates this ability in mental structures and processes – including perception, categorization, mental representation, conceptualization, and inferencing – by means of which individuals ‘digest’ socially relevant stimuli (Bless, Fiedler and Strack 2004: Ch 1).

3.1. The dimensions of social conceptualization

The actual object of analysis includes the human comprehension of social reality along four central dimensions: people make judgments about i) themselves, ii) other individuals with whom they interact, iii) the social groups and communities with which they actively engage and of which they feel part, and iv) other groups with which they do not directly interact as insiders but that they can perceive and categorize from an outsider perspective. For an overview of these dimensions see Figure 1. Along these four dimensions, we categorize and evaluate ourselves and other people by forming complex concepts for I-s, You-s, We-s, and They-s (Smith and Mackie 2000: Chs. 3–6). All of these dimensions of social orientation play a role when we try to determine our position in a given social environment, e.g., a group-forum.

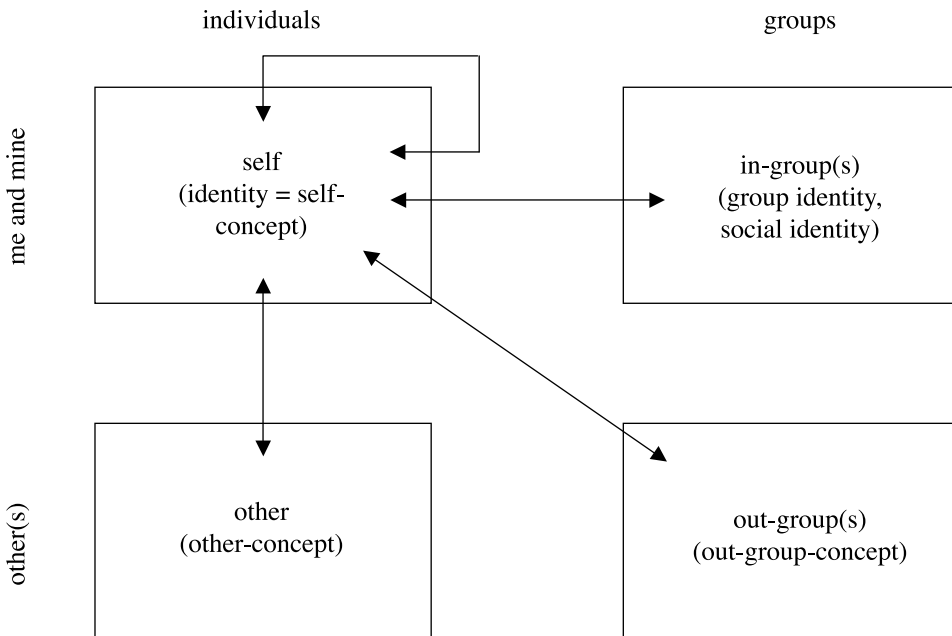




Figure 1. Dimensions of social conceptualization

Thus, Birgit may perceive herself as being creative, humorous, straightforward, and dominant. These attributes are part of her *self* – the concept that she constructs for her own *identity* (Smith and Mackie 2000: 104). In the group, she interacts with others, e.g., with Lydia. These interactions are determined by the *other-concept* that she has derived from previous experiences with her (Bless, Fiedler and Strack 2004: Ch. 3). Since she regards Lydia as a very friendly and funny person, she ventures to tease her by saying *Lydia doesn't get a vote*  (1d).

The quality of our interpersonal relationships also determines our engagement with groups, i.e., we identify with a collectivity of many 'others' because they belong to the *in-groups* that we value as being important to us (Smith and Mackie 2000: 211). By seeing ourselves as a part of these communities, we adopt different *group identities* or *social identities* (Smith and Mackie 2000: 205). By positioning ourselves (or rather our "selves") within the groups, we assume specific *roles*. Since we engage with a great many individuals and groups, our identity consists of a complex cluster of various sub-identities such as our cultural identity, our professional identity, our group identity as a football supporter, etc. Thus, part of Birgit's social identity is being a student, and with regard to the specific paper-writing task her group identity is being a core member of Group 1. Of course, her potential role as a moderator constitutes a fundamental part of her situated concept of self.

Finally, we also want to know and evaluate the social characteristics of groups that we do not directly identify with. Thus, besides referring to her potentially authoritative and bossy position as the new group moderator in a self-ironic way, Birgit's emoticon for the BOSSY ACADEMIC () can also be read as an allusion to the course instructors. The label attributed to this emoticon by the system is 'I am right'.⁴ By using this emoticon, Birgit alludes to the fact that by taking on the role of the moderator her colleagues could (mis)interpret her novel social position as an attempt at adopting the authoritative characteristics of the teachers herself. Thus, this ironic *out-group-concept* of the self-opinionated teacher is evoked by Birgit to define her potential position as the BOSS OF THE GROUP in a jocular way (Smith and Mackie 2000: 217–218). The self-ironic strategy is adopted to signal that she would still understand herself as being a core member of the in-group even if she won the moderator election. In short, the out-group concept is adopted as a counter-concept to solidify her loyalty with the in-group.

3.2. Situated social conceptualization

Social cognition explains the mental construction of what individual cognizers perceive as their social reality as the effect of categorizing and processing *social stimuli* against the background of social knowledge that is mentally represented in the form of *social concepts* (Bless, Fiedler and Strack 2004; Kunda 1999; Smith and Mackie 2000). Thus, when reading the forum postings, the students perceive a multitude of linguistic stimuli that invite them to make social categorizations and judgments. For

instance, they can see the different smileys that invite them to infer the producers' emotional stance. They can also perceive salient lexical cues such as the offensive address *you wench* (6b) or the affirmative exclamation *Yup! Birgit for president!!!* (5a). To comprehend the complex and multi-layered social experience of the election process, the students must employ these stimuli to activate social concepts. That is, they must categorize the cues into classes of experiences by relating them to concepts that represent their previous knowledge of elections and their underlying social dimensions. This conceptual knowledge works as a mental base against which they can make sense of the forum situation. The students' categorization of the stimuli relative to entrenched *social concepts* (MODERATOR, PRESIDENT, BOSSY ACADEMIC, and so forth) leads to the mental construction of the perceived social 'reality' of electing Birgit as a moderator and defining her new role.

A very recent model of categorization, which can also be applied to social conceptualization, is offered by Barsalou (1991, 1993, 1999, 2003, 2005). Barsalou's theory accounts for the situated and dynamic nature of categorization judgments. He challenges the traditional cognitivist view of concepts as abstract, decontextualized, and amodal symbolic representations that are stored in the specific cognitive module of semantic memory (Barsalou 2003: 515–522). By contrast, Barsalou (1993: 34) claims that conceptual categories are dynamic entities that are grounded in direct perceptual experience and that are constructed on-line through perceptual re-enactment mechanisms: "Rather than being stable structures stored in long term memory and retrieved as needed, concepts are temporary constructions in working memory." Moreover, Barsalou (1999: 604) claims that "[a] concept is the ability to simulate a kind of thing perceptually."

The model assumes two levels of category representation: *simulators* and *simulations* (Barsalou 2005: 624–625). The simulator works as a deep structure of category-generating mechanisms that produces simulations – the surface structures of concrete category representations. If, for instance, you imagine a SHEEP in your mind's eye you probably activate a fairly rich representation of an animal with a specific body shape and woolly fur that eats grass on the meadow and produces bleating sounds, etc. This multi-modal representation works as a simulation. That is, it constitutes one specific but mentally-represented instance of the SHEEP category that you can produce in a specific context. Thus, the simulation makes it possible for us to imagine an instance of a SHEEP in the absence of concrete perceptual stimuli. It functions as a mental re-enactment of previous perceptual experiences. Depending on the situation, the SHEEP simulation varies. Thus when thinking about sheep in association with New Zealand you are likely to generate a different simulation than when doing so in association with a WALLACE AND GROMMIT movie. Accordingly, Barsalou claims that we do not possess fixed and abstract conceptual categories. Rather, we possess the ability to dynamically generate situated category-simulations which allow us to understand the world of experience relative to its situational demands.

The ability to generate alternative category-simulations resides in the simulator. The simulator works as a category type, i.e., a mentally-represented standard on the basis of which simulations of category instances can be constructed. However, the simulator is not an abstract conceptual representation of a concept in the traditional cognitivist sense. Rather, the simulator is a generative neuro-cognitive mechanism that allows us to produce the category simulations. To do so, the content of the simulator consists of a distributed system of *perceptual symbols*, i.e., visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory, or proprioceptive features, which are stored in long-term memory (Barsalou 1999: 578). A perceptual symbol is a schematic representation of one particular facet of a holistic perceptual brain state that has become isolated from it through selective attention (Barsalou 1999: 583). Barsalou (2005) describes the content of the simulator as follows:

Consider the simulator for the category of [CATS]. Across learning, visual information about how cats look becomes integrated in the simulator, along with auditory information about how they sound, somatosensory information about how they feel, motor programs for interacting with them, emotional responses to experiencing them, and so forth. The result is a distributed system throughout the brain's feature and association areas that accumulates conceptual content for the category. (Barsalou 2005: 624)

Moreover, the simulator structures the content of perceptual symbols by operating as a *convergence zone*, i.e., an underlying frame organizes the perceptual symbols into a feature pattern (Barsalou 2005: 623). Through alternative combinations of the pool of perceptual symbols that is associated with the simulator, a potentially infinite set of simulations can be constructed from it:

For example, the [CAT] simulator might simulate a sleeping kitten on one occasion, whereas on other occasions it might simulate a hissing tom cat or a purring house cat. Because all the experienced content for cats resides implicitly in the [CATS] simulator, many different subsets can be reenacted on different occasions. (Barsalou 2005: 625)

With the help of simulators and the simulations generated by them, cognizers thus become able to enact complex situated conceptualizations top-down, i.e., from the 'top' of mental representations to the 'bottom' of experience, in the absence of concrete bottom-up stimulation, i.e., in the absence of the representational 'bottom' of direct perceptions (Barsalou 2005: 623). In other words, cognizers can project a conceptual simulation onto the world of (social) experience to construct a rich understanding of it in the absence of any concrete perceptual stimuli that would enable them to 'see' this world. In the case of our example, the students have to construct a rich situated conceptualization of their social relationship in the very absence of direct and immediate face-to-face contact. Thus, while the students cannot rely on any direct perceptual stimuli of each other in the computer-forum, they can rely on the linguistic and non-linguistic signals to generate situated conceptualizations that enact this world of experience mentally. Thus, a *situated conceptualization* is a contextualized, rich, and multimodal

simulation of an experiential scenario “that supports one specific course of situated action with a category instance” (Barsalou 2005: 620). In our example, the situated conceptualization *BIRGIT AS A MODERATOR* can be simulated top-down in the absence of face-to-face contact, i.e., concrete bottom-up stimulation of Birgit as a person. While neither the students nor we as readers interact directly with Birgit, the situated conceptualization that she evokes by her creative use of linguistic cues still provides us with an idea of her character and her interpretation of the moderator job. Our ability to generate situated conceptualizations from simulators creates “the experience of ‘being there’” with the students (Barsalou 2005: 627), (Figure 2).

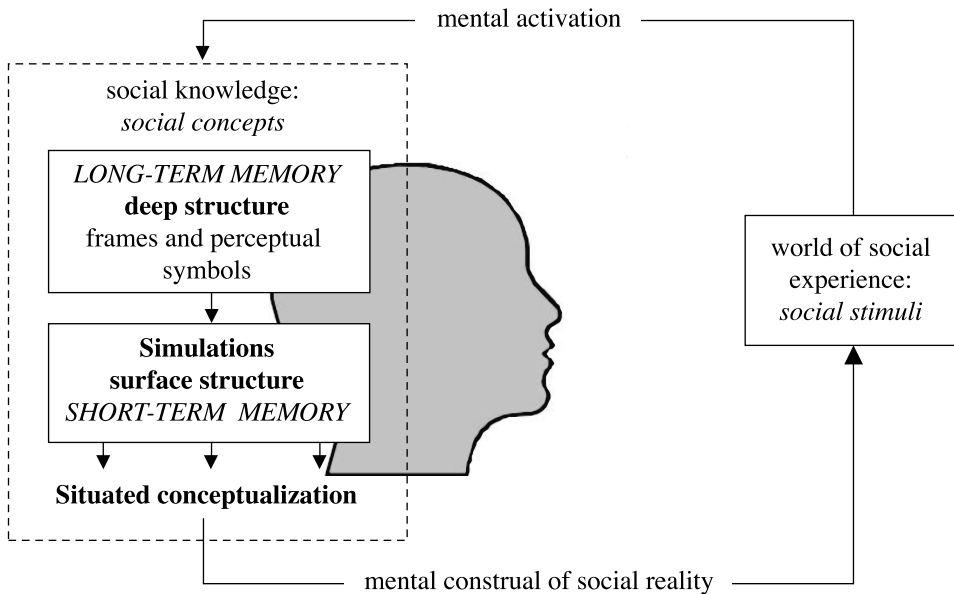


Figure 2. The situated mental construction of social ‘reality’

Going beyond the basic categorization of the emitted stimuli, social cognizers can draw further mental inferences about their perceptions by further manipulating the situated conceptualizations mentally. Thus, to derive a judgment on Birgit’s ‘real’ social position in the group, initial social categorizations must be further manipulated mentally by balancing different conceptualizations against each other and by evaluating their potential social impact. This complex socio-cognitive process will be addressed in Section 6.

4. Bridging the cognitive and the social: Anti-cognitivism or post-cognitivism?

Adopting a traditional cognitivist view of information processing, research in social cognition locates sense-making in the mental capacities of the individual. The mind is understood as a computational apparatus and problem-solving is seen as an autonomous and decontextualized process that follows the principles of deductive reasoning (cf. Waskan 2006: 109–121). With regard to methodology, social cognition primarily derives its insights from experimentation in controlled research settings, including reaction time and priming experiments, attitude measurements, etc. (Smith and Mackie 2000: Ch. 2; Bless, Fiedler and Strack 2004: 59–67).

This approach to social sense-making has been severely criticized from a discourse-analytical perspective. In particular, researchers coming from the interaction-centered paradigms of ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and discursive psychology have rejected the cognitivist research paradigm. (For a recent overview of these praxeological, anti-cognitivist perspectives see Te Molder and Potter 2005 and the special issue of *Discourse Studies* on ‘Discourse, interaction, and cognition’, van Dijk 2006a). The focus on interactional behavior, rather than underlying cognitive systems, is based on fundamental criticism directed against the autonomous, decontextualized treatment of human cognition:

There are many reasons for such reluctance: [...], most importantly, the continuing reliance of mainstream work in cognitive science on a model of the mind situated in someone like Robinson Crusoe before the appearance of his man, Friday – that is, an isolated individual whose access to the world is mediated by a sensory apparatus processing unfiltered input [...] to the tender analytic mercies of a genetically shaped computational organ. (Schegloff 2006: 142)

Indeed, rather than merely categorizing and processing social input cognitively, human beings are often engaged in socio-communicative practices in the very process of understanding and manipulating their social environment, as is reflected in our example (Clark 1996: Ch. 1). Very centrally, the students perform linguistic actions such as greeting, flattering, joking, teasing, or abusing. To find orientation in social environments, social cognizers must therefore produce, attend to, and process linguistic cues that have an immediate impact on their construct of social reality. It is this sociolinguistic engagement at the micro-level of communicative exchange that turns our arenas for social encounter as well as the mental construction of social reality into highly dynamic, interpersonal phenomena.

In line with this social interactional perspective on social orientation, the radically anti-cognitivist stance advocated by discursive psychology (DP) can be taken as representative for discourse-analytical criticism against traditional research in social cognition. DP places discourse, conversational interaction in par-

ticular, at the very heart of its approach to social sense-making while rejecting an underlying cognitive dimension of mental structures and processes:

[...] the main thrust of DP is not to close down psychology departments, but to counter and invert what mainstream psychology has done *with discourse*, which is to treat it as the *expression of* thoughts, intentions and cognitive structures. The ‘inversion’ offered by DP is to start with discourse itself, and to see how all of those presumptively prior and independent notions of mind, intention, motive, etc., are topicalized, categorized and, in various less direct ways, handled and managed within discourse itself. (Edwards and Potter 2005: 243)

Thus, DP defines itself as an “empirically grounded exploration of how psychological themes are handled and managed in discourse in the performance of a wide range of interactional business” (Edwards 2005: 271, for a comprehensive overview see Edwards 1997). Analyzing themes such as emotions, beliefs, attitudes, routines, etc. from the perspective of interaction, DP basically develops a praxeological approach to psychology to handle these themes “in their own right” (Edwards 2006: 42) and “by approaching mentalistic claims as performative rather than merely erroneous” (Edwards and Potter 2005: 256). To illustrate this stance one may consider the construction of memory or remembering through discursive practices, a well-researched topic in DP or ethnomethodological approaches (cf. Lynch and Bogen 1996). Wooffitt (2005), for instance, shows how memory is not primarily bound to its cognitive and neurological basis, but that the making of memory is closely linked to the “everyday grammar of memorial expression” (Wooffitt 2005: 224). Thus, memory is not (only) seen as the reflection of a cognitive state but as interactional memory work – the linguistic production of what we remember (cf. also Lynch and Bogen 2005).

Without any doubt, it is a very important achievement to highlight the situated and local fine-tuning of memorization processes and memorized knowledge in actual interpersonal exchange. The same is true for the analysis of the discursive management of emotions, attitudes, or knowledge states, which constitute other topics that have attracted discourse-oriented approaches to psychological topics (for an overview see Edwards 2005). Thus, the discourse-based methodological critique of cognitive psychology results in a highly fruitful and valuable extension of the analytical scope to include “cognition on the ground” (Maynard 2006), as it is performed by interactors in their concrete and actual everyday behaviors, rather than some highly artificial experimental situation.

Unfortunately, DP does not present a theory of sense-making that links the linguistic with the cognitive as well as the social dimensions of this process. Focusing on the discursive level of the interactional product, it only accounts for the behavioral surface of what happens in discourse without proposing an explanatory framework of discourse production and interpretation. These problems are aggravated by the fact that DP explicitly positions itself as a post-cognitivist enterprise: “It is probably the most salient characteristic of DP, at least as we practice it, that it

rejects the cognitivist assumption that minds are revealed or expressed in what people say” (Edwards and Potter 2005: 245). In his own discussion of this non-cognitive stance, Levinson (2006a) considers two potential points of attack that interaction-oriented approaches have directed against cognitive approaches to discourse and interaction. He summarizes these points as follows:

- a) The mental entities (beliefs, knowledge states, intentions, goals) and cognitive meta-language “add nothing, and at worst distract us from proper analysis of the record of interaction” (Levinson 2006a: 90).
- b) Cognitive approaches, based on the componential linear processing of an autonomous cognizer, fail to see the social interactional scope of cognitive processing in interaction (Levinson 2006a: 90).

Let us review these points of critique individually. In line with Levinson’s own counter-critique, it can be claimed that the methodological stance a) – adopted by the majority of discursive psychologists, CA analysts, and ethnomethodologists – cannot imply that these approaches are absolved from taking the cognitive dimension into account (cf. also Graesser 2006). Researchers, in the same way as non-academic recipients of discourse, can only perceive and understand the very complexity of linguistic choice-making in conversation if they activate the very rich pool of conceptual categories that allows them to become part of the cognitive environment of a given interaction:

The need for attention to cognition, despite the arguments against it, arises from the fact that the phenomena we analyze are not physically objective behaviours (motion) but *meaningful* behaviours (actions, through speech and other expressive resources). As a result our ‘observations’ of what has occurred actually are *interpretations* of the discourse objects in question, [...]. (Sanders 2005: 59, emphasis in original)

While rightfully stressing the social and actional basis of cognitive representations and processes, DP highlights the social-interactional dimensions to the extent of rejecting central cognitive concepts such as cognitive representation or (autonomous) cognitive processing completely (Coulter 2005). The same is claimed for the construction of social meaning: social categories are not bound to mental representation but to their online-construction in discourse (Antaki 2006: 9–11; Billig 2006: 19–23). In doing so, it throws the cognition baby out with the anti-cognitivist bathwater (cf. also Kitzinger 2006). In short, DP analysts overextend their attack against cognitivism to an extent that weakens their own epistemological position. While they manage to offer a well-motivated alternative to traditional psychology with regard to their object of analysis and research method (psychology in discourse), they do not integrate this method with an equally powerful theory of sense-making in action. Simply put, DP (as well as other interaction-oriented approaches to social sense-making) offers a theoretical critique but no theoretical alternative to cognitive psychology as addressed by Marmaridou (2000):

[...] even though societal pragmatics [including DP, AL] emphasizes the importance of social aspects of language use and is concerned with the interpretation of social and linguistic meaning, it does not explain how social knowledge is internalized by the individual so that it is institutionally reproduced in the use of language. (Marmaridou 2000: 15)

Shifting the epistemology from positivist experimentation to situated interpretation, a hermeneutics of sense-making must be backed with a theory of how meaning generation in and through discourse works. Any theory of discourse production and comprehension must have a strong cognitive component because communicative moves are designed to influence mental states more than anything else. This, however, is not to say that our personal cognitive understanding does not have a very strong social, situational, and actional basis. Linguistic action is both cognitive action and social action.

Thus, in line with the second point of criticism, b), the cognitive representations and processes that underlie and shape social cognition must be modeled as the emergent property of human cognitive practices that are bound to linguistically-mediated social interaction. Thus, in accord with Saferstein (1998: 391), social cognition is the basis as well as the product of interaction between two (or more) participants: “Of significance to cognitive science is the consistent finding that social interaction does not just reflect internal mental processes but involves social cognitive processes that affect the organization and recall of information.” Accordingly, the fundamental role of language in interpersonal encounters must be scrutinized with a view to the social scope of the cognitive processes that underlie social sense-making. To revisit social cognition from such a post-cognitivist rather than an anti-cognitive stance, we must develop a socio-cognitive counter-view to traditional cognitivism. This counter-view must be able to integrate the basic tenet of social interactional linguistics: sense-making is a joint, social and communicative process rather than an autonomous cognitive process. But it must also allow us to model the quintessential cognitive dimension of meaning interpretation and integration that underlies any communicative act. To reconcile the cognitive perspective with this social view of meaning construction, social cognition must therefore be approached in terms of a socio-cognitive theory of linguistic interpretation as joint social practice (cf. Marmaridou 2000: 39).

5. The socio-cognitive nature of meaning construction

More recent approaches to human cognition including *situated* (see Barsalou’s model), *mediated*, or *socially-distributed cognition* have challenged the traditional computational processing paradigm of cognitivism by comprehending cognitive work as a highly contextualized and interactive phenomenon that is deeply rooted in social practices (A. Clark 1997, 1998; Hutchins 1995; Hutchins and Clausen

1998; Wertsch 1998). Grounded in a Vygotskian view of the human mind, these *sociocultural approaches* therefore invite a fruitful connection of interactional and cognitive perspectives on meaning:

The most important feature of the sociocultural tradition is the focus on interaction between individuals. It is argued that individual development cannot be understood independently of the social context in which the person is placed and brought up. [...] Vygotsky (1960/1981), the originator of this approach, stated in an often-quoted passage that “any higher mental function necessarily goes through an external stage in its development because it is initially a social function” (p. 162). This means that cognition and cognitive development is in fact constituted by the internalization of the social processes and communicative acts that humans share with other individuals. On this view, communication and language is of course of primary importance. (Gärdenfors and Johansson 2005: 10)

In cognitive linguistics and developmental psychology, the Vygotskian view of cognition was prominently adopted by Tomasello and his team (Tomasello 1999, 2003; Tomasello et al. 2005; Moll and Tomasello 2007). Levinson (2006a, 2006b) develops a similar position when sketching the socio-cognitive foundations of a *human interaction engine*.

5.1. Tomasello’s socio-cognitive theory of communication

The basic research objective of Tomasello’s group is to understand the socio-cognitive foundations for human communicative and cultural behavior. They locate this cognitive specialization in the human ability to predict or read another person’s intentions for the purpose of performing joint, cooperative actions upon some jointly observed referential object. Ontogenetically, this cognitive predisposition fully unfolds at the age of approximately 14 months (Tomasello et al. 2005: 689). And, following Moll and Tomasello (2007: 645–646), it involves a change in the format of mental representation: “[...] young children’s participation in activities involving shared intentionality actually creates new forms of cognitive representation, specifically, perspectival or dialogic cognitive representations. [...] – forming a bird’s eye view’ of the collaboration in which both commonalities and differences are all comprehended with a single representational format.” Thus, to become able to engage in a collaborative practice with an interactional partner, the conceptual representations of each of the cognizers need not only include a private simulation of the (social) world of experience; they must also comprise an awareness of the other’s mental state, i.e., an implicit assumption that the communicative partner is also conceptualizing the same scene from her perspective and has an intention of acting upon it. Both interactors must produce a corresponding metacognition, i.e., they must understand each other to conceptualize the world of experience in a similar way because they want to share this conceptualization to coordinate their joint activity (Figure 3).

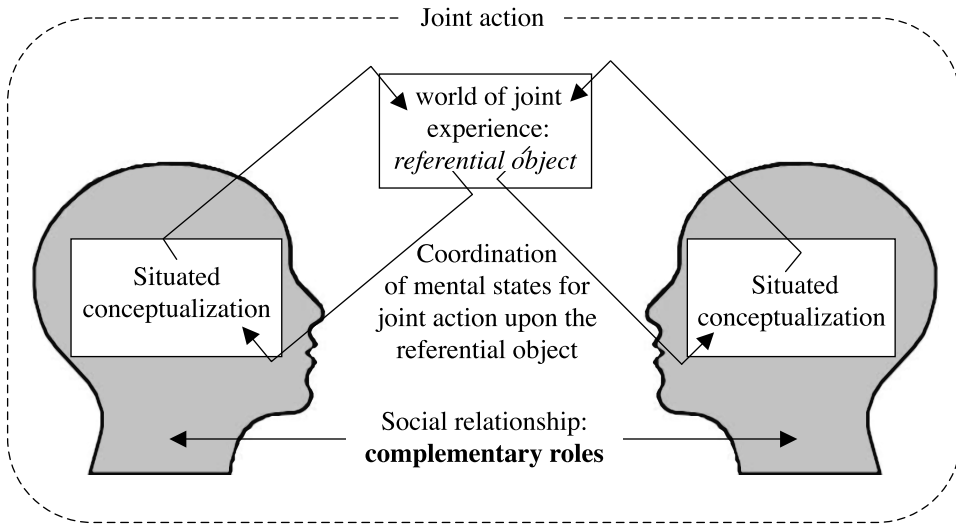



Figure 3. The coordination of situated conceptualizations for joint action (based on Tomasello et al. 2005: 681, Figure 2)

This ability for mind reading – or *theory of mind* (Tomasello et al. 2005: 690) – allows individuals to coordinate mental states in complex joint activities. For instance, when playing football, the players share the intention of winning the match by scoring as many goals as possible. To succeed, they are forced to coordinate their line-up, pass play, etc. Their collaboration is subject to their ability to construct complementary, perspectival mental representations of the state-of-the-game through aligned processes of situated conceptualization. It is only on the basis of such perspectival cognitive representations that people can actually enter practices of social positioning and cultural learning:

[t]he essentially social nature of perspectival cognitive representations enables children, [...], to construct the generalized social norms that make possible the creation of social-institutional facts, [...], whose reality is grounded totally in the collective practices and beliefs of a social group conceived generally. (Moll and Tomasello 2007: 646)

Perspectival cognitive representations, by definition, imply the presence of an interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Since both interactors coordinate their intentions to orient towards the referential object or concept for joint action, their interactional roles must be complementary:

[...] the cognitive representation of the intention also contains both self and other – it is thus a joint intention. [...], collaborative activities require both an alignment of self with other in order to form the shared goal, and also a differentiation of self from other in order to understand and coordinate the differing but complementary roles in the joint intention. (Tomasello et al. 2005: 681)

Thus, if one interlocutor A points out a referent to B, B must attend to the referent from her stance. If B then grasps this object and gives it to A, A must adopt the complementary role of the receiver. Accordingly, our ability to construct interpersonal relationships through discursive positioning, i.e., our ability to discursively evoke and manipulate social conceptualizations in interaction, is based on this fundamental socio-cognitive disposition for coordinating and aligning mental states in accord with complementary social roles. If Brigit teases Lydia by stating *Lydia doesn't get a vote*  (1d), Lydia must adopt the complementary role of the TEASED when orienting towards Brigit's communicative intention and thus engaging in the joint communicative activity of TEASING.⁵

5.2. Clark's view of language use as joint action

To extend these fundamental insights into the socio-cognitive basis of human social cognition and to integrate them with interactional sociolinguistics, we must reconsider the notion of *intentionality*. Since communicative intentions are directed at the interactors' cognitive states, they involve a kind of meta-attention. Tomasello (2003: 23) expresses the corresponding communicative form of *shared intentionality* as: "you intend for [me to share attention to [X]]." Thus, communicative intentions aim at modifying the communicative partner's attention to a given referential object or concept. The receiver has to realize that the speaker wants him/her to also pay attention to the referential object and that the speaker and the hearer therefore have to coordinate their situated conceptualizations of the world of experience by assuming coordinated perspectives on it. When successful, communicative acts thus change the partner's internal cognitive orientation towards the world of experience, including the complementary role that he/she has to adopt when conceptualizing the world in the way intended by the speaker. Understanding a communicative intention thus means to realize that the speaker wants the hearer to pay attention to the world of experience in a way that he/she considers functional relative to a given (joint) activity. Thus, the interactors have to coordinate their orientation to the world of experience or they have to make sure that it is already coordinated for a given joint engagement. Note that this does not only include harmonious communicative behaviors. If, for example, a given speaker A considers it functional to offend B by saying, *you wench!*, B is 'invited' to orient towards this act and adopt the complementary role of the offended. The joint communicative activity 'offence' can only be realized if both communicative partners engage in it by adopting the perspectival conceptualization OFFENDER VERSUS OFFENDED or the ONE WHO IS CALLING THE OTHER A WENCH and the ONE WHO IS BEING CALLED A WENCH by assuming the corresponding complementary social and communicative roles. In accord with Clark (1996: 18–21), all communicative acts must therefore be modeled as *joint actions*.

Joint orientation towards a referential object or concept in any given act of communication is bound to a *coordination problem* (Clark 1996: 62). To become able to coordinate their actions, communicative partners must therefore depart from some degree of *common ground*, i.e., a basis of presupposed or shared knowledge relative to which they can calibrate their behavior (Clark 1996: Ch. 4). In the student work-group, for instance, it was common ground between the students that they had to elect a moderator. They could rely on this shared knowledge when engaging in the subsequent joint activity of electing Birgit into the moderator role. It was only relative to this shared and presupposed knowledge of having to perform an election-process that the students could inter-adapt their situated conceptualizations of the election-process and the corresponding redistribution of the social roles within the group. Thus, the presence of coordinated conceptualizations as common ground between two interactors is the very basis for the construction of *shared intentionality* or “we intentionality”, i.e., the fine-tuning of action plans and social roles for the performance of a joint activity (Tomasello et al. 2005: 676).

Clark (1996: 93) defines common ground as “the sum of [the interactors’] mutual, common, or joint knowledge, beliefs, and suppositions.” In addition, the communicative partners must be mutually aware of these shared knowledge chunks as “information they each have” (Clark 1996: 120). This joint awareness of shared chunks of knowledge can only be established if both interactors scan their world of experience for cues that indicate or make it possible for them to infer that the communicative partner thinks (more or less) the same thing as they do. In other words, the cues point to potentially shared bases of knowledge that make it very likely that the two partners base their comprehension and judgment of immediate experience on the same situated conceptualization. Linguistic cues in particular provide quintessential evidence for common ground. For instance, backchannel cues such as *u-huh* are powerful signals suggesting that the recipient has successfully aligned her situated conceptualization to establish common ground with the speaker. Being embedded in the perceptual environment of *joint selective attention* (Tomasello 1999: 96–100), words (and other linguistic structures) thus support and force the mutual adaptation of each participant’s situated conceptualization. Rather than merely providing the semantic content for meaning-generation, linguistic cues, i.e., utterances of any type and complexity, thus work as *coordination devices*: “What coordination devices do is give the participants a rationale, a *basis*, for believing they and their partners will converge on the same joint action” (Clark 1996: 65). This is illustrated in Figure 4 (see next page).

Linguistic cues thus support the interactors to converge on the same activity, to align their perspectival conceptualizations of the world of experience, and to adopt the complementary social roles that are implied in the coordination device. For instance, when Birgit volunteers by stating *I would be happy to be the group moderator for group 1 ...* (1b), she volunteers for being elected into the role of the group

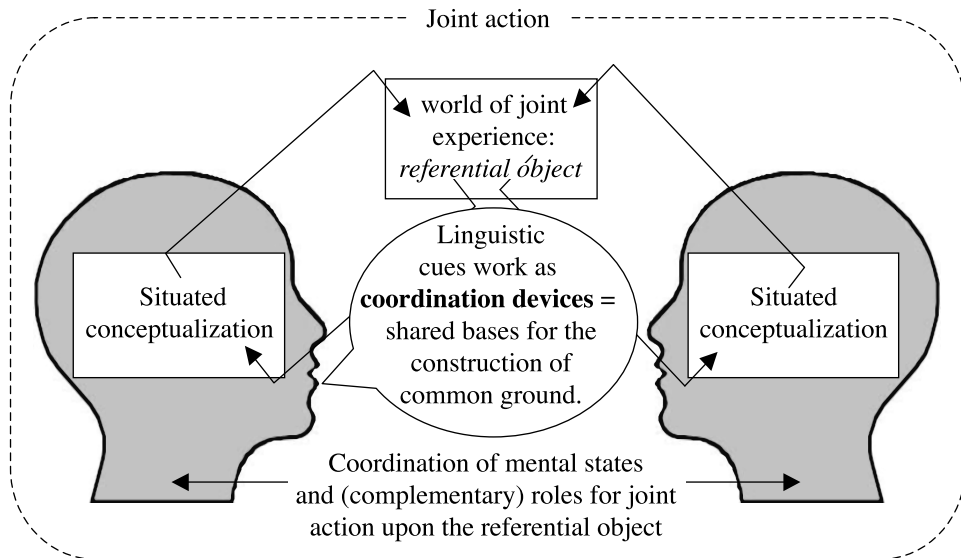


Figure 4. Linguistic cues as coordination devices in joint actions

moderator. The other students are thus given the option to accept this offer by confirming Birgit in the novel role or to reject it. Thus, when orienting towards this meaning-coordination step, her colleagues have to adapt their situated conceptualizations of social reality accordingly by constructing the category BIRGIT AS POTENTIAL MODERATOR. When doing so, they have to align their own perspectives relative to this situated conceptualization by adopting the complementary social roles of POTENTIALLY SUBORDINATE GROUP MEMBERS. From the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics and social cognition, any act of positioning must thus be rooted in an assumed social intention as well as a social conceptualization that makes this action become socially meaningful as common ground.

5.3. Levinson's activity types as complex socio-cognitive sense-making systems

Human beings live in cultural environments that are constructed and mediated through normative practices of social interaction (Engeström and Middleton 1998; Streeck and Mehus 2005). Communicative moves therefore cannot be regarded as isolated acts or actions. Rather, they are embedded in complex communicative practices that are part of activities that involve many meaning coordination steps: "signalling is of interest only because it is used in advancing the joint activities people are engaged in" (Clark 1996: 191). Thus, to coordinate sense-making effectively, linguistic practices must function to mediate higher order socio-cultural practices (Figure 5).

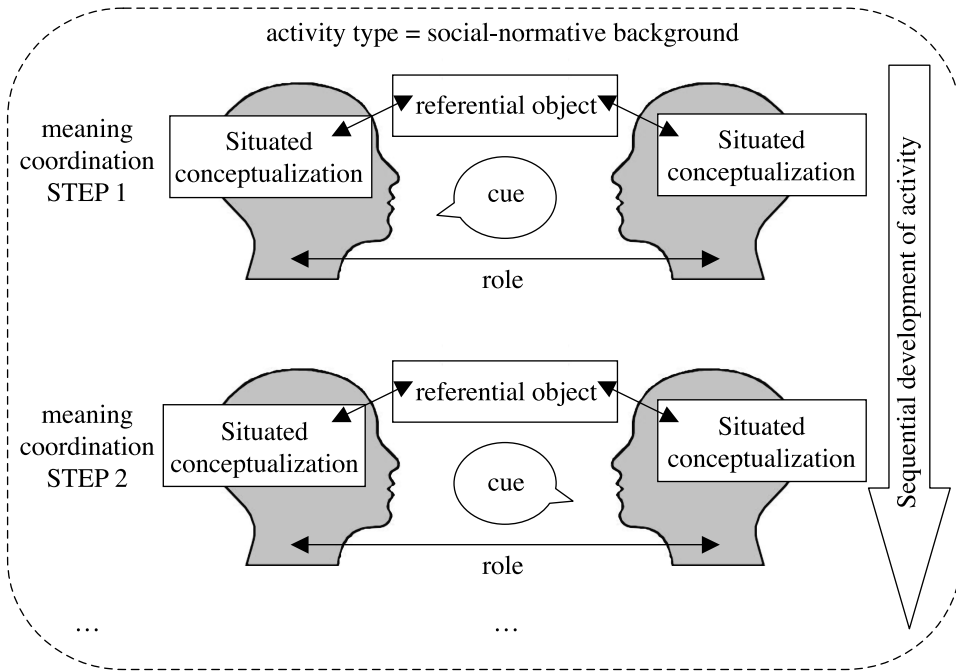


Figure 5. Grounding meaning-coordination in practices

For example, workplace discourse is characterized by a set of institutionalized activities, including electing a person to a particular professional position (Koester 2004). These activities are conventional and social-normative, i.e., they provide the basis for the discursive construction of the instrumental and social realities of the workplace including the interpersonal negotiation of professional roles (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 37–39).

Following Levinson (1992), workplace genres and other conventional speech activities can be defined as *activity types* with structural constraints on speech turns, lexical choice, speech style, etc. The linguistic structures are conventionally adapted to the overarching goal of the activity. The structural features scaffold or “anchor” (Hutchins 2005) activity-specific inferential procedures or *generalized conversational implicatures* (Levinson 2000), i.e., situated conceptualizations connected with corresponding steps of meaning coordination and social orientation. Activity types thus establish strong expectations about allowable contributions in the sequence of utterances as well as their interpretation relative to the overarching goal and social organization of the given activity. This can be illustrated on the basis of our example. The overall instrumental goal of the transaction is to elect the group moderator. To realize this goal, the students must perform the activity type ‘election’ by producing linguistic cues that conform to the corresponding communicative norm.

Indeed, if one erases all the jocular cues from the transcript (1d, 1e, 1f, 3b, 4a–c, 6b–d), the communicative activity of election is fully performed by the students. Thus, in (1b) Birgit volunteers while asking for her colleagues' approval in (1c). In reaction, her colleagues give their approval (2a), (4b), (5a) and thus raise Birgit to *MODERATOR* position; but they also express their support (3c), (5a) and welcome their new leader in her new role (2b). Birgit closes the election process by thanking her colleagues. Thus, these segments of the postings are fully compatible with the activity-type 'election'. Relative to the activity-specific conceptualization of social reality, the students can thus assign the default role *ELECTED MODERATOR* to Birgit.

Following Barsalou's (2005) categorization model, the linguistic cues that scaffold and anchor the election activity must be *structurally coupled* with a corresponding activity simulator that generates an activity simulation (Varela, Thompson and Rosch 1991: 202). The linguistic cues thus work as conventionalized instructions for the interlocutors to simulate a situated conceptualization that is in accord with the current discursive state of their joint activity (cf. Zwaan 2004). To perform the role-ascription practice, the participants must adopt the complementary roles of *ELECTORS* and *ELECTED* and produce the linguistic features, structures, and processes that are expected from them. In other words, the shared intentionality of electing Birgit as a moderator is directly signaled by their reproduction of the activity-specific sequence of cues. By activating the *ELECTION*-simulator via the linguistic cues, the dynamic, socio-cognitive sense-making steps of an election practice can be coordinated. The students can thus enact their social 'reality' as common ground without having to meet face-to-face. They can do so by re-enacting the perceptual symbols that they associate with the process of election top-down, i.e., by projecting a mental simulation of an election practice in the absence of direct and immediate physical interaction. It is this coupling of conventional linguistic forms and communicative turns with conventional simulations of the transactional and social states of a socially-distributed communicative practice that characterizes situated meaning-construction as a socio-cognitive phenomenon by definition.

6. Creative social positioning through role blending

The transactional task of electing the moderator is achieved by a set of default statements. The joint role-ascription process would be complete on the basis of these postings alone. However, the students enact a more complex and creative process of social positioning. They use conversational humor to undermine the social challenges and potential risks of face-threat that are connected to raising Birgit to the moderator role. Hypothetically, Birgit's self-selection could be read as an act of selfish empowerment over the others and thus threaten her positive face-needs as well as her colleagues' freedom of action. Moreover, Birgit could be ousted from

the in-group because she is no longer regarded as a peer. To undermine such potential interpersonal frictions resulting from the group reorganization, the students construct a novel, situated moderator category for Birgit – *THE CREATIVE LEADER AS A PEER*. This situated conceptualization can be seen as a conceptual compromise between the transactional task and their group identity. Their joint communicative achievement mirrors the socio-cognitive nature of positioning strategies.

6.1. A socio-cognitive interpretation of the students' positioning strategies

Creativity is a departure from cognitive routine and social norm. With regard to activity types, Clark (1996: Ch. 12) describes forms of linguistic creativity, including humor, in terms of *layering*. Layering is achieved by cueing an embedded domain of action that works as a counter-world for non-serious, *staged communicative acts* (Clark 1996: 368). In our forum discussion this staged communicative event is triggered by Birgit's teasing of Lydia into a fictive conflict when writing *Lydia doesn't get a vote* 🙄 (1d), *Oh alright and Lydia too ...* 🙄 (1e), and *she's going to get me back for that isn't she???* 🙄 (1f). These statements breach the norms of the election procedure. Birgit extends her moderation rights in an unacceptable, despotic way and thus stimulates an alternative social stereotype: *THE TYRANT*; this alternative is underlined by the devil-emoticon. Accordingly, the statements (1d)–(1f) invite all group members to momentarily adopt different social roles: *TYRANT* versus *DISLOYAL, REBELLIOUS SUBJECTS*. Clearly, these turns are marked as being jocular. This is evidenced by a number of linguistic and non-linguistic cues. For example, Birgit employs the 🙄 emoticon and predicts *she's going to get me back for that isn't she???* 🙄 to characterize her statement as a humorous invitation to enter the activity-type of teasing, which is layered into the election. Her colleagues enter this 'battle of wits' by producing reactions that conform to this second layer of action; Miranda writes *i'm not quite sure if i really want you to be our group moderator ... just joking* 😊 (3b) to express her jocular resistance against Birgit as a *DESPOTIC MODERATOR*. Lydia also jumps on the teasing game by stating *concerning your desire to be moderator ... weeeeeell ... nobody's listening to you anyway* (4b), which is accompanied by the jocular signal 🙄 *hehehehe* (4c). Moreover, by posting the sheep-smiley and explaining *ok, just put this in because it's funny ... somehow it reminds me of you* (4a), Lydia triggers a further communicative layer of jocular role-attribution and identity-challenge. She opens the activity of abuse, which is itself embedded within the staged conflict layer. This abusive role-attribution game is accepted by Birgit as signaled in line (6b) when she offends Lydia by calling her a *wench*. In her highly creative elaboration of this abuse-game (6d), she produces a set of alternative (fictive) characters as jocular mirror images of herself and her new moderator job: *THE CURLY SHEEP, EVITA, SWEENY TODD, FOSCA IN PASSION*. Note that all of these characters allude to alternative conceptualizations of her face – her situated public concept of self. The conceptualiz-

ations can thus be interpreted as jocular role models to simulate the interpersonal relationship between herself and her colleagues: THE CURLY SHEEP = THE DUMB MODERATOR VERSUS INTELLIGENT COLLEAGUES; EVITA = THE MISUNDERSTOOD WOMAN VERSUS HER (POLITICAL) ENEMIES; SWEENEY TODD = THE MASS MURDERER VERSUS THE VICTIM(S), FOSCA IN PASSION = THE REJECTED LOVER VERSUS THE REJECTING BELOVED. This jocular play with social concepts exploits the common ground of shared in-group knowledge. Thus, while the knowledge underlying these characters is highly specific and cannot be assumed to be generally known, the students in this work-group shared a very strong interest in literature and drama. Some of them were also members of the same drama group (as can be seen in Extract (2) below). It is this common ground that is exploited by Birgit. Therefore, her allusive play with the characters functions as a powerful strategy to build rapport on the basis of this common ground: “[...] since jokes are based on mutual shared background knowledge and values, jokes may be used to stress that shared background or those shared values” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 124). Moreover, the complex arrangement of alternative social categories shows the intimate link of the situated management of the interpersonal relationship between Birgit and her colleagues with social conceptualizations. But it also indicates that these conceptualizations cannot be regarded as static conceptual patterns that can be projected one-to-one onto the world of experience. Rather the concepts are recruited for the complex socio-cognitive negotiation of face-needs in this concrete situation of interpersonal engagement. So how does this discrepant set of social categories and interpersonal relationships contribute to the students’ process of making sense of their social environment? To answer this question, we must scrutinize the cognitive dimension of dynamic meaning construal in further detail.

6.2. Social positioning and conceptual integration

Fauconnier’s (1994, 1997) *mental space theory* and Fauconnier and Turner’s (2002) *blending theory* offer powerful cognitive-linguistic heuristics to explain processes of creative and dynamic meaning construction in actual discourse. Fauconnier discusses *mental spaces* and mappings between them as a fundamental cognitive construal operation that channels the cognitive construction and manipulation of meaning through language. Mental spaces are defined as “partial structures that proliferate when we think and talk, allowing a fine-grained partitioning of our discourse and knowledge structures” (Fauconnier 1997: 11). More specifically, they constitute conceptual packages that are evoked as cognitive contexts relative to which cognizers become able to track reference. In terms of mental space theory, the linguistic cues that activate the ELECTION simulator in our example function as *space builders*. A space builder is a linguistic element that “opens a new space” (Fauconnier 1997: 40). The mental simulation for the election thus works as a *base space* (Fauconnier 1997: 38): the mental correlate of the actual ‘reality’ context of

the interaction. When producing the teasing cues *Lydia doesn't get a vote* (1d), Birgit uses additional *space builders* that invite her colleagues to open a second mental space, the TEASING space as a further mental background. This *new space* (Fauconnier 1997: 38) constitutes a mental context for the hypothetical conflict-scenario. Both spaces are internally structured by different simulations. The base space is connected to the ELECTION simulator, while the new space is controlled by the CONFLICT simulator. This change also implies a switch in the conceptualization of social roles and interpersonal relationships between the students. While the ELECTION simulator positions the students as ELECTED MODERATOR VERSUS SUBORDINATED GROUP MEMBERS, the CONFLICT simulator implies: DESPOTIC MODERATOR VERSUS RESISTING STUDENTS. Relative to the CONFLICT space, Lydia further triggers an ABUSE space by posting the sheep-smiley and stating *ok, just put this in because it's funny ... somehow it reminds me of you* (4a). Again, this ABUSE space leads to an alternative conceptualization of the social relationship.

In terms of mental space theory, the cognitive correlate of activity-layering can thus be understood as building new spaces, i.e., new mental contexts, for fictive situated conceptualizations that are juxtaposed to the reality space of the election (Figure 6), (Langlotz 2008). On the social level, this invites the interactors to construct connections between the social concepts and interpersonal relationships that are implied in these incongruous simulations.

To keep track of the jocular shifts of reference from the actual 'reality' space of ELECTION to the staged activities of CONFLICT and ABUSE, the students must build

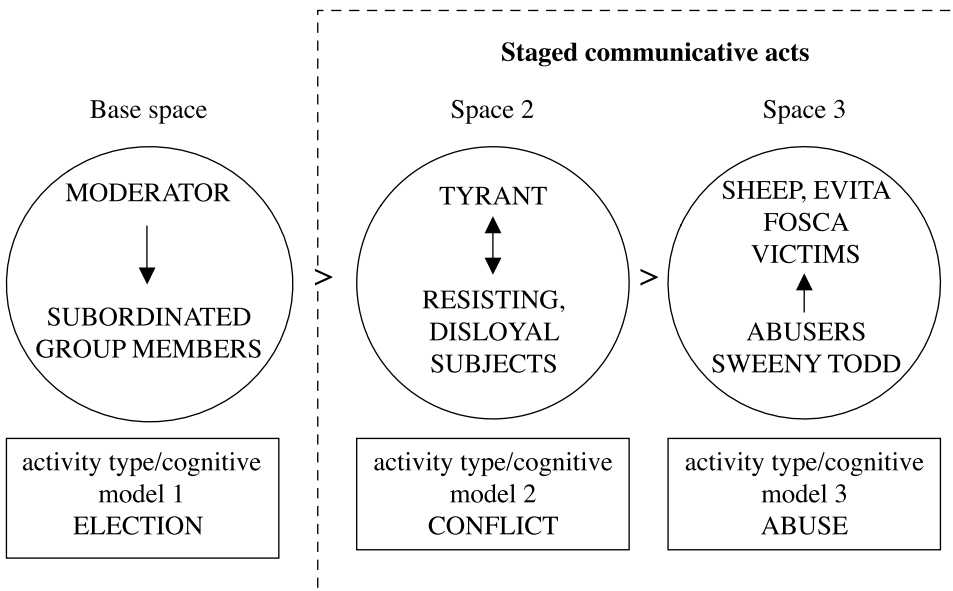


Figure 6. Activity layering through mental-space building









mental connections between these spaces. Thus, Birgit must be identified as the categorization target of the MODERATOR, TYRANT, and SHEEP models. These categories constitute alternatives against which her concept of self can be understood. In addition, the three layers create alternative scenarios for the mutual positioning between Birgit and the other group members. All mental spaces work as input-spaces for blending a novel MODERATOR concept.

Blending is a cognitive process in which information from distinct mental spaces, which work as *input spaces*, are selectively mapped into a novel, creatively constructed third space – the *blend* (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 40–41). The blend contains new or *emergent structure*, i.e., the information that is integrated in the blend is not available from any of the input spaces alone (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 42). Blending must thus be understood as a highly creative cognitive process that allows human cognizers to construct novel situated conceptualizations, which are not based on any previous experience, but which can be used to construct novel categories.

The blending model can be nicely applied to our creative example of social conceptualization. To gain global insight into Birgit's actual moderator role, social information from the alternative mental spaces must be selectively projected into SOCIAL-ROLE blends. This process becomes obvious in the closure of the election-process, (2):

(2)

Velcro

Birgit	7a	Velcro (Unamunda for Welcome for all those who missed last years Beggar's production ... which I'm sure you didn't ...) my fellow Groupies
	7b	your moderator speaketh to thou ...
	7c	I hold the key to this forum  and I alone ... 
	7d	I can either make your life easy ... or hell ... (depending on how nice you are to me )
	7e	Näää seriously girls ...
	7f	we'll have lots of fun ... 
	7g	bee the 
Lydia	8a	 ahem I mean 
	8b	you can't scare me ... I'm not afraid of you ... not at all ... 
Alexa	9a	Nor am I! for the shire!!!!

The blend between the MODERATOR-role (ELECTION space) and the LEADING TYRANT role (CONFLICT space) is signaled in (7b)–(7d). Here, Birgit introduces herself in the role of the new moderator: *your moderator speaketh to thou ...* and characterizes herself as possessing unrestricted power over the actions in the forum: *I hold the key to this forum [smiley] and I alone ... [smiley]*. This DESPOTIC MODERATOR blend is marked as being jocular in (7e)–(7f). Moreover, a second blend between the MODERATOR role and the alternative role models evoked in space 3 is performed in (7g). Here, Birgit self-positions herself as a SHEEPISH/CLUELESS MODERATOR. Note that neither the DESPOTIC MODERATOR nor the SHEEPISH MODERATOR model can be predicted from conventional social categories. Rather, these ad hoc conceptualizations are derived from simulating a blended conceptualization through the active and ‘online’ mapping of information from the input spaces 1, 2, and 3. This blending analysis of situated role construction thus reveals the human capacity to integrate conceptual structures from alternative simulations. (Recently a similar approach has been developed by Watts 2008, who analyses impoliteness from the blending perspective). The blending operation allows the students to simulate novel social categories to make sense of their immediate social experience and their context-specific relationship (Figure 7).

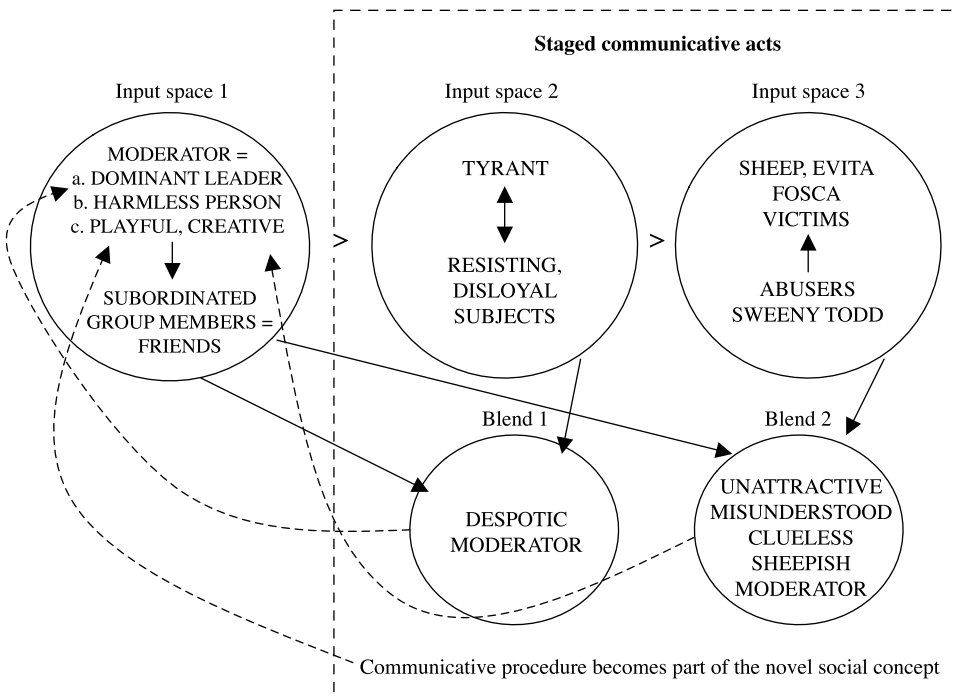


Figure 7. Social-role blending

Interestingly, the two detrimental conceptualizations constitute exaggerated but concrete allusions to Birgit's face-needs. The *DESPOTIC MODERATOR* model is a direct instantiation of her negative face-needs – her freedom of action, whereas the *SHEEPISH MODERATOR* model characterizes her as being harmless and can thus be read as a playful invitation to orient towards her positive face – her wish to be accepted. In other words, the two blends function as direct cognitive reflections of the students' creative strategies to balance face-needs within the group. Their playful communicative strategies thus open an analytical window into the socio-cognitive nature of the management of interpersonal relationships. However, the two blends do not constitute the final step in the students' joint conceptualization process: the blends are still part of the jocular staged communicative play with the moderator role. Nevertheless, their emergent conceptual structure is relevant for the social reality of the students' workgroup. Namely, the two non-serious blends can be used for the *backward projection* of information to define Birgit's real role in the base-space (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 44).

Relative to the two blends, Birgit can be defined as a *LEADER* (the *DESPOT* blend), but as a leader who defines herself through self-irony (the *SHEEP* blend). In addition, rather than being clueless, she takes the reins into the hands but does so in a *HARMLESS* way (the innocent sheep). It is also important to highlight that the very procedure of playfully constructing the blends together with her colleagues becomes a conceptual attribute of Birgit. She can thus position herself as a *CREATIVE AND FUNNY LEADER* by guiding her colleagues through their joint battle of wits.

6.3. Social role-blending as a socially-distributed, interactional activity

While mental space and blending theory provide fruitful frameworks for modeling the cognitive processes that underlie the situated construction of social roles and relationships, they do not account for these processes of conceptual integration as a joint positioning activity (but cf. Hougaard 2005; Oakley and Hougaard 2008). To be socially significant, the process of conceptual integration must become common ground between the students, i.e., it must be socially-distributed and shared between the group members. Following the *principle of appreciation* (Clark 1996: 359), the communicative partners must therefore signal that the blended conceptualization is mutually accessible. Thus, the blend must be *materially anchored* in the linguistic context (Hutchins 2005). Accordingly, the group's acceptance of Birgit must be linguistically signaled by referring to the blended conceptualization of her novel position. The joint cueing of the role-blends becomes graspable in (4a)–(4c), (8a)–(8b) and (9a). Here, the colleagues tune into Birgit's proposed battle of wits by blending their role as subordinated group members with the jocular role of disloyal and abusive subjects. For instance, the statement *you can't scare me ... I'm not afraid of you ... not at all ... ☺* (8b) takes the *DESPOTIC MODERATOR-*

blend as its conceptual base. The emoticon marks this blend as being jocular and invites Birgit to see Lydia's positive face iconically.

The socio-cognitive nature of the blending process is also reflected in the conversational management of the space building and blending process. While Birgit triggers the CONFLICT space and thus self-positions herself as a TYRANT, Lydia's abusive reaction of posting the sheep other-positions Birgit relative to the ABUSE space. Birgit re-positions her concept of self within this ABUSE space by playing with abused or abusive characters (EVITA, SWEENEY TODD, FOSCA, and the SHEEP). In other words, the power of evoking these jocular contexts and playing with them is distributed and shared between the students. The same is true for the construction of the blended spaces. By sharing the space building and blending process together, the students can align their situated social conceptualizations by co-orienting towards the input spaces and exploiting them together. This mutual coordination is based on their shared intention to find a creative solution to the implicit group-identity challenge. Within the jocular speech activities on layers 2 and 3, superiority, social rank, and group-balance thus become part and parcel of the joint commitment to the socio-cognitive language game performed by the students. Following Holmes and Marra (2002: 70–71), the students perform a 'communicative tightrope walk' between *reinforcing* and *subversive humor*. On the one hand, the battle of wits creates social cohesion because it invites all group members to share complex processes of role-imitation and role-blending. In addition, the game releases positive emotional energy and undermines potential frictions that could emerge between the students. On the other hand, the joint performance of the battle of wits also provides fertile ground for Birgit to perform her sense of creative leadership. This is best expressed in (7a). Since this creativity is adopted and thus accepted by her colleagues, it becomes the basis for the contextualized redefinition of Birgit as the CREATIVE LEADER AS A PEER.

7. Conclusion

This article has developed a socio-cognitive approach to the pragmatics of interpersonal relationships. The main motivation was to bridge the epistemological divide between social constructionist, discourse-analytical approaches to social sense-making and its underlying cognitive dimensions as modeled by social cognition. From a socio-cognitive perspective both approaches have their shortcomings. Since humans are social beings acting in socially-constructed worlds of experience (such as the computer forum), their cognitive representations and processes must be adapted to the dynamic, socially-distributed nature of sense-making. The social interactional tradition is therefore right in criticizing the cognitivist paradigm for focusing on individual computational processes only. This, however, cannot prevent interpersonal pragmaticist from taking the cognitive di-

mensions of sense-making into account. Communicative intentions are directed at the interlocutors' cognitive states. It is through these states that the social world of experience, including interpersonal relationships, is cognized and understood. This is not to say that the process of constructing and negotiating interpersonal meaning is an individual cognitive problem-solving process. Rather, the construction of social meaning must be understood as a social process that is cognitively mediated by the interacting cognizers. Along these lines, the cognitive representations which underlie and guide the interlocutor's interaction are of central importance for understanding communicative practices including the situated construction of social orientation. The construction of (social) meaning must therefore be understood as a socio-cognitive process by definition. Accordingly, the traditional notion of 'face' must be seen as the product of the complex situated negotiation of social conceptualizations for the purpose of balancing the interactors' face-needs against the background of a joint speech activity. Irrespective of whether these activities are harmonious or conflict-oriented and whether they are face-enhancing or face-threatening, the communicators are forced to inter-adapt their social conceptualizations in order to define their context-specific social position. To do so they must rely on language – the most powerful tool to cue and scaffold the dynamic socio-cognitive system of social sense-making.

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Notes

1. Note that the data has been slightly modified. First, it has been fully anonymized; while the interaction is real, all names in the transcript have been replaced by myself. Second, all information on the date and time of the postings has been erased. Third, the second column including the line numbers has been added for easier reference.
2. In accordance with the cognitive-linguistic tradition, I use small capitals to denote concepts.
3. It is important to note that the notion of *face* is a metaphorical concept itself. As Watts (2003: 119) argues, the term was already in use in ancient China and has appeared in other cultures of the world. The metaphor is grounded in the assumption that one's character and public identity is contained or mirrored in the individual traits of one's face. Goffman introduced the term in his analysis of face-work in 1955. Brown and Levinson themselves adopted the term from Goffman but, by describing an individual's positive and negative face-needs, gave it a highly individualistic interpretation. This individualistic interpre-

tation of face has been heavily criticized by several authors (e.g., Lee-Wong 1999; Mao 1994; Matsumoto 1988). They show that Brown and Levinson's definition is strongly biased by a Western understanding of identity in terms of individuality. According to them, this understanding is not applicable to Chinese or Japanese culture. Compare also the discussions of face in the first part of this volume.

4. Note that this smiley, as all the other emotions used by the students, was included in the computer-based learning environment as part of the technological infrastructure of the discussion forum.
5. Note that this complementary perspective on communicative actions and corresponding conceptualizations centrally defines social cognizing as a joint project. As a result, joint socio-communicative activities such as teasing can only materialize as a social reality if the interactors adopt the corresponding roles. Consequently, it is not possible for Lydia to challenge Birgit's tease without having first adopted the role of the teased.

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Identity and gender

8. The negotiation of identities

Anna De Fina

Abstract

The chapter discusses the fundamental theoretical shift brought about in studies of identity by the Social Constructionist movement, emphasizing how this new paradigm has promoted a change in perspective from identity as related to fixed social categories to identity as emergent and constructed in concrete social contexts. This shift implies a strong connection between identity studies and interpersonal pragmatics since identities are seen as highly negotiable in interaction, emergent and largely co-constructed.

The chapter reviews some of the main theoretical trends within the Social Constructionist paradigm and discusses the fundamental constructs and methodologies that have been used within them. In particular the focus is on:

- Talk-in-interaction approaches inspired by Conversation Analysis and Ethnomethodology*
- Autobiographical approaches (particularly within social psychology and related to the “narrative turn”) and their proposed notion of positioning*
- Sociolinguistically oriented approaches focusing on notions such as indexicality, style and performance and on social practice as a central domain for the study of identity*

The discussion highlights the differences between the conception of interpersonal communication that underlie traditional pragmatic models such as Brown and Levinson’s (1987) Politeness Theory, and these more interactive orientations.

1. Introduction

The field of identity has become one of the most significant areas of investigation in the social sciences, particularly in disciplines that are concerned with interpersonal communication. Work on identity has grown exponentially in the last twenty years in such fields as sociolinguistics, anthropological linguistics, interpersonal pragmatics, social psychology and narrative studies. This renewed interest has been spurred by a profound change in the theoretical paradigm that dominated research on this topic until recently. In particular, there has been a shift from a vision of identity as a fixed set of categories that can be attributed to the individual or to the group, towards an investigation of identity as a process in flux enacted in concrete social

encounters and social practices. This shift implies a strong connection between identity studies and interpersonal pragmatics since identities are seen as highly negotiable in interaction, emergent and largely co-constructed. As will become clear in our discussion below, this paradigm also represents a break with respect to views of communication implicit in the most important pragmatic models such as Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986), and Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson 1987). In such models communication is seen as the product of individual intention and calculation. Although in all of these theories individuals base their decisions on what to say and how to say it on considerations about the context and their interlocutors, communication is still seen as a matter of coding and decoding carefully crafted messages. Such view places the individual as a rational being at the center of attention. Recent conceptions of identity shift the focus from the individual to interaction and social practices as the locus for the study of identity and therefore sharply depart from traditional pragmatic models. This new orientation is the product of multiple theoretical influences and has resulted in a variety of new trends and concepts which would be impossible to discuss exhaustively in the limited space afforded by this chapter. However, it can be safely said that the single most important influence on the constitution of a new paradigm in identity studies has been Social Constructionism, a movement that has come to dominate our thinking about the ways in which people build and negotiate images of themselves and others. Thus, this chapter will review some of the main theoretical trends within the social constructionist paradigm and discuss the fundamental constructs and methodologies that are used within it, emphasizing how they contribute to our understanding of the process of identity negotiation in interpersonal contexts. In particular, the focus will be on:

- Talk-in-interaction approaches inspired by Conversation Analysis and Ethnomethodology
- Autobiographical approaches (particularly within social psychology and related to the “narrative turn”) and their proposed notion of *positioning*
- Sociolinguistically oriented approaches focusing on notions such as *indexicality*, *style* and *performance*, and on social practice as a central domain for the study of identity

I will discuss and compare each of these theoretical methodological orientations in order to highlight how they have contributed to shaping current conceptualizations of identity and recent approaches to studying it. More specifically, the chapter is organized as follows: In Section 2, I introduce Social Constructionism. In Section 3, I discuss talk-in-interaction approaches to identity, while I devote Section 4 to positioning theories. In Section 5, I discuss sociolinguistically oriented studies of identity and in Section 6, I present a sample analysis from my own work on identity negotiations among members of a community of practice. Section 7 offers some brief concluding remarks.

2. The contribution of Social Constructionism to identity studies

Social Constructionism (Berger and Luckmann 1967; Hall 2000; Kroskrity 2000) has emerged as a frame for the study of discourse and interaction in general, but it has been especially influential in the field of identity research because of its role in dispelling some of the dominant conceptions in traditional philosophical and psychological frameworks. The approaches to identity that I discuss in the following sections represent different developments within the social constructionist paradigm, however they have in common a fundamental acceptance of the main theoretical premises of this movement: the rejection of essentialist and individualist views of the self, the conception of identity as a process rather than as a concept, and the stress on interaction and social practices as its locus of construction and investigation.

One centerpiece of this new paradigm has been the critique of traditional conceptions of the persona. In particular, social constructionist thinkers rejected traditional notions of the person as the privileged locus for identity. These notions are at the centre of a vision of identity as firmly located in the “self-sustaining” subject (Hall 2000: 15), the Cartesian individual characterized by rationality, continuity and coherence. They have pointed instead to the need to speak of identities in the plural stressing that self presentations may be multiple and multi-voiced even when they are proposed by the same individual. In addition, they have shifted attention from the sphere of the monologic to that of the dialogic and from the product (identity) to the process (identification). In Stuart Hall’s (2000) words the notion of identity deployed in social constructionist thinking:

[...] is therefore not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one. That is to say, directly contrary to what appears to be its settled semantic career, this concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same’, identical to itself across time. [...] it accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. (Hall 2000: 17)

Thus, social constructionist thinking has been instrumental in rejecting individualistic and monolithic notions of the self.

A second key premise of this movement has been the notion that identities, like other social processes, are constructions, not mental products or sets of properties. Such an idea comes from the work of phenomenologists such as Berger and Luckmann (1967), who argued that although the social world appears to human beings as an objective reality, it is in fact constituted through human action and interaction and is not independent of it. People continuously create and recreate social reality and in turn are shaped by it in a dialectical process: “Society is a human product. Society is an objective reality. Man is a social product” (1967: 61). Two principles

are apparent here: on the one hand the idea that all social categories are created and negotiated through processes of communication among human beings, on the other hand the suggestion that the individual and the social do not stand in opposition to each other but in fact cannot be conceived of as separate. Hence, a third, important principle defended by social constructionists is the notion that one cannot grasp identities in abstraction from concrete social interaction and practices and that the latter provide the frames and the limits within which interactants select the linguistic and strategic resources for identity presentations and negotiations.

The principles described above constitute the core of social constructionist thinking. The approaches that we take into consideration below have emphasized different aspects of it and developed different analytical instruments, but they all share an anti-essentialist, contextually grounded conception of identity.

3. Identity as talk-in-interaction

The talk-in-interaction approach to identity stresses the situated nature of identity categories and claims. Its theoretical and methodological orientation has been described in detail in Antaki and Widdicombe's introduction to their 1998 volume *Identities in Talk* (but see also Edwards in the same volume, and Benwell and Stokoe 2006). Antaki and Widdicombe emphasize their affiliation with Ethnomethodology (Garfinkel 1967): a discipline that studies social life through the vantage point of the participants in it. In accordance with the ethnomethodological tradition, these authors propose an anti-mentalist and anti-cognitive approach to the study of identities and a methodology based on the analysis of how people go about displaying, constructing, negotiating who they are in everyday life. As we will see, this kind of analysis is based on a close connection between processes of identity attribution and negotiation and categorization strategies. Antaki and Widdicombe (1998) propose the following five basic ideas as the basis of their project:

- For a person to 'have an identity' – whether he or she is the person speaking, being spoken to, or being spoken about – is to be cast into a *category with associated characteristics or features*;
- such casting is indexical and occasioned;
- it *makes relevant* the identity to the interactional business going on;
- the force of 'having an identity' is in its *consequentiality* in the interaction and
- all this is visible in people's exploitation of the *structures of conversation*.

(Antaki and Widdicombe 1998: 3, emphasis in the original)

Let us briefly go over these principles in order to make their implications clear. The idea that having an identity means being cast into a category related to certain characteristics draws attention to how identities are connected to social categories that get defined based on their association with activities. Such associations are, as the second principle explains, indexical in the sense that they can vary widely ac-

ording to participants and social contexts. Thus, if I call someone 'a girl', I can mean different things depending on who I am talking to (a teenager or a middle aged woman, for example) and therefore make relevant different types of associated activities and characteristics. In that sense identities are also occasioned, i.e., they emerge and are negotiated within those particular contexts rather than belonging to the individual or the group. Stating that identities need to be made relevant in order to be significant in an interaction implies rejecting the practice, strongly opposed by these authors, of looking for the contextual significance of identities that may be presupposed by the researcher but do not seem to be attended to by the participants. In other words Antaki and Widdicombe believe that it does not make sense to analyze how, for example, being Jewish or female or a teenager may affect the discourse and interaction of a particular person, but rather that it is acceptable to study how these categories may be important to participants in an interaction only if they make them relevant to it. Showing that they are relevant to the interaction implies demonstrating that they are consequential to it, or, in other words, that their use has concrete effects on the way participation in the communicative event develops.

According to Antaki and Widdicombe, identity categories are not mental products as many psychological models have treated them, and they do not pre-exist social interaction, but get constructed in interaction. The task of the researcher consists therefore in discovering how categories for identification are created and negotiated. The last principle put forward by Antaki and Widdicombe points to the regularities of conversation (i.e., the fact that conversational structures are recurrent and well known to participants) as a frame that allows both people to make and understand identity claims and analysts to make sense of them. In brief, Antaki and Widdicombe's model builds on a close association between categorization and identity construction, an idea that was already present in a number of lectures delivered by the sociologist Harvey Sacks (see 1992a),¹ who saw the construction of social identities as closely associated to the process of relating categories to specific relationships and activities. Indeed, a core trend within talk-in-interaction approaches to identity has been Membership Categorization Analysis (henceforth MCA; see Hester and Eglin 1997; Watson 1997), a movement that has focused on the study of the specific ways in which participants in interaction create, discuss and negotiate such categories and the implications of belonging to them. According to proponents of MCA, social identity categories and other membership devices can only be understood by paying attention to local processes of attribution that happen in specific social encounters and that are signaled by participant orientations.

In order to illustrate the type of analysis advocated by proponents of the talk-in-interaction movement, let us consider a fragment of natural interaction transcribed from a radio program, *The Steve Harvey Morning Show*, on FM 102.5 in the Washington metropolitan area. The program was aired on September 29, 2008. In

the show, guests discuss their personal problems with two or three radio hosts. In this case the conversation takes place between a guest (whom we will call Jean) who has just explained that she is single and looking for a man, and three radio hosts. Host 1 is a man of about 80 years of age, as he declares during the show. He is also the most vocal of the hosts. He maintains an ironic, slightly patronizing tone during the whole fragment. Hosts 2 and 3, a woman and a man, contribute to the interaction in a much more limited way just adding remarks to what either of the other two participants say, or simply laughing. (The transcription conventions can be found at the end of this chapter.)

Example (1)

- 01 Host1: Well, may be you can find a man over here in ((...))=
 02 Jean: =You just never know, you just never know=
 03 Host1: =You know?
 04 Jean: My friends tell me [I need to get out more.
 05 Host 3: [@@@
 06 (.)
 07 Host1: And you went o:n [at it.
 08 Host 2: [@@@@
 09 Jean: So here I am.
 10 Host 2: @@[@@
 11 Host 3: [Looking for him.
 12 Host1: What type of man are you looking for ((...))
 13 Jean: Just a very nice man (.)
 14 A gentleman.
 15 Host3: A gEntleman?
 16 Jean: A god fearing man, a nice man – just a nice man.
 17 Host1: A nice man is [go::d fearing.
 18 Jean: [I like nice guys,
 19 I like nice guys.
 20 Host1: Saved?
 21 Jean: Yes! god fearing, yes.
 22 Host1: Maa::m, god fearing don't make a saved man. I said if you were look-
 23 ing for a saved man.
 24 Jean: Yes, sister O'Br[ien-
 25 Host1: [Yeah! you're gonna be looking for a long time that's
 26 what I was getting to. may be you need, to get your stand and move
 27 them round a little bit.
 28 Jean: You know, it's not so bad to be single it's all [right honey.
 29 Host3: [It's cool.
 30 Jean: It's cool.

At the beginning of the transcript Host1 is orienting to the identity of Jean as a single woman looking for a man. Jean aligns herself with him by playing along with the idea (lines 1–3), but then goes back to discussing her problem of finding a man and mentions that her friends give her the advice to get out more (line 4). At this point Host1 implies with his observation in an ironic tone of voice in line 7 that she did not waste time in this endeavor. The other two hosts also align with him either through laughter (Host2, line 10) or through completion of her utterance (Host3, line 11). At this point Host1 asks her what type of man she is looking for. This is the first moment in the transcript in which interactants are working openly with identity categories. In fact, Jean responds to the question by describing the type of man she is looking for as “a very nice man” (line 13). Then she tries to specify what kinds of men belong to the category of nice men saying that she is looking for a gentleman (lines 14). As Host2 seems surprised at this definition, or at least asks for clarification (line 15), Jean again qualifies what kinds of individuals belong to the category of nice men, proposing “god fearing” men (line 16). This brief negotiation shows both the local occasioning of categories, since Jean is pushed into coming up with a category defining the identity of her ideal man, and that this is consequential for the interaction, since most of the following exchange takes place around the definition and evaluation of this category and this identity. We see that Host1 makes explicit the connection between nice men and god fearing men that had been implicitly proposed by Jean, and his utterance overlaps with the next one pronounced by her as she is going on with the identification of the categories of men she likes (‘nice guys’, line 18). Host1 at this point proposes in an ironic tone the category of ‘saved men’ (line 20) as relevant to the discussion, as if implying that ‘god fearing’ is not an acceptable category in the search for good or nice men. Jean, reiterates her position that she is looking for god fearing men (line 21) and at this point Host1 makes explicit his disagreement with her by saying that ‘god fearing’ does not mean ‘saved’ and that it will take her a long time to find a specimen of that category. At this point Jean gets defensive and pronounces that being single is not such a bad thing.

As we see from this fragment, interactants are negotiating each other’s identity while at the same time building certain images of each other through the use of identity categories. They are both aligning to the identity of Jean as a single woman who is looking for a man. However, while Jean is assuming such identity without making a big deal out of it, Host1 is using it as the spring board for a power struggle in which he takes the position of the wise man who can give advice. Both participants make relevant a religious identity, but a different one, as Jean uses the identification between nice men and god fearing men to convey her religious affiliation, while Host1 uses his disagreement on that membership classification in order to present his identity as a religious expert. At the end of the fragment therefore, Jean negotiates the value of her identity as a single woman, which at the beginning had not appeared to be problematic, by stating that it is not so bad to be single. Due to

space limitations I cannot go much deeper into the analysis of this fragment but I believe that the discussion shows some of the ways in which identity ascriptions are made and negotiated, their local occasioning and their consequentiality for further interaction. The talk-in-interaction movement, particularly in its version as Membership Categorization Analysis has produced a great deal of analyses of how people place themselves and others into social categories and how they negotiate such categories, particularly in institutional contexts. And although there is a great deal of debate on how locally occasioned identities relate to wider social identities (see De Fina 2006 on this point), it is safe to say that most researchers have embraced the need to look closely at concrete interactions in order to understand personal and institutional identity constructions.

4. Identity as positioning: Narrative studies

Another important contribution to the analysis of the interactional negotiation of identities comes from the theoretical construct of *positioning*. Although the term has been used by a variety of social scientists (see, e.g., Fairclough 1992; Hall 1990) to refer to the constitution of the subject through and in discourse, in this section I will talk specifically of the developments that the concept has had within social psychology since such ideas have spurred a great deal of research on ways in which identities are built and negotiated in interaction. In their now classic 1990 article 'Positioning: The discursive production of selves', Davies and Harré propose the construct as an antidote to the static concept of role, then predominant in both psychology and sociology, and therefore to a vision of identity as being basically determined by one's social and cultural position. In fact they see positions as "the discursive production of a diversity of selves" (1990: 47), stressing the fact that there is no single, coherent identity but rather that identities are related to the kinds of social situations and discursive practices in which people are involved. These authors emphasize the social nature of identity categories, arguing that positions are acquired through social and discursive practices in which people learn to associate identities with cultural stereotypes that they relate to cultural "story-lines". But Davies and Harré also argue that there is space for individuals to creatively reshape the meaning of these categories. As in talk-in-interaction approaches, in this perspective identities are not seen as the outcome of the intention of the individual to convey certain images of himself/herself (as in traditional pragmatic approaches à la Grice), but rather as an interactional, not mental process, in which people are continuously positioned by others (present or absent), position others (present or absent), and position themselves. However, Davies and Harré still fundamentally focus their attention on the individual as the main actor in the negotiation of identities and, unlike talk-in-interaction proponents, refer to mental and cognitive processes as central to such practices. Indeed people are seen as in-

interpreting and responding to social identities in which they are positioned based on their own past experience with social categories and attributions, on their emotions, and on their construction of personal narratives through which they make sense of experiences. Subjectivity and personal involvement thus play a major role in positioning theory since in Davies and Harré's (1990) words, this construct permits

us to think of ourselves as a choosing subject, locating ourselves in conversation according to those narrative forms with which we are familiar and bringing to those narratives our own subjective lived histories through which we have learned metaphors, characters and plot. (Davies and Harré 1990: 52)

There is a clear connection here between performing and understanding identities and placing oneself and other people within stories. In that respect, positioning theory has joined forces with the 'narrative turn' in the social sciences (Bruner 1991; Gergen and Gergen 1988) pointing to narrative practices as a main locus for identity construction. Within this approach narratives are seen as central to identity construction because they allow people to build coherent (although ever changing) versions of who they are and make sense of experience through its emplotment (Polkinghorne 1988) into episodes with beginnings and ends involving actions by characters. And it is within narrative studies that positioning as a concept has been developed the most, evolving into a more interactive notion. Bamberg (1997, but see also Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 2008) proposed it as a tool for analyzing the ways people do identity work in narrative, but refined it, proposing that positioning is a result of strategies that operate at three levels in narratives. Specifically, narrators can position themselves with respect to:

1. the characters in the story world
2. the other participants in the storytelling event
3. themselves as subjects

At the first level narrators may position themselves, for example, as active or passive characters in their stories, as being victims or perpetrators. They may arrange the sequence of events selectively and present antagonists and other characters in particular ways in order to build certain interpretations of what happened. With the second level, the analyst tries to capture what the narrator is doing with the story in the particular conversation or social situation. Thus, it may be that the teller is using the story to blame someone for something that happened, or to show off her experience, or simply to empathize with another teller. Finally, at the third level narrators are seen as conveying something about themselves that may transcend the local context and construct, "a local answer to the question: 'Who am I?'" (Bamberg 1997: 337).

As one can see, this separation of levels allows for the analysis of how narrators deploy a variety of linguistic resources to build certain images of them-

selves. At the same time, this framework does not ignore the fact that self presentations are addressed to audiences and not only may vary a great deal according to who is listening to the story and commenting on it, but may also be contested, reshaped, rejected by audiences and therefore may require additional discursive work. Some researchers such as Wortham (2001) have looked for and analyzed “positioning devices”, i.e., linguistic elements that are used by narrators as privileged tools to convey and build images of themselves. These can go from the choice of words to refer to self and others (what characters are called and how they are described), to particular verbs of saying (for example, using “admit” instead of “reply”), to reported speech as a way to emphasize self or other characterizations. Wortham also made the interesting suggestion that by presenting themselves as particular kinds of persons narrators also often act as that kind of person in the present interaction.

As we have seen, positioning has been developed particularly as a tool for studying narrative and most of all autobiographical narrative, but its proponents share with talk-in-interaction theorists and interactional sociolinguists a focus on discourse and interaction as sites for the construction of identity and a recognition of the fundamentally social nature of the self.

5. Identity as social practice: Sociolinguistically oriented studies

The importance of discourse and the need for a close analysis of naturally occurring interactions which characterize the approaches described above are premises shared by many sociolinguists who have worked on identity as well. In classic sociolinguistic models such as the variationist canon, identities were associated with linguistic variables based on fixed social characteristics. For example, in his ground breaking sociolinguistic studies on vernacular English, Labov (1972) focused on the analysis of how variation in the way certain sounds were pronounced correlated with social class. But even in later discourse analytic studies there was a tendency to associate identities with ways of speaking based on fixed characteristics, therefore there was not much interest in negotiation and variability at the level of the interaction. An example of this tendency can be found in many studies on gender (see Mullany, this volume) in which it was assumed and then argued that women as a general category talked in ways that were different from those typical of men: for example that they interrupted less or elaborated more, or were more empathetic, etc.²

Starting from the late 1990s sociolinguists have increasingly questioned such assumptions, pointing to the need to be aware of diversity and variability in groups and speech communities rather than always assuming homogeneity (for a discussion see Blommaert et al. 2001). This new focus has helped turn attention towards the ethnographically oriented study of linguistic behavior within specific so-

cial practices and contexts. It would be impossible to give an exhaustive account of this vast literature on identity in interactional and ethnographically oriented sociolinguistics (see Bucholtz and Hall [2005] and De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg [2006] for an introduction), but I want to focus on some of the notions that have been central to these studies and that are particularly significant for the analysis of identities in interpersonal contexts. Among them, probably the most important is the concept of indexicality (Silverstein 1976). Such a concept subsumes “many of the theoretical constructs used to study identities: it connects utterances to extralinguistic reality via the ability of linguistic signs to point to aspects of the social context” (De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg 2006: 4).

Indexicality relates signs, in our case linguistic signs such as words, utterances, accents, etc., to complex systems of meaning such as ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about all aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances, practices and organization structures. Just to give an example, an expression such as “You are darn right” may be taken to signify nothing in a conversation between two friends having a cup of coffee, but it may be read as a marker of authenticity and of “speaking like everyday folks” in the televised speech of a politician. In the second case the expression becomes associated with widespread middle class values, which translates into an attribution of these values to the speaker. It is through these kinds of processes that people may signal aspects of their identity, for example by conveying their affiliation or disaffiliation with particular social categories, beliefs and ideologies. The notion of indexicality also points to the centrality in communication of complex symbolic processes. As the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1991) has brilliantly illustrated, humans reproduce the social order, including social relations and identities, through associations and reciprocal reinforcement between material and symbolic practices. The latter, which range from rituals, to uses of language, to ways of handling the body, reflect and reinforce types of knowledge, categories and representations based on accepted and established social relations, and processes and hierarchies that are perceived as natural. In that sense, although identities may be discussed or explicitly focused upon, they are more often performed (Butler 1997; Bauman 2000; also see Mullaney, this volume), i.e., indexed and conveyed through the use of linguistic and non linguistic signs.

Sociolinguistic research on identity has focused in the last twenty years on the specific processes through which people create these associations between language and identities. One notion that has been instrumental in capturing some of the ways in which people connect identities with language has been the concept of style. Irvine (2001) proposes that style crucially concerns distinctiveness: how people and groups create and maintain differences with respect to each other and what these differences are based on. For Irvine, styles of speaking involve the way speakers, as agents in social space, negotiate their positions and goals within a sys-

tem of distinctions and possibilities. Styles are based on shared ideologies in so far as, although a style “may characterize an individual, it does so only within a social framework (of witnesses who pay attention)” (Irvine 2001: 21). In other terms, in order for a style to mean something it has to be based on socially recognizable indexes that people consistently associate with particular social representations. The idea that styles of speaking make people feel different from each other captures the fact that symbolic processes are built on a number of levels of signification, not on individual signs. Thus, judgments on a person’s identity may be based not solely on this person’s pronunciation of individual sounds, but also on the presence of a number of symbols that play together to paint a general picture such as accent, choice of words, syntax, intonation, just to mention some of the linguistic cues that may be involved. Indeed, style is often made up of more than just linguistic cues and it may include all kinds of symbols: from clothing, to objects that people own, to body language.

Research on style has moved from the Labovian framework that saw it as a relationship between linguistic variables and social categories, towards a more interactive framework in which it is seen as a strategy to present personas or groups (Eckert 2000; Coupland 2001). The latter conception derives from a shift towards language as practice and towards the analysis of meanings as socially constructed. In that sense, style is indeed to a certain extent conventional, but it is also always situationally achieved (Coupland 2001). That way style and performance are two concepts that complement each other as people may continuously create new styles or give new meanings to old styles. It is impossible to make a list of style indexes, but researchers have pointed, for example, to language varieties such as registers and dialects, as well as to linguistic choices in terms of interpersonal communication such as closeness or distance, levels of politeness, etc. The point is that the definition of style needs to be closely connected to the study of social contexts in order to understand how people choose and exploit what is significant to distinguish themselves from others and to index their identities. While individuals and groups may consistently adopt styles of speaking to distinguish themselves from others (think, for example, of the adoption of a particular jargon by a group of teenagers in a school), styles may be exploited as strategies to create certain personas at the local level of interactional exchanges as well, a process that is well exploited by comedians who try to convey different personas by switching from one way of speaking to another.

Research on the negotiation of identities and on how indexicalities play out in concrete interactions has been particularly significant in the area of code-switching, i.e., in the analysis of how people’s alternate use of languages in their speech may be exploited to do identity work. Many classical sociolinguistic studies of code-switching presupposed a stable relationship between the use of the language variety spoken by one’s own ethnic or national group and the expression of in-group solidarity. For example Blom and Gumperz (1972), Gal (1979), and Milroy

(1987) regarded the different codes spoken by bilinguals as associated in a rather fixed form to a *we* or a *they* representing respectively the in-group and the out-group. However, studies of code-switching have painted a much more complex picture showing that there is no necessary association between using one's mother tongue and expressing solidarity with one's own group and that language varieties may be used to express subtle conversational moves (see Auer 1998 and 2005 for a discussion). In his studies of the use of different language varieties by adolescents in London inner city schools, Rampton (1995) showed, for example, that youngsters may appropriate any language variety, including languages that they do not speak well, to construct specific personas in interaction with peers and that these displays of identities are creative and unpredictable.

6. Sample analysis

As we have seen, a great body of recent research points to the need to pay close attention to what people actually do in order to construct and negotiate identities and to the importance of ethnographic studies of specific communities and concrete social practices. For this reason, I devote this section to an exemplification from my own research on code-switching and ethnic identity in a community of practice (for a full analysis see De Fina 2007a). Communities of practice have been defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (who followed an original proposal by Lave and Wenger 1991) as

an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, the CofP is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464)

The concept allows researchers to explore how groups are constituted in and through social action (including, of course, discourse practices) and the specific symbolic activities that are used to define membership into those aggregates. The community in question is an all male card playing club, *Il Circolo della Briscola*, composed of Italian and Italian American members, playing the card game Briscola in the greater Washington area. The languages spoken by different members include English, regional varieties of Italian,³ Italian dialects (Abruzzese, Calabrese, Molisano, Siciliano), and minority languages (Friulano). However, competence in all these different codes varies widely. While all Briscola members speak English fluently, only some of them are fluent in Italian and very few are fluent in an Italian dialect. The existence of all these languages in the repertoire of the Circolo members makes language switching a potential resource for identity displays.

However, associations between languages and identities are not automatic and the fact that a particular member may speak Italian rather than English is not per se an indication of ethnic affiliation. I have argued (see De Fina 2007a and b) that in order to understand how languages are concretely related to identities we need to study the social (including linguistic) practices of groups, their local and global objectives, their rules of behavior. In this particular case, I have observed that code-switching is a common phenomenon in both card playing and conversation, that club members may choose to speak Italian or English depending, for example, on their competence, on who they are talking to, or on what they are talking about, and that such choices are not intended or do not function in the interaction as acts of identity. However, code-switching into Italian can become a powerful strategy of ethnic alignment and of in-group cohesion.

How can such instances be recognized? Connections between code-switching and ethnicity can be established by looking at recurrent patterns, types of practice in which interactants are engaged, and the sequential development of talk. In the case of the *Circolo*, one aspect that has emerged is that participants converge towards the creation of an image of the *Circolo* as an organization that stresses its connection with its Italian identity. This is accomplished through adherence to what is presented as tradition in different areas (food and play being the most important ones). Thus, for example, Italian food is always consumed and commented upon during *Briscola* nights and terms for food are predominantly used in Italian both in conversation and in writing. The other important area in which the connection between using Italian as a language and indexing an Italian identity is signaled is in the reign of card playing. I have shown that a good card player's identity is constructed in the club as including the ability to speak some Italian and that the use of Italian is enforced at the card playing table as an index of adherence to tradition. Below I present one example of how such use is encouraged through socialization practices, i.e., those activities that are aimed at introducing newcomers to the rules and regulations of the club and to the game of *Briscola*. Among these practices there is the playing of mock games with newcomers in order to familiarize them with the cards. The example below is taken from one such game. Here Paul and Al are trying to teach Carl how to play *Briscola*. Both Paul and Al are American born and know very little Italian. As a first step they are showing Carl how to recognize cards. Carl also is American born and does not speak any Italian.

Example (2)

- 01 Carl: ((pointing at card)) What the hell is this? Is that a queen?
 02 Paul: No that's a horse.
 03 Carl: You don't have a queen in there.
 04 Paul: No.
 05 Carl: ((puts his hands on his head)) ((pointing)) That's three,

based sociolinguistic studies. There are significant differences in objects of study, methodologies and theoretical orientations among these three approaches; however I hope to have shown that there are also important points of convergence. In particular, researchers in all these areas recognize the importance of attending to interaction as the site for identity construction, they argue for the need to understand how participants themselves signal, negotiate and index their identities, and they all study identity as discursive work taking place within the social practices that surround it. These orientations are in stark contrast with mainstream traditions in interpersonal pragmatics as represented in models derived from Gricean based Speech Act Theory (Grice 1975), such as those proposed in Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model, which are centered on a notion of identity as the individual management of face. Within such approaches identity is seen as signaled by the speaker through her intention to signify, while the job of the addressee is reduced to that of responding to that intention by decoding the illocutionary force of utterances. In traditional pragmatic models contextualization is seen as operating exclusively at the cultural level, but very little attention is paid to the concrete social practices in which identities are made relevant and negotiated. Finally, while in analyses based on speech act theory or on politeness the focus is on a fixed set of linguistic resources for the display of identities, practice and interaction based models see symbolic processes as creative and therefore argue for the need to discover and describe the linguistic resources used for identity work.

Transcription conventions

CAPS	louder than surrounding talk
.	at the end of words marks falling intonation
,	at the end of words marks slight rising intonation
–	abrupt cutoff, stammering quality when hyphenating syllables of a word
!	animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
—	emphasis
:::	elongated sounds
italics	utterance in Italian
(.)	micropause
//	overlapping speech
(())	transcriber's comment
(...)	non audible segment
=	no interval between adjacent utterances
[]	translation
@	laughter

Notes

1. In particular see Sacks ([1966] 1992b: 337). In this paper, he explains: “We have our category-bound activities, where, some activity occurring, we have a rule of relevance, which says ‘look first to see whether the person who did it is a member of the category to which the activity is bound.’ So that if somebody does being fickle, or is observably being rich, you might then have a rule which permits you to select a preferred category for seeing who they are. And of course, using that procedure for finding the category, you may never come across occasions for seeing that it’s ‘incorrect’ in the sense that the first procedure I suggest would end up showing.”
2. For a thorough discussion of these issues see Bucholtz and Hall (2004), and Crawford (1995).
3. Regional varieties are varieties of Italian spoken with a specific accent that also exhibit some lexical variation with respect to Italian. Italian dialects are local vernaculars that developed from Latin into local languages. They may be more or less similar to Italian depending on the case.

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9. Gender and interpersonal pragmatics

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Abstract

The crucial role that gender plays within the negotiation of identities has figured heavily in interpersonal pragmatics research. This chapter presents a historical overview of early theoretical positioning in the field and then moves on to examine more recent developments and advancements. A theoretical framework which brings together the social constructionist approach of performativity with the notion of gendered discourses and indexicality is outlined and illustrated. The importance of viewing gender in conjunction with other relevant social identity categorisations is emphasised and gender is also considered alongside sexualities, race, ethnicity and class. The overarching importance of producing studies of interpersonal pragmatics with a clear political agenda is emphasised, as is the need to expand the field in future research by investigating the interplay between gender and sexualities, as well as the urgent need to include work on non-white, non-western groups from a range of different class and cultural backgrounds.

1. Introduction: The current state of the field

Studies examining language and gender in the specialist field of interpersonal pragmatics have expanded rapidly since the 1970s and a range of different theoretical positions and approaches have emerged during the last four decades. Language and gender research has interpersonal issues at its core; however, our understanding of the relationship between gender identities and interpersonal linguistic usage is complex. In recent years, theoretical conceptualisations of gender have become more sophisticated as the field has developed. Whilst early linguistic studies tended to draw upon the notion of gender identity as a fixed, static construct, more recent work is heavily influenced by the principles of social constructionism, outlined by De Fina in the previous chapter.

The theoretical shift to social constructionist perspectives has led to the prevalence of gender being viewed as a dynamic, fluid notion within language and gender studies. In particular, Judith Butler's (1990, 1993, 1999, 2004) conceptualisation of gender as a performative social construct has come to dominate the field. The application of social constructionist models, where identities are conceived as pluralised, negotiated and contested categories, has resulted in the production of more intricate understandings of the interplay between interpersonal

pragmatics and the negotiation and performance of gender identities within interaction.

In line with the social constructionist approach, it is important right at the outset of this chapter to highlight that, whilst gender is a highly significant aspect of our social identity construction and performance, there is also a range of other crucial facets of our sociolinguistic identities which interact with gender in our interpersonal identity construction, including, for example, ethnicity, class, sexuality and age. It is integral to view gender alongside these and any other salient identity categorisations in order to ensure that the full complexity of individual identity construction, in specific contexts of interaction, is taken into account. This approach helps to counteract a key criticism which has been cited at earlier language and gender research (see Swann 2002), that gender identities have been prioritised at the expense of other potentially relevant identity categorisations.

Interlinked with the above argument is the fact that studies of gender and interpersonal pragmatics have long been dominated by a focus on the interpersonal communication of white, middle-class, western, heterosexual women. This can be seen as partly attributable to the fact that Lakoff's (1975) *Language and Woman's Place*, generally accepted as the first and most seminal publication in the field, was based upon the anecdotal experiences of white, middle-class western (presumably heterosexual) women in the United States. Early researchers aimed to test whether Lakoff's anecdotal observations could be borne out by more rigorous empirical evidence of that particular group of individuals in western societies. It can also be seen partly as a consequence of the fact that access to white middle-class western women is arguably more readily available than access to other groups as many language and gender researchers within academia belong to this (loosely defined) category and thus already have access to a range of potential informants as part of their own speech communities.

However, in order to guarantee that we have a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of gender and interpersonal pragmatics, there is a real and urgent need to ensure that a diverse variety of groups of women as well as groups of men from a whole range of different cultures and contexts are investigated. This is not to deny the importance of studying white middle-class western women, or to claim that such studies of gender and interpersonal pragmatics should no longer be conducted; such research remains important, especially if key areas of contemporary gender inequality are being directly addressed, such as in recent studies of institutional settings, including political arenas (Wodak 2003; Shaw 2006), academia (Jule 2006; Mills 2006) and professional workplaces (Baxter 2003; Koller 2004; Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007). Rather, it is to make the point that white middle-class western women are just one group amongst many that should be researched. In order for the discipline to expand there is a necessity for many more gender researchers from different backgrounds in various global locations to start addressing the gaps that currently exist within the field.

Since the late 1990s researchers have begun to expand the field by producing empirical evidence of men's interpersonal pragmatic interactions as well as women's interactions. The field of language and gender studies historically has a tradition of focusing more on women's interpersonal interactions, either in single-sex, all-female encounters or with a predominant focus upon women's interactional identities in mixed-sex settings. This is totally understandable historically – indeed, one of the reasons why the discipline came into existence in the first place was to focus much needed attention on women and language practices in order to address the issue of language and inequalities (cf. Lakoff 1975). However, more recently, the importance of producing empirical evidence of men's interactions has also been emphasised (see Johnson and Meinhof 1997; Coates 2003). As Johnson (1997) points out, a lack of actual studies of men and masculinities leads simply to men being associated with the norm and power thus remains hidden. The field has become more inclusive by investigating a plethora of gender identities, including a range of femininities and masculinities, and how these relate to interpersonal pragmatic identity performance.

Indeed, in the recently launched journal *Gender and Language*, a publication which has included contemporary articles on a range of interpersonal pragmatics topics, the editors point to the need for much more research on languages other than English (McElhinny and Mills 2007). They also openly state their commitment to publishing a transparent record documenting all countries where work has been received, reviewed and published to attempt to ensure that they (and their readership) have an annual reflexive review to assess the successfulness of the commitment to expanding the scope of gender and language research (see McElhinny and Mills 2008). McElhinny and Mills (2007) make the crucial point that the overall aim of including a range of non-western work and thus broadening the field will only be achieved if all of us, in our roles as researchers, editors, members of editorial boards, reviewers, authors and readers are continually reminding ourselves of the need to analyse and publish language data from non-western cultures and traditions. This is a key point to consider in relation to the development of topics and contexts in future gender and interpersonal pragmatics research (see also Mills and Mullany in press).

Following this initial overview of the current state of the discipline, in Section 2, I review the field of gender and interpersonal pragmatics research, briefly charting its early theoretical development through to a concentration on the most recent advances within the social constructionist paradigm. This includes consideration of two other recent theoretical developments which can be utilised alongside the social constructionist, performativity approach: (1) the notion of gendered discourses (Mills 1997; Sunderland 2004; Mullany 2007), which includes a consideration of the crucial importance of gendered language ideologies (Cameron 2003) for interpersonal pragmatics research, and (2) the concept of indexicality (Silverstein 1976; Ochs 1992; McElhinny 2003), also outlined by De Fina in the previous

chapter. I illustrate how these theoretical paradigms can be brought together as part of an integrated approach to gender and interpersonal pragmatics research and then utilise this theoretical backdrop as a springboard to focus upon the importance of viewing gender in conjunction with other identity categorisations. In Section 3, I move on to examine the theoretical development of studies on interpersonal pragmatics which investigate gender and sexualities. This is followed in Section 4 by a focus upon work emphasising the importance of viewing gender alongside race, ethnicity and class.

In Section 5, I will look towards the future development of the field by focusing upon the recent findings of one particular study (Yang 2007). I have selected this work as I believe it exemplifies some of the significant gaps in the field that wait to be fulfilled: It focuses on Chinese (Mandarin), a significantly under-investigated language that remains to undergo any thorough analysis from a gender and interpersonal pragmatics perspective; it focuses upon the interpersonal interactional norms of heterosexual couples in intimate domestic settings. It is also a study that has a clear political motivation and commitment to gender equality and bringing about social change (cf. Cameron 2007a). It attempts to reveal how gendered language ideologies produce and reproduce norms and expectations for linguistic practices within interpersonal interaction which result in negative evaluation of women's linguistic behaviour. This has far-reaching consequences, as the women in Yang's study have been subject to domestic violence, blamed upon their "deviant" language usage. If gender and interpersonal pragmatics research is to expand in future and fulfil the aim of becoming more inclusive and more overt in its political motivation, then studies of this kind are exactly the type of research that needs to be produced.

2. Theoretical approaches

2.1. Early work

Strategic attempts to characterise the theoretical thinking behind early language and gender research are commonly known as the deficit, dominance and difference approaches (see Coates 2004, 2008 for good summaries). These categories are commonly thought to chart the field's chronological development (Talbot 1998). The *deficit* approach is associated with Lakoff (1975) and was coined on the basis of her view that women's language is weak and unassertive, and thus deficient. The deficit approach is followed by the *dominance* approach, popular in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The *difference* approach then developed around the mid-1980s and remained popular until the early 1990s. All three approaches assume that difference between female and male speech patterns pre-exists. During the 1990s, a significant and crucial shift away from the view that gender difference should be taken as the

starting point for language and gender studies was observed. The assumption that gender difference pre-exists is the case in all of these approaches, regardless of their differing titles. The newer, social constructionist approach briefly outlined in the previous section has been termed the *dynamic* model, thus completing the ‘alliterative list’ of approaches to language and gender study (Talbot 1998: 150).

Dominance researchers argue that a patriarchal social order governs the language system, resulting in male domination in spoken interaction and a perception that men’s speech is always more highly valued. Researchers who follow the culture/difference approach argue that, if cultural backgrounds differ, then lines of interpretation and the habitual use of linguistic strategies are likely to diverge. As a consequence, miscommunication occurs in mixed-sex interaction.

Whilst the chronological four “Ds” approach is arguably useful, I have chosen not to adopt a more traditional, blow-by-blow chronological account of these perspectives in my overview. My reasoning is that application of such neat theoretical accounts with the chronological development of the field runs the danger of pigeon-holing researchers into different camps, when often evidence of elements of at least two or even more of the approaches can be seen simultaneously. Some language and gender research does not obviously fall under any one category and thus studies may be forced into a paradigm that is not wholly accurate. This can result in over-generalisation of the findings, with important subtleties and nuances being missed. The most important point in this section is to establish that the findings of all early work can provide contemporary researchers with a useful starting point for conducting interpersonal pragmatics research on gender – the distinctions imposed by these differing theoretical categories arguably can tend to obscure this point. I will thus focus on research here that provides a well-rounded overview of gender and interpersonal pragmatics work from a historical perspective.

Lakoff’s (1975) original publication covered a range of interpersonal interactional features, including women’s language and humour, terms of address and linguistic politeness. Overall, Lakoff claimed that women are more linguistically polite than men and that their interactional styles are characterised by what she termed “superpolite” forms, including euphemism, a lack of expletives and hypercorrect grammar. Whilst heavily criticised for being based upon anecdotal observations, and the observations only of white middle-class American women, as well as failing to pay attention to the form and function of linguistic features in context, her publication resulted in the rapid growth of the field. Examples of well-known early studies where Lakoff’s claims were tested include Dubois and Crouch’s (1975) and Cameron, McAlinden and O’Leary’s (1989) work on tag questions, Fishman’s (1978) work on questioning and hedging in intimate couples, and Goodwin’s (1980) work on the interpersonal interactions in children’s activity groups.

Another early work, and one that is particularly notable for its rather rare focus on a minority language and culture, is Brown (1980), who investigated the interactional usage of diminutive pragmatic particles that encode linguistic politeness

in a rural Mayan Indian community in Mexico. She found that women in this particular cultural grouping used far more of these politeness features than men. Whilst it is important to emphasise that interpersonal pragmatics is much larger than just a focus on politeness, politeness work does provide us with an excellent illustration of interpersonal pragmatics work from a gender perspective. And another oft-cited and highly influential study is Holmes' (1995) examination of gender and politeness in a plethora of different contexts in New Zealand. Holmes brought together a range of linguistic features including pragmatic particles, tag questions and interruptions and categorised these effectively utilising Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) politeness framework. Her quantitative and qualitative research demonstrated that women were more polite than men in a wide range of different contexts in New Zealand. In an overall summary of her findings she argues that "women tend to be more verbally polite than New Zealand men. In general, women are more orientated to affective, interpersonal meanings than men" (1995: 192–193). In contrast, "redundant verbal frippery seems to be how linguistic politeness is regarded by many men" (1995: 195).

Studies such as Lakoff (1975), Brown (1980) and Holmes (1995), where investigators appear to take the search for gender differences as the starting point of their research, have been critiqued for assuming that gender differences pre-exist, over-generalising what is a more complex picture (see Mills 2003 for a critique of Holmes 1995), and for potentially downplaying similarities and ignoring differences and the plurality of identities *within* groups of women and *within* groups of men (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Bergvall, Bing and Freed 1996). Nevertheless, the findings of these earlier studies represent a significant contribution to the area of gender and interpersonal pragmatics research. Despite the above criticisms, it is important to acknowledge that certain aspects of earlier theorisations may still have a role to play in current thinking. Whilst it is the case that the field has moved on considerably, researchers have revisited Lakoff (1975) and argued that the criticisms her work received may have been too harsh, and that valuable insights can still be gained by revisiting the original text (Bucholtz, Liang and Sutton 1999).

The growing popularity of the idea of reanalysing the original culminated in a re-publication of the 1975 version in 2004 as the first half of a volume which also contains commentaries from contemporary scholars who re-assess and re-evaluate Lakoff's work from the perspective of current preoccupations (Bucholtz 2004). This includes chapters which stress the aforementioned crucial importance of viewing gender alongside combinations of social identity categories including gender, race and class (Morgan 2004), gender, class and sexuality (Gaudio 2004) and gender, ethnicity and class (Mendoza-Denton 2004). Furthermore, we can use Lakoff's and other earlier work as a starting point which enables us to then move in and focus upon gendered discourses, gender and language ideologies and the crucial notion of indexicality. I will come back to this line of argument below, after we

have spent some time looking at the most significant theoretical development within the more recent history of the discipline, Butler's social constructionist theory of performativity.

2.2. Gender identities and performativity

Since the mid 1990s, Butler's theoretical model of performativity has come to dominate much work on language and gender. It is important to highlight that not all researchers who favour a social constructionist approach follow Butler (see Kotthoff and Wodak 1997). Nonetheless, Kendall and Tannen's (2002) remark that the performativity approach prevails in gender and discourse research – an observation that is equally applicable to studies of gender and interpersonal pragmatics – is still an accurate assessment of the field at the present time.

The crucial principle behind Butler's (1990, 1999) conceptualisation of gender as a performative social construct is that gender is something that we *do* as opposed to something that we are or have. In one of her more recent works, Butler (2004: 1) succinctly summarises this position, emphasising that gender is a “doing, an incessant activity performed”. She also makes the crucial point that our gender identities are not created in isolation by us as individuals: “one does not ‘do’ one's gender alone. One is always ‘doing’ with or for another” (Butler 2004: 1). Thus, from the perspective of the application of this theoretical framework to linguistic pragmatics, gender is something that we actively do/perform when we are engaged in interactional activities with fellow interactants in specific contexts.

Some researchers have criticised Butler for placing too much emphasis on individual agency at the neglect of the crucial role played by powerful societal forces in governing our interpersonal interactional strategies (Walsh 2001). However, Butler (1990: 33) has always acknowledged that a “rigid regulatory frame” exists which regulates our behaviour and that, if we step outside of the boundaries of acceptable interactional patterns, we may be subject to negative consequences. Nevertheless, as McElhinny (2003) points out, Butler's “rigid regulatory frame” has been critiqued for being too abstract. In later work, Butler devotes time to further articulating exactly what she meant by the “rigid regulatory frame” in response to earlier criticisms. She makes the following crucial observation:

persons are regulated by gender [...] this sort of regulation operates as a condition of cultural intelligibility for any person. To veer from the gender norm is to produce the aberrant example that regulatory powers (medical, psychiatric, legal to name a few) may quickly exploit to shore up the rationale for their own continuing regulatory zeal. (Butler 2004: 52)

Butler then clarifies the influence of Foucault on her perspective, elaborating on the importance of the notion of regulation to her theory as “a mode of *discipline* and *surveillance* in late modern forms of power” (Butler 2004: 55, emphasis in

original). She goes on to make the critical point that regulation is “bound up in a process of normalization” as it “relies on categories that render individuals socially interchangeable with one another” (Butler 2004: 55). The linkage that Butler makes to Foucault’s work here makes this a good point to bring in the notion of gendered discourses, which has also exercised a considerable influence upon gender identities research.

2.3. Gendered discourses and gender ideologies

The influence of Foucault can be seen not just through Butler’s direct invocation of his work, but also specifically from within language and gender studies itself, where his notion of “discourses” has become widely cited alongside Butler’s theory of performativity. Foucault’s (1972: 49) oft-quoted definition of “discourses” as “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak”, in conjunction with his fluid notion of power as a “web” or “net” (Baxter 2003: 8), have played significant roles in terms of enabling the complex relationship between gender, ideology and power to be theorised.¹ The term “gendered discourses” is now frequently utilised to describe systems which regulate gendered norms and conventions and thus govern our judgements and evaluations of one another’s behaviour. They can be viewed as the boundaries of social practice through which appropriate gendered behaviour is regulated (Mills 1997; Baxter 2003; Sunderland 2004; Mullany 2007). Gendered discourses operate as boundaries for the manner in which women and men “are represented or expected to behave *in particular gendered ways*” (Sunderland 2004: 21, emphasis in original). Gendered discourses are maintained and reproduced by gender ideologies. As Heller (2001: 120) argues, discourses “are obviously linked to the notion of ideology, insofar as ideologies are understood as a means of structuring and orientating domains of activity, and therefore inform discursive production and content”.

Gramsci’s (1971) notion of hegemony is often integrated with the Foucauldian perception of discourses (Coates 2003; Sauntson 2008), where hegemony is broadly defined as “people’s compliance in their own oppression” (Mills 1997: 30) – power is enacted by gaining people’s consent. From this perspective, power is viewed as being located within “everyday routine structures, emphasizing that the most effective form of domination is the assimilation of the wider population in one’s worldview” (Eckert and McConnell Ginet 2003: 43). A combined perspective of dominant hegemonic discourses enables *pluralised* femininities and masculinities to be theorised, along with the inclusion of other gendered categories, such as hermaphrodites. Conceptualising gender as pluralised enables variation *within* and *amongst* groups of women and men to be theorised and moves away from binary thinking that there is just one singular, monolithic version of femininity or one singular, monolithic version of masculinity (see Coates 2007). Pluralising gender also sets up the useful notion of a gender hierarchy (Sauntson 2008). A good illus-

tration of this point is if we consider gender in conjunction with sexualities (see also Section 3 below). Coates (2003) makes the crucial point that dominant hegemonic discourses of masculinity and femininity are *heterosexual*. If gendered discourses are not heterosexual, then they lose their dominant hegemonic status. To borrow Bourdieu's (1991) terminology, the dominant hegemonic discourse of heterosexual femininity and heterosexual masculinity have more linguistic and cultural capital and therefore more regulatory power over the norms of "acceptable" gendered behaviour.

Arguably one of the most powerful and overarching gendered discourses that exists is the *discourse of gender difference* (Sunderland 2004), namely that women and men are inherently different due to biological sex differences that exist between them and this then dictates our social, gendered behaviour. A key part of this dominant hegemonic discourse of gender difference from a linguistic perspective is the stereotypical view that women and men have inherently different interactional speech styles due to biological "hardwiring" in the brain. As Cameron (2007a) points out, this view that males and females are inherently different due to biological sex category is completely lacking in empirical evidence, though it is both accepted and perpetuated by popular culture and in certain academic disciplines outside of linguistics – a prime example of the power of the overarching discourse of gender difference and how this includes the inaccurate and unhelpful collapsing of the distinction between sex and gender.

In an earlier work, Cameron (2003: 450) draws attention to the dominance and persistence of this ideological belief about gender and language, and the fact that "[i]n many versions of this ideology the differences are seen as natural", though she makes the absolutely crucial point that gender and language ideologies change over time. She charts a transition in the final decade of the twentieth century away from the dominant view that women's language is weak, deficient and unassertive (and thus in need of assertiveness training) to a move towards women's language as superior to men's. In public discourses in late modern societies there has been an ideological shift to what Cameron (2003: 458–459) terms "a new linguistic ideal" in the form of a "skilled interpersonal communicator who excels in such verbal activities as cooperative problem-solving, rapport-building, emotional self-reflexivity and self-disclosure, 'active' listening and the expression of empathy". As these skills are stereotypically associated with women's language, a discourse of "female verbal superiority" has emerged (Cameron 2003: 458).

Cameron (2007a: 15) identifies a "neo-Darwinian discourse on language, sex differences and human evolution", which has resulted in this dominant discourse of female verbal superiority. She points out that any claims of the female brain as "superior" to the male brain for language processing are ignorant of the contextually-conditioned responses of earlier language and gender studies. These responses have been obscured by those who have put forward the neo-Darwinian account of sex differences accounting for alleged inherently differential language

usage. Such “reasoning” has resulted in women being seen as more naturally predisposed to occupy low-paid menial service sector jobs such as call centre work (Cameron 2003).

Looking back to earlier work, Cameron draws attention to the fact that Brown’s (1980) argument was never that men in the Mayan community could not use pragmatic particles associated with politeness due to biological hardwiring; they could and did, but they used them more infrequently than women, thus making it a question of “motivation rather than ability” (Cameron 2007a: 22). Similarly, Goodwin (1980) never claimed that girls were not capable of using aggravated directives. Indeed, she even provided empirical examples of girls doing just this in different settings. What Goodwin did claim was that in specific contexts and when fulfilling certain social roles girls will enact identities that are more co-operative and inclusive compared with boys in the performance of a particular task. Cameron goes on to make the crucial argument that, if the biological hardwiring argument really bore any resemblance to reality, then the interactional linguistic behaviour of women and men would be exactly the same across all different racial, ethnic and cultural groupings. This is clearly not the case. Any evidence of female verbal superiority is taken only from studies of “modern western speech communities” (Cameron 2007a: 21).

In complete contrast, Cameron (2007b: 32–34) highlights that in non-western, “traditional” societies, it is quite often men who are deemed to be the more polite, co-operative and status-conscious interactants. Indeed, this observation is very clearly borne out in Yang’s (2007) study in traditional, non-western society in Beijing. Her work arguably highlights not only the inaccurate nature of the neo-Darwinian discourse on interactional strategies and sex but also the significant differences between this ideological belief of female verbal superiority in western culture and the considerably different expectations of the ideological view in traditional, non-western cultures: women’s language is impolite, deficient and uncouth, including a biological predisposition to talk far too frequently and engage in harmful, face-damaging gossip. Yang (2007) demonstrates that this is indeed the stereotypical, dominant discourse of women’s language currently circulating in urban China, firmly held in place by gender ideologies. This can have serious and far-reaching consequences for those women who stray outside of the boundaries of the rigid regulatory frame in this cultural setting, including being subject to physical violence (see Section 5 for a detailed discussion of this study).

Cameron (2007b) also documents a speech genre known as the *kros* in Gapun, a Papua New Guinean village. She defines this genre as an angry monologue containing a multitude of highly abusive terms. In Gapun culture, the *kros* is thought to be a good representation of doing exactly what comes naturally to women, that is, using abusive, direct and confrontational language. As is the case in urban China, this is the exact opposite to what is supposed to be “natural” for women in western societies. Thus, the complete lack of consistency across cultural groupings provides overwhelming evidence against the biologically essentialist argument of fe-

male verbal superiority in terms of women's interpersonal pragmatic skills. This discourse is clearly an ideological notion which has come about as a consequence of the dominant gendered language ideologies associated with the "ideal" of the white middle-class western woman who is polite, indirect and co-operative, what Morgan (2004: 253, 2007: 125) refers to as the "good" woman. Cameron (2007a) argues that it is the role of language and gender researchers to dispel such myths in disciplines outside of linguistics in order to stop the prevalence of these opinions in popular culture and wider society more generally. She highlights that there is an urgent need to "unpick ideologies of the natural" (2007a: 22).

2.4. Indexicality

It has already been highlighted above that the findings of early research should not be entirely dismissed. Indeed, the dichotomised speech styles reported in earlier studies of gender and interpersonal pragmatics can be utilised as lenses which reveal the deeply embedded, stereotypical gendered expectations for individuals within societies, particularly if we integrate this perspective with the notion of indexicality. Ochs' (1992) work here is invaluable in explaining indexicality from a language and gender perspective.

Ochs argues that gender is either directly or indirectly indexed through language. Direct indexicality, lexical items where gender is overtly and explicitly encoded, such as *girl/boy*, *man/woman*, are relatively few and far between. Much more frequent is the indirect indexing of gender, whereby interactional styles come to be encoded or indexed with specific gendered meanings. The interpersonal pragmatic styles of individuals are viewed and evaluated in light of these gendered expectations. Therefore, the stereotypical view that women are more linguistically polite than men, borne out by early research in western cultures, can be seen as an ideological expectation, held in place by powerful gendered ideologies, which holds white middle-class behaviour for women as the most dominant, hegemonic discourse for all women to follow in western societies. If women should stray beyond the boundaries of this expectation, then they may well be subjected to negative evaluation. The notion of the "double bind" should not be overlooked here though, as often those who do abide by the norms and expectations of white middle-class women are still subject to negative evaluation, for example, in public contexts such as the workplace, where speech styles stereotypically associated with white middle-class femininity can be negatively evaluated as inappropriate and powerless (for further discussion see Lakoff 2003; Mullany 2007).

Coming back to Holmes, in her later publications on gender and politeness, the influence of Butler, Foucault and the indexicality approach can be seen, particularly in her influential work on language in workplace settings, which includes analysis of a range of interpersonal pragmatic elements (Holmes and Marra 2004; Holmes and Schnurr 2005, 2006; Holmes 2006). Another prominent theory for

gender and interpersonal pragmatics research, which takes a social constructionist approach and where the influence of all of these theoretical perspectives can be seen, is in Mills' (2003) work on linguistic politeness (see also Mullany 2007). Mills argues that politeness should be viewed as a set of judgements that interlocutors make during interactions, and that politeness emerges within particular communities of practice (CofPs).

Mills follows the now-classic definition of a CofP as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). She argues that instead of a "universal" approach to politeness such as that proffered by Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness should alternatively be conceptualised as follows:

A set of practices or strategies which communities of practice develop, affirm and contest and which individuals within these communities of practice engage with in order to come to an assessment of their own and others' behaviour and position in the group. (Mills 2003: 9)

The influence of Butler's "rigid regulatory frame" can be clearly seen in Mills' (2003) work. In a UK context, she crucially argues that politeness and impoliteness should be conceptualised as notions that are already gendered, raced and classed: politeness should thus be seen as always already stereotypically associated with white middle-class women. Therefore, if interlocutors stray beyond the boundaries of acceptable gendered interpersonal pragmatic interaction they may be subject to negative evaluation.

There are certain differences and tensions between the positions taken by Mills and Holmes, in Holmes' earlier and later work. For instance, Mills argues that the CofP approach allows both impoliteness and politeness to be conceptualised. The CofP framework also enables researchers to break away from the criticisms that have been given to earlier approaches to gender studies which are too heavily influenced by Brown and Levinson's "universal" framework. Mills argues that studies drawing upon Brown and Levinson, including Holmes' (1995) work, produce "disembodied" and "abstract" analyses. (See Mills [2003], Holmes [2005] and Mullany [2006] for a more detailed exposition of the debates between these theorists.)

Despite the theoretical and methodological differences between them, the work of Holmes and Mills has been undeniably influential to the field of gender and interpersonal pragmatics research. They should both be seen as key contemporary contributors to this research arena. Their approaches are applicable to investigations of gender and interpersonal pragmatics in a wide variety of contexts and can be utilised to investigate a whole range of language varieties and cultural practices. For example, Troutman and Newby (2008) have utilised Mills' CofP framework to investigate politeness in African American women's speech; Vine and Marra's (2008) recent work has investigated gender and ethnicity in Maori work-

place communities in New Zealand. Indeed, I will now move on to examine the overall importance of viewing gender in specific relation to other social identity categorisations in interpersonal pragmatics. This will commence with a consideration of gender and sexualities and then move on to consider gender, ethnicity, race and class.

3. Gender and sexualities

In this section I will initially concentrate on theoretical background and then move on to consider the specific interpersonal pragmatic issues of naming, terms of address, labelling of self and other and the debate that surrounds the identity category of “queer”. This debate opens up a range of interesting arenas for discussion in terms of gender, sexuality and identity categories, as well as a broader consideration of “queer theory” and its theoretical relevance to the research arena of interpersonal pragmatics.

As a starting point, it is notable that there has been much debate as to whether language and sexuality should be viewed as a totally separate sub-discipline of enquiry in its own right, as completely distinct from language and gender studies. However, I agree with Sauntson (2008) that it makes more sense to view gender and sexuality in conjunction with one another. When we make statements and observations about sexuality we are also commenting on gender, and it is “impossible to completely separate them in linguistic analysis” (Sauntson 2008: 274). Sexuality is deeply embedded within gender identity. However, it is important to recognise the need to be extremely wary of conflating the two terms or of viewing the relationship between the two in an overly-simplistic manner, which could ignore the complexities and intricacies of these crucial facets of our social identities.

Butler’s performativity work has been highly influential in the development of studies of language and sexuality. Butler (1993: 231–232) argues that, since gender norms are controlled by the operations of the rigid regulatory frame, they “operate by requiring the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity, ones that are almost always related to the idealization of the heterosexual bond”. This accords neatly with Foucauldian notions of dominant gendered discourses and as we have already seen above, dominant discourses of *heterosexual* masculinity and femininity are hegemonic and thus are those imbued with the most power. It is through these dominant hegemonic discourses that our performances of gender identities are assessed and encoded. As Sauntson (2008: 276) observes, heterosexuality is a key form of constraint and regulation which is “challenged by homosexuality and certain forms of ‘non-normative’ gendered behaviour”.

Butler (2004) takes care to spell out more clearly the relationship between gendered norms, sexuality and overarching power and control as exercised through the rigid regulatory frame. She clarifies that

norms do not exercise a final or fatalistic control, at least, not always [...] sexuality is never fully reducible to the “effect” of this or that operation of regulatory power. This is not the same as saying that sexuality is, by nature, free and wild. On the contrary, it emerges precisely as an improvisational possibility within a field of constraints. (Butler 2004: 15)

Queen (2004: 291–292) makes a direct link between earlier work in language and gender studies and the theoretical integration of language, gender, sexuality and indexicality. Looking back to Lakoff (1975), she argues that Lakoff’s work gives us “an analytic window that constructed and constrained ‘woman’s’ linguistic stage, offering a set of features that operated stereotypically and en masse to help index ‘woman’”. Queen (2004: 293) goes on to highlight the vital role played by stereotypes of gender “as a means of constructing, performing, and orientating around myriad acts of social and linguistic identity” by heterosexual and homosexual and queer individuals alike when engaging in identity performance in interaction.

An examination of the term “queer” provides interesting insights into identity politics and the interpersonal language issues of naming/terms of address. Cameron and Kulick (2003) argue that, in addition to being utilised as a new naming strategy for “gay” and “lesbian”, “queer” also represents a more significant shift to re-label and reshape sexual politics in terms of the creation of a much broader and inclusive discourse of sexuality. This inclusive discourse includes transgendered individuals such as transvestites and those with “deviant” sexual desires regardless of sexual orientation such as fetishists and sadomasochists. The term “queer”, the practices of renaming and the creation of a new discourse are all informed by queer theory, generally defined as a theoretical stance whereby identity undergoes a substantial critique resulting in a rejection of essentialist identity categorisations (Sauntson 2008).

One recent study which investigates the identity category of “travestis” and referring expressions in a language other than English is the work of Borba and Ostermann (2007) in southern Brazil. They define “travestis” as biologically male individuals who struggle for femininity. These individuals are not interested in any sex realignment surgery (femaleness) but instead they strive to perform feminine identities. In terms of interpersonal language usage, travestis usually adopt female names and most commonly use feminine grammatical gender forms within the Portuguese language system to address each other. However, there are occasions where they do use masculine grammatical gender categories. One of these functions is as a face saving strategy, utilised in order to distance oneself from other travestis with whom they do not wish to be associated due to their “vulgar” behaviour. Borba and Ostermann cite the example of Cynthia, who uses masculine forms when referring to travestis who are not deemed to be worthy of public respect. The use of grammatical gender here thus operates as a social distancing strategy and a device that saves her own face. In contrast, she signals a positive identity for herself by utilising “the contrasting feminine forms” (2007: 141). Borba and Oster-

mann (2007: 142) argue that, in such contexts, gender indexing operates as a “marker of exclusion”.

Barrett (2004: 299) discusses the complexities of the debates surrounding the term “queer” which are still continuing today. He draws attention to Butler’s view that the performativity of language enables us to rename a term through repetition, which allows us to expose “the heteronormative character of society”. However, drawing on the work of Leap (2002), Barrett points out that the term “queer” can be blatantly rejected. Indeed, most gay men choose to identify themselves as “gay” rather than “queer”, and there is a negative perception that the imposition of the identity category “queer” shows disrespect for an individual’s personal conceptualisation of their identities. Leap (2002) argues that individuals have the right to self-name and that usage of any other term that is not self-named may well be rejected.

The use of “queer” as a collective term may also signal a false political unification between homosexual men and lesbians (Butler 1993). Additionally, Sauntson (2008: 276–277) highlights the difficulties of adopting the term “queer”, pointing out that many individuals who self-identify as queers have been guilty of oppressing “non-gender conformists” (e.g., women who identify themselves as “butch” in lesbian communities). Sauntson (2008: 277) thus points to the danger of “rendering invisible already oppressed groups.” She also includes non-white and transgendered people as those who are in danger of invisibility. Sauntson further points out that, even within the supposedly liberal environment of academia, some lesbians and gay scholars still see the term “queer” as having strong negative associations and thus choose not to use it.

This interlinks with an overarching point made by Barrett (2004: 300) that the process of reclaiming terms such as “queer” as an identity categorisation “are always contested not because they have no rational basis, but because of the gut reaction to the words’ citational history as a potential form of hate speech”. However, Barrett (2004: 301) does go on to point out that some attempts at renaming via the term “queer” have been successful in questioning “the meaning of identity labels and the inherent exclusivity of identity categories”.

A set of complex and controversial issues has thus been raised by this discussion of naming, terms of address and gender and sexuality identity construction. This consideration neatly illustrates the difficulties involved within such interpersonal pragmatic issues, and how they are deeply embedded in the webs of societal power structures, which are extremely difficult to disentangle. However, resistance and change to the status quo is possible if it is desired and embraced by those (often minority groups) to whom the identity categories most apply.

Whilst it is possible to look positively upon some of the successes of the term “queer” being used in a reclaimed, inclusive, positive manner with all of the above caveats in mind, Butler (1993) and Sauntson (2008) both observe that “queer” has only really been examined in reference to white individuals and that researchers

have thus not taken into account the role that the application of the identity category “queer” may or may not play for different racial groups. This is just one example of many where issues of race have been obscured from interpersonal pragmatics and gender studies. We will now move on to examine these issues in more detail.

4. Gender, race, ethnicity and class

Coming back to Lakoff (1975) once more, Morgan (2004: 253) posits that her work can be of inspiration to researchers investigating gender and race as it demonstrates how the field of linguistics can be changed by asking critical questions. It thus provides a “framework from which to move African American women and other women of color to the very center of language and gender studies”. Morgan (2004) argues that there are significant problems in terms of a lack of representation of work on gender, race, ethnicity and class in gender and language research. She makes the following, crucial observation:

[S]cholarship on women of color has actively asserted that the interrelationship between race, gender and class is integral to understanding both race and gender. Paradoxically, rather than social science and linguistic canons and paradigms shifting in light of the extensive writings on African American and other non-white and working-class women, academic theories have simply shrugged in disregard. (Morgan 2004: 252)

Feminist scholarship has thus arguably been guilty of engaging in “a big tease that refused to include race, ethnicity, and class while romancing gender and sexuality” (Morgan 2004: 253).

Of particular interest from the perspective of interpersonal pragmatics is the fact that Morgan draws attention to the dominant perception of the “good” woman as white. This perspective directly accords with Mills’ (2003) view, highlighted above, that politeness is already raced, classed and gendered. Polite women i.e., “good” women are white, western and middle-class. However, historically, this has not always been the case, and the interpersonal interactional styles that Lakoff (1975) characterises as part of women’s language, including formal terms of address and politeness were “necessary to perform the identity assigned to African Americans under slavery and segregation” (Morgan 2004: 255). Following the civil rights movement in the United States, a transition in interpersonal interactional style has taken place:

African American speech in white-dominated contexts has gone from being depicted as childlike, feminine, overly polite, and self-effacing, to being viewed as aggressive, impolite, direct and threatening. (Morgan 2004: 255)

As a consequence of the civil rights movement black women have ended up in what Morgan (2004: 255, 2007: 125) describes as the “crevices” of this transition.

These crevices are potentially powerful places, though they have been bound up in contests and mediations of racism as well as sexism.

As a consequence of dealing with these political struggles, Morgan (2004) argues that there are now two key functions of African American women's discourse. The first is associated with cultural identity and the second is a powerful discourse about race, gender, and class injustice and thus within this "any critique of gender hegemony is also a critique of class hegemony" (2004: 256). Morgan argues overall for the urgency of a paradigm shift so that a definition of women exists that always already assumes diversity in terms of race, ethnicity and class.

Morgan (2004: 257) identifies the interpersonal categories of *smart talk*, defined as "women talking with an attitude" and *cross talk*, characterised as Caribbean women's floorholding and interruptive techniques, as two key indices of gender, race and/or class in African American women's speech. She contrasts these features with *small talk*, commonly identified with Lakoff's (1975) "good" woman features, thus stereotypically associated with white middle-class women's interactional style (see Holmes 2006; Holmes and Schnurr 2006; Mullany 2007). Such interactional styles can thus be categorised as part of a range of complex and creative identity categories for the performance of interpersonal communication of African American women. In a later work, Morgan (2007: 125) highlights that there are great strengths and rewards in the speech of African American women as they have succeeded in developing a discourse style which is "not only defiant and independent of patriarchal censorship and control, but one that also freely critiques the loss of power and responsibility of the good woman".

However, negative evaluation is never far away, and Morgan (2007: 125) draws attention to the negative stereotype of the "hard, cold, uncaring, unsympathetic black woman". She puts this down as a consequence of a failure to acknowledge societal power structures and the ideological dominance of the view that one set of interactional norms (white, middle-class norms) is unmarked and preferred.

Morgan (2007: 127) outlines an overall target for language and gender research, that it should aim to be inclusive of all women by producing a spectrum of empirical studies of all different groups of women instead of privileging one group – there is space for inclusion of white middle-class women too, but their positions should not be given precedence over any others, particularly those who are currently under-represented and in danger of becoming invisible. The recent work of researchers including Troutman (2006), Troutman and Newby (2008) and Bucholtz (2008) hopefully represents the start of a significant development of race, ethnicity and class research within the field.

There are a handful of other studies involving interpersonal communication and gender which have also been carried out with other ethnic minority groups. One example is Mendoza-Denton's (2004) work on Latinas in the United States. Mendoza-Denton reports on Farr's (1994) study of Latina women where she examines *relajo* (the suspension of seriousness), an interpersonal interactional feature

within the private sphere versus decorum and other social norms within the public sphere. Farr conducts a transgenerational study of women engaging in transgressive gendered behaviour in the private sphere that would not be found in the public sphere. She finds that the *abuelitas* (grandmothers) engage in *relajo*, including teasing, sexual explicitness and double entendre. This interpersonal interactional style in the private sphere serves to work as a critique of “the common gendered moral code” (Mendoza-Denton 2004: 263).

There is clearly much scope for future development here for interpersonal pragmatics in languages other than English (see *Gender and Language* 2008, 2(1) for a special issue on Japanese), but also in sub-varieties of English such as African American Vernacular English, as well as a whole host of other non-standard languages and codes spoken by non-mainstream and/or marginalised and oppressed groups.

5. A case study: Urban China

The final part of this chapter focuses upon Yang’s (2007) work as an example of a recent investigation which draws upon current theoretical perceptions of conceptualising gender identities and considers the interpersonal language practices of a group of non-white, non-western, working-class (albeit presumably heterosexual) women in urban China. As already mentioned, Yang’s (2007) study has a clear and urgent political purpose in highlighting how engagement in ideologically-loaded interpersonal language practices, which are perceived to go beyond the boundaries of acceptable gendered behaviour, can have far-reaching physical consequences for women who become victims of violence at the hands of their husbands.

Drawing upon Butler’s notion of regulatory constructs and gendered norms, Yang (2007) has produced a metapragmatic analysis which reveals a range of insights into interpersonal communicative norms in urban Chinese society. Yang initially documents the findings of a recent survey carried out by the *All China Women’s Federation*, which cites the number of women experiencing domestic violence in China as high as 30 percent (Wang 2003, as quoted in Yang 2007: 108), representing a dramatic increase from 1.67 percent in 1991. Yang documents that this increase is partly due to the fact that it is now more socially acceptable to report domestic abuse. However, it can also be seen as a consequence of a loss of social status of women during the neo-liberal restructuring of China. She reports that women have suffered more from unemployment than men, resulting in “feminised poverty” in Chinese cities and an increased vulnerability to becoming victims of domestic violence (Yang 2007: 109).

She identifies the discourse of “*zuiqian*”, translated as “deficient mouth”, as a regulatory gendered norm in urban China. Engaging in the discourse of *zuiqian* goes against the expectations and norms of appropriate behaviour for women to en-

gage in and it is clearly articulated as a key reason why women have experienced domestic violence by those whose role it is to give advice to battered women. The discourse of *zuiquan* applies only to women and consists of a series of pejorative terms to identify “deviant” and “deficient” levels of interpersonal interactive behaviour. The metapragmatic discourse of *zuiquan* includes the following terms:

zuisui “broken mouth”: talking about trivial things in detail
da zuiba “big mouth”: talking loudly and aggressively
zuijian “cheap mouth”: talking too much and out of context
chang shetou “long tongue”: being too inquisitive and noisy
 (from Yang 2007: 109–110)

Yang reveals that the general perception from institutional authorities is that women have no-one to blame but themselves for going against the norms of acceptable interactional behaviour. Engaging in any of these forms of interpersonal communication listed above, either with other women or with their husbands in private, domestic spheres, was deemed to have been the cause of the violence. In a workplace where an abused woman approached a middle-aged female party secretary of her work-unit to ask officially for assistance, she received the following response:

If I had a rich husband, I would seal my mouth and serve him well to win his heart back. Nowadays it’s hard to have a man who can make money and meanwhile be nice to you. Men work outside the whole day, and they need peace at home. You just tend every one of his needs. Don’t argue with him. Don’t complain. (Yang 2007: 110)

In order to stop her husband’s violent behaviour, alternative interpersonal communicative norms are presented by the female party secretary who basically advised the beaten woman to be “quiet, docile and tolerant” (Yang 2007: 110). Silence, and thus a complete lack of engagement in any interpersonal communication at all, is therefore advocated. Yang reports that this example of folk ideology illustrates one very popular belief of how women can avoid being physically attacked. She points out that the women who were subject to violence were not viewed as being worthy of help because they had brought on the attacks themselves through their “deficient mouths”. Due to their “deviant” interpersonal interactive styles, they had “violated normative definitions of the helpless victim and did not appear properly gendered” (Yang 2007: 112).

Indeed, a female member of a local women’s group and leader of an international anti-domestic violence collaboration made the following comments to Yang in her role as fieldworker during an interview: “They [women] should mind their language. Some women have really really ‘cheap mouths’, and they cannot control their mouths” (2007: 111). She pointed out that these women need to improve their language in order to avoid men being violent towards them.

Therefore, the powerful discourse of *zuiqian* places the blame upon individual women and thus serves to obscure the primary cause of male violence. The Chinese

economic and political system serve only to strengthen gender inequalities. Furthermore, the following crucial problem is identified:

The negative and essentialising portrayal of women's deficient speech styles works to legitimise non-inference from the state [...] When a talking mouth becomes a modality to regulate women, the politics of gender is then played out in biological terms. To put male dominance over women in biological forms may constitute a nascent means of governing gender in China. (Yang 2007: 111)

Drawing on Foucault's conceptualisation of an ideology of the social body, Yang argues that women's bodies are discredited and blamed as part of the dominant hegemonic discourse of *zuiqian*. Women's mouths are responsible and thus the violence is legitimised towards such non-conforming bodies. From the perspective of Foucault's anato-mo-politics, she argues that this subjugation of women can be perceived as a "disciplining of mouths/bodies" (2007: 111). Furthermore, drawing on Laclau (1990) and Butler (1993), Yang (2007: 115) argues that the "'deviant', 'deficient' and 'lack' categories are essential to construct the hegemonic subject identified with the state interests". The direct echoes of Lakoff (1975) and early language and gender theorisation of women's language as weak and unassertive are particularly strong here. Yang (2007: 115) concludes by making the crucial point that "domestic violence often indexes the general politics of gender and class". Her study thus highlights how a focus on the interpersonal communicative styles and gendered norms, maintained by gender ideologies, can reveal a great deal about a society's social and political structures.

6. Conclusions

This chapter has reviewed a range of theoretical perspectives on gender and interpersonal pragmatics from the inception of the field to contemporary work. One key aim has been to illustrate the usefulness of more recent approaches and frameworks that have developed in the field and to argue for the theoretical and analytical benefits of integrating the social constructionist approach with the crucial notion of gendered discourses and indexicality, which will allow ideological assumptions and norms of interpersonal pragmatic behaviour to be revealed. However, it has also been the aim to emphasise that the findings of early research can still be valuable, and encourage researchers not to reject all findings and perspectives expressed in earlier work.

It is hoped that future work on gender and interpersonal pragmatics will expand representation of the interactional communicative strategies of a wide variety of different groups, with gender being viewed in conjunction with a range of other facets of our social identities, including sexualities, race, ethnicity and class.

It is also the intention that the overarching political aim of gender research has been emphasised. As Cameron (2007a) recently argued:

one legitimate goal for language and gender scholarship is political: to contribute to the wider struggle against unjust and oppressive gender relations, by revealing and challenging the ideological propositions which support and naturalize those relations. (Cameron 2007a: 16)

To reword Simone de Beauvoir's oft-cited and famous phrase, "the interpersonal is political", and this should drive our decision-making in terms of deciding exactly who and in which particular locations and contexts we need to focus upon in future gender studies of interpersonal pragmatics.

Notes

1. Whilst some of the terms that are referred to in this section are associated with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995), in my own research I have not adopted an explicit stance as a critical discourse analyst, nor is it necessary for language and gender researchers who utilise these theoretical constructs to do this. As Mills (1995) and Walsh (2001) point out, there are problems with Fairclough's positioning in relation to gender, in that gender tends to be eclipsed by social class concerns. Following Baxter (2003: 3), I also believe that there are dangers in aligning oneself to an already well-established framework, which can lead to "an unquestioning and over-respectful adherence" to particular models. I would also argue that all feminist language and gender research can be defined as "critical" by virtue of the fact that it aims to critique the existing gender order, regardless of whether or not it identifies itself within the CDA paradigm (see Mullany 2007 for further discussion).

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Part II: Linguistic strategies for interpersonal effects

10. Mitigation

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Abstract

The chapter starts with a discussion of the role of mitigation within interpersonal relations. After a brief consideration of similar or related concepts (reinforcement, mood and modality, evidentiality, vagueness, downtoning, and discourse markers), the chapter focuses on the various proposals regarding the classification of mitigation devices. Most of them refer to the scope of the devices. Lakoff's (1972) original concept of 'hedge' was widened by Fraser (1975) and later on by Brown and Levinson (1978), Prince, Fraser and Bosk (1982), and Hübler (1983) in order to include not only expressions that qualify the degree of category membership but also those that modify the indication of illocutionary force or the commitment to the truth of a proposition. These distinctions have been further developed and expanded by Caffi (1999, 2001, 2007), who distinguishes between bushes, hedges, and shields. Bushes operate on the propositional content by making referring terms or predicates less precise. Hedges cover both speaker commitment and indication of illocutionary force. Shields can be deictic and non-deictic. Deictic shields shift one of the deictic reference points of the utterance (ego, hic, nunc), e.g., by ascribing an utterance to a source other than the actual speaker. With non-deictic shields, for instance, with a quotational shield, the speaker opens up a meta-level by using expressions like English so to speak or let's say. The chapter continues with an overview and examples of mitigation devices from a variety of languages and is completed with suggestions for further readings.

1. Introduction: The role of mitigation within interpersonal relations

Verbal interaction, or *talk-in-interaction*, comprises all forms of interaction in which the participants react to each other verbally and immediately (cf. Selting 2008: 217), for example, face-to-face conversations or conversations via interactive phone-based media. There is general agreement that such forms of interaction can be analysed as sets of hierarchically structured units, some of them being dyadic, others centring on a single participant. Although the definition and identification of some of these units is under debate, there are considerable analytical advantages in assuming that the basic unit of verbal interaction is the speech act (see Cooren 2004; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005: 62–65).

In the majority of cases our actions have direct or at least indirect consequences for other human beings. From this general perspective, our behaviour very often has relational or interpersonal aspects. In the present contribution, however, ‘relation’ is limited to phenomena arising in visual and/or verbal interaction between individuals. Verbal interaction is thus not a necessary condition for a relation, as the latter may be established through visual contact. For instance, we may hold the door open for the person coming after us several times a day; we do this mostly without saying a word, nevertheless the act itself serves to establish or define a relation to this person.

Speech acts always have a relational or interpersonal side (cf. Watzlawick, Beavin, and Jackson 1967: 54). However, a simple distinction between properties of speech due to the mere transmission of information (informational properties) and properties due to the speaker and hearer (relational properties) is not possible, since both the content of a speech act and the manner in which the content is expressed define a relation between the interactants. The content of an order, for instance, has interpersonal significance, but an order is also strongly influenced by the way in which it is formulated and expressed. Thus holding the door open to another person has interpersonal significance by itself, but so does the way in which it is done. There are, nevertheless, verbal interactions in which the informational aspect dominates and others in which the relational aspect is at the forefront. Brown and Yule’s (1983: 2–3) distinction between *transactional* and *interactional* discourse underlines this fact. Although we acknowledge that speech acts always combine informational aspects with relational aspects, in the present chapter we are more interested in the ‘how’ of a speech act than in the ‘what’. In other words, we are not looking for the reasons and motives that cause someone to make, for example, a request or give an order, but we are analysing the modes in which these speech acts are conveyed, once the decision to perform them has been taken.

Relational work refers to the linguistic activities carried out by interactants when they negotiate relationships with one another and adapt their own language to different speech events and different goals. It covers the entire range of interpersonal linguistic behaviour, including aggressive and conflictual communication (see Locher and Watts 2005: 11; Locher 2008: 510). Since Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) seminal contribution to politeness theory, the term *facework* has been used to refer in a narrower sense to the efforts participants invest in adjusting their own face needs to those of the other interactants, often by balancing conflicting needs. This includes consciously monitoring one’s own linguistic behaviour and that of the other participants and entails the willingness to adapt it in order to interact as consensually and as effectively as possible under the given circumstances. Facework, as a subset of relational work, necessarily involves mitigation strategies.

The speech acts produced during verbal interaction entail duties, obligations and liabilities for the participants, all of which we subsume under the heading ‘re-

sponsibilities'. Depending on the nature of the speech act, different responsibilities will be relevant, since every speech act entails its own specific responsibilities. In the present chapter, I will not propose a detailed analysis of these responsibilities. For my purposes, it is sufficient to distinguish between speaker-centred responsibilities and interlocutor-centred responsibilities (see Caffi 1999: 883, 2001: 29). With representative acts, such as descriptions and statements, the speaker makes a claim to truth and thereby creates a responsibility for him- or herself (see Grice 1975, 1978; Searle 1976). Directive acts commit the speaker or interlocutor to a certain verbal or non-verbal behaviour in the future (see Langner 1994: 45), thus creating a responsibility either for one or the other, or even for both.

These responsibilities may be desired or undesired, planned or unplanned, but in any case their presence can constitute a risk to or even lead to an offence against the faces and territories of the interactants. They thereby influence the interactants' degree of vulnerability (cf. Martinovski 2006). The claim to the truth of a statement or the commitment to fulfil a promise represent risks: a statement may turn out to be false and a promised action may not be performed, both negatively affecting the speaker's face. An order immediately and directly reduces the interlocutor's autonomy, thus violating his or her territory. Hence, speakers regularly try to minimize the responsibilities as well as the risks and offences entailed by their speech acts. They do this by reducing their commitment to the speech act. Both the process of reduction of commitment and its result are called *mitigation*. Whereas for Fraser (1980), who introduced the term into modern pragmatics, it only means the reduction of the unwelcome effects that a speech act may have on an addressee, for Caffi (1999, 2001, 2007) it covers all strategies by which a speaker tries to avoid the risks arising from verbal interaction. Other terms used for the same or for similar notions are English *hedging* (see Markkanen and Schröder 1997), *attenuation* (see Holmes 1984; Sbisà 2001), *downgrading* (see House and Kasper 1981), French *atténuation* (Borillo 2004), *adoucissement* (see Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2005), German *Abschwächung* (see Meyer-Hermann and Weingarten 1982; Langner 1994), and Spanish *atenuación* (see Briz 1995, 1998). The term (*epistemic*) *stance*, derived from modal logic and also used in this context, generally refers to speaker commitment in statements (see Kärkkäinen 2003). Borillo (1976, 1982) analyses speaker commitment expressed by French modal adverbs and parenthetical clauses within statements and uses the term *modalisation (assertive)* (see also Haillet 2004). Her approach was later applied to Italian by Venier (1991) and Schneider (1999).

Mitigation facilitates the management of interpersonal relations during verbal interaction insofar as it makes an utterance as acceptable as possible to the interlocutor without the speaker having to give up his or her standpoint. Mitigation expressions are fine-tuning-devices that achieve a compromise between what the speaker wants to say and what the interlocutor is willing to accept. Moreover, by allowing objection and by adapting to the interlocutor's standpoint, the speaker as-

signs a more important role to the interlocutor and concedes space for interventions. The interlocutor is put into a position where he or she can question the utterances of the speaker without endangering his or her face (cf. Haverkate 1992: 517). Mitigation devices are visible traces pointing to the interlocutor's presence.¹ They emphasize the dyadic nature of communication and highlight the fact that the participants are involved in verbal *interaction*.

Undoubtedly, without the use of mitigators, most verbal interactions would be reduced to mere information transactions and would not last very long. Mitigation thus seems to be involved in almost every verbal interaction. However, there are contexts, for example, emergencies, air traffic communication, deliberately conflictual interaction, from which it is excluded (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 69; Bublitz 2009: 268).

In what follows, Section 2 is dedicated to a discussion of concepts that are related to mitigation. In Section 3, the most important proposals concerning the classification of mitigation devices will be introduced. Section 4 presents the principal mitigation devices and illustrates them with examples drawn from various languages. Section 5 concludes the chapter and gives some suggestions for further readings.

2. Related concepts

When Lakoff (1972) proposed the concept of 'hedge', he primarily discussed the attenuation of the degree of category membership. But his original definition of 'hedge' also comprised the *reinforcement* of the degree of category membership, as for example in English *John is very tall*. In fact Lakoff (1972: 195) calls *very* an *intensifier* and *sort of* a *deintensifier*. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) maintain both aspects, though not insisting much on reinforcement. Nowadays, the term *hedge* is primarily used for attenuating rather than for reinforcing expressions.

Holmes (1984) proposes the superordinate concept of 'modification' that comprises both the attenuation (or weakening) and the boosting (or emphasizing) of speech acts. She analyzes attenuating and boosting devices, but concedes that attenuation has attracted more attention than boosting and explains this with the fact that English-speaking academic speech communities tend to constitute "negative-politeness cultures" (Brown and Levinson 1978: 250), fascinated by "devices which attenuate negatively affective speech acts" (Holmes 1984: 348). Sbisà (2001: 1811) also acknowledges that mitigation is far more frequent than reinforcement and that it is has often been studied as a phenomenon in itself. However, she thinks that mitigation and reinforcement are in principle of the same nature and should be explained as variations in the illocutionary effects of speech acts.

Mood and *modality* concern two general phenomena: The indication of the utterance type and the attitude towards the utterance. Both may involve mitigation. Mood is an illocutionary force indicating device, just as performative verbs, word order, or intonation contour. But mood may also mitigate the commitment to a speech act. While English performatives are hedged by modal verbs, in other languages this function is fulfilled by a mood directly applied to the performative, for example, the conditional mood of French *je dirais*, Italian *direi*, Spanish *diría* ‘I would say’, which can be used to introduce a statement. The attitude towards one’s own utterance is the most obvious case where modality and mitigation overlap. According to traditional definitions (cf. Palmer 1986), modality operates only over propositions. Mitigators operating over propositions (e.g., the English parenthetical *I suppose*) would therefore be instances of modality, whereas mitigators operating over single expressions, as the classical *hedges* in Lakoff’s (1972) sense (e.g., English *sort of*), would not (see Markkanen and Schröder 1997: 6). This is true for epistemic modality, which “indicates the degree of commitment by the speaker to what he says” and shows “the status of the speaker’s understanding or knowledge; this clearly includes both his own judgements and the kind of warrant he has for what he says” (Palmer 1986: 51). Here the overlap with hedging is most evident. Deontic modality, on the other hand, is characterized as containing an element of volition, typically present in directive acts. In this case, an overlap with mitigation seems to be less obvious. However, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) discuss strategies that may decrease the imposition of a request on the interlocutor.

The distinction between *evidentiality* and epistemic modality has frequently been the subject of debate. Occasionally it is difficult to draw a line between the speaker’s evaluation of the truth of his or her statement and the speaker’s description of the evidence on which the truth of the statement is based. Typical borderline cases are sensation verbs and inferential verbs. There are many languages in which the two types of information (speaker commitment and evidence) are realized by the same means, while pure evidential systems are rare (see Palmer 1986: 66). This is the reason why evidential and epistemic expressions are sometimes put under the same umbrella (cf. Ifantidou 2001; Kärkkäinen 2003: 19). Moreover, evidentials indirectly also express speaker commitment, since the quality of evidence indicates what kind of responsibility the speaker assumes for his or her statement.

Vagueness (cf. Channell 1994; Cutting 2007) is a central semiotic property of human language. An expression is vague if its applicability to referents cannot be determined in all cases. Vagueness enables a more flexible use of our limited repertoire of concepts (see Löbner 2003: 292, 293). We can even argue that being vague is a necessary communicative strategy (see Jucker, Smith and Lüdge 2003) because situations in which we come across concepts that do not fit the grid provided by the lexicon are extremely frequent. In such cases we use an existing cell in the grid in a more flexible manner. A specific semantic category and its associated lexical item are temporarily modified and extended. The extension of a linguistic

expression is indicated by a special marker in order to avoid misunderstandings. To refer to such markers, Lakoff (1972) introduced the term *hedge*. Most authors consider them to be mitigators (e.g., Caffi 2007), but since they modify the truth value of a proposition, it is debatable whether they are mitigators in the strict sense. Their function is primarily semantic and only indirectly interpersonal: Using an expression marked as vague has the side-effect of reducing the speaker's commitment to the truth of the propositional content.

In German publications on pragmatics, one finds – besides *Abschwächung* 'mitigation, attenuation' – the term *Abtönung* 'downtoning', the latter traditionally referring to the semantic and pragmatic effects of German modal particles, such as *ja*, *doch*, and *denn*² (see Weydt 1969). Although the two notions overlap in some areas (e.g., in the pragmatic use of diminutives) and sometimes have been treated as similar (e.g., Brown and Levinson 1987: 147), a clear distinction seems useful (see Weydt 2003; Waltereit 2006: 186–189). *Abschwächung* 'mitigation, attenuation' is a scalar strategy, which reduces speaker or hearer commitment to the speech act without modifying its type, whereas *Abtönung*, as a digital strategy, modifies the basic features of a speech act (see Waltereit 2006: 188, 189). For instance, if used in a statement, such as in German *Die Malerei war ja immer schon sein Hobby* 'Painting has always been his hobby', the particle *ja* indicates that a basic felicity condition of statements, namely that the propositional content should be new to the addressee, has been invalidated (see Waltereit 2006: 52, 73). Occasionally, *Abtönung* may imply a reduction (or also a reinforcement) of the illocutionary force, but this is a mere side-effect.

The term *discourse marker* (see Schiffrin 1987) has been applied to mitigation devices, to downtoning particles, to elements signalling self-corrections or relationship between clauses and to elements indicating utterance structure. Since there are conflicting definitions of the concept (see Hansen 1998: 4), the overlaps with mitigation can be more or less extensive for different authors. Initially, great importance was placed on the notion of the particle: Discourse markers were seen as words that do not take inflections. Later definitions assumed a discourse-functional approach, which treated some mitigation devices, such as parenthetical verbs, as discourse markers (cf. Stenström 1994: 59).

3. Classification of mitigation devices

The most prominent classification proposals in the literature are concerned with the scope of the mitigation devices. Lakoff's (1972) original concept of 'hedge'³ refers to markers of intentional vagueness applied to single expressions. It was initially a semantic concept with no direct interpersonal relevance, but its meaning was very soon extended from the relation between referring term and referent to the relation between speaker and utterance (see Caffi 2001: 47).

The first step in this process was to involve the indication of the illocution. Lakoff (1972: 213), observing that hedges may act on performatives, introduced the concept of ‘hedged performative’. But it was not until Fraser (1975) that the concept was fully developed. According to Fraser (1975: 187, 188), a hedged performative contains a modal or a semi-modal. A hedged performative counts as the performance of the illocutionary act denoted by the performative verb, although the meaning of, for example, English *I must advise* is not identical to the meaning of English *I advise*, since the first clause states that the speaker has the obligation to advise, whereas the second one states that the speaker is in fact advising. This leads Brown and Levinson (1978) to include among hedges not only expressions that modify the degree of category membership but also those that modify commitment to the truth of a proposition. Their proposal was taken up by Prince, Frader and Bosk (1982: 85), who distinguish two types of fuzziness and hence two types of mitigation devices: “fuzziness within the propositional content proper” and “fuzziness in the relationship between the propositional content and the speaker, that is, in the speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition conveyed.” The former category of mitigators is called *approximators* and comprises *adaptors* (markers that adapt an existing term to a new concept such as English *sort of*) and *rounders* (imprecision markers such as English *approximately* used in connection with measurements). The second category is referred to as *shields* and is further subdivided into *plausibility shields* (expressing doubt) and *attribution shields* (attributing a belief to someone other than the speaker). Similar classifications are proposed by Hübler (1983), who distinguishes between *understatements* (producing fuzziness within the propositional content) and *hedges* (reducing speaker commitment), and by Diewald (2006: 307), who suggests a distinction between hedges that are *characterizing* and those that are *perspectivizing*.

The distinctions of Prince, Frader and Bosk (1982) and Hübler (1983) are further developed and expanded by Caffi (1999, 2001, 2007). In her framework of mitigation devices she distinguishes between *bushes*, *hedges*, and *shields*. These three types of devices can both mitigate directive acts such as requests and orders – in this case, Caffi (2007: 226–242) speaks of *lenitive mitigation* – and representative acts such as statements – in that case, Caffi (2007: 242–255) speaks of *tempering mitigation*. Bushes correspond to Prince, Frader and Bosk’s (1982) approximators and operate on the propositional content by making referring terms or predicates less precise. Hedges, in her terminology, cover both speaker commitment and indication of illocutionary force. As such, they subsume Prince, Frader and Bosk’s (1982) plausibility shields and Fraser’s (1975) hedged performatives. Caffi’s shields are only partially comparable to Prince, Frader and Bosk’s (1982) attribution shields. She proposes the following types: *deictic*, *quotational*, and *topical* shields. Deictic shields shift one of the deictic reference points of the utterance (*ego*, *hic*, *nunc*) and can be of several subtypes, depending on the shifted reference point. For example, an *actantial* shield is based on the *ego* and is typically

represented by utterances ascribed to a source other than the actual speaker (e.g., Spanish *dicen* ‘they say’) or by impersonal or passive constructions where the author is deleted (e.g., Italian *c’è scritto* ‘it is written’). A *narrativization* shield involves the *nunc* and describes present events or state of affairs as if they had happened in the past (e.g., English *I wanted to ask*). Other shields are non-deictic. In *quotational shields* the speaker introduces a meta-level with expressions such as English *so to speak* or French *disons* ‘let’s say’ and distances him- or herself from what he or she is saying. The suspension of the literal meaning implies that the speaker’s commitment is suspended too. With a *topical shield*, the speaker backgrounds an embarrassing, painful or delicate topic; either by making a strategic digression (for instance, with the help of expressions such as English *by the way* or *incidentally*) or by providing a strategic example.

Taxonomic criteria other than scope, although equally interesting, have received less attention. Brown and Levinson (1978: 169–176, 1987: 164–171) suggest that hedges should be considered markers indicating that the speaker is not fully adhering to one of Grice’s (1975, 1978) maxims. Their account of hedges is organized according to this criterion, i.e., they discuss hedges on quantity, on quality, on relevance, and on manner.

Hyland’s (1998) analysis of hedging in written academic discourse is based on a hierarchical model in which hedges are related to the fundamental components of (written) verbal interaction, i.e., writer, reader, and content. *Content-oriented* hedges operate on the relationship between the propositional content and its referent, whereas *reader-oriented* hedges take into account the possible effects of the proposition on the reader’s attitude (see Hyland 1998: 156). The former group is further divided into *accuracy-oriented* hedges (*attribute-type* or *reliability-type*) and *writer-oriented* hedges. Writer-oriented hedges “aim to shield the writer from the possible consequences of negatability by limiting personal commitment” (Hyland 1998: 170).

The type of speech act in which a mitigation device regularly occurs represents a further criterion. It is tentatively explored by Caffi (1999: 886), who mentions *illocution-bound* and *illocution-free* mitigators. In Caffi (2007), however, this distinction is not present any more. In the case of mitigators specialized for a certain illocution, it is convenient to treat mitigation not as superficially adjoined to an independently indicated illocution, but as closely connected to or even identical with it (see Sbisà 2001). For example, an adverb such as English *please* downgrades the force of the request and at the same time characterizes the act as a request (see Blum-Kulka 1985; House 1989). Moreover, in the case of indirect speech acts, illocution-bound mitigators help to recognize the illocution actually intended by the speaker (cf. Schneider 2007: 151–156).

4. Principal mitigation devices

While some devices are specialized for mitigation, others have (or had) meanings that, in certain contexts and under certain circumstances, may assume a mitigating interpretation as a secondary effect. This phenomenon explains the quantity and heterogeneity of these devices.

From an etymological point of view, many expressions that nowadays are used as mitigators originally had meanings not necessarily related to mitigation. This is true for some adverbs, for example, English *perhaps*, German *vielleicht*, Italian *forse* and Spanish *quizás* or *quizá*, all meaning ‘perhaps’. The original meaning of these adverbs (or of their parts) has been lost in the course of the diachronic development. For example, German *vielleicht* originates from a Middle High German compound of *vil* ‘much, many, very’ and *lîhte* ‘light, easy’. However, in many other cases, the mitigating meaning and the original meaning exist side by side today, as in the case of English *please*, which can be both a mitigator and a verb, French *peut-être* ‘perhaps’ and *peut être* ‘can be’, French *s’il vous plaît* ‘please’ and *s’il vous plaît* ‘if you like it’, German *wohl* ‘probably’ and *wohl* ‘well’, Italian *chissà* ‘perhaps’ and *chi sa* ‘who knows’. The coexistence of meanings is even more evident in the case of strategies such as deictic shifting (e.g., English *I wanted to ask* can mean ‘I want to ask’ or even ‘I ask’, as well as ‘I wanted to ask’), the use of diminutives (see Example 3 below), or the use of the conditional form in performative clauses (see Example 1 below).

Although historical development regularly entails a shift from the non-mitigating to the mitigating function, from a synchronic point of view it can be difficult to establish which of the two coexisting functions is the primary one. Nobody would deny that the primary meaning of the conditional form in French is the expression of conditionality, but this is not the case in Example (1), taken from text FPUBDL03 of the C-ORAL-ROM-Corpus (see Cresti and Moneglia 2005):

- (1) EMA: [...] *je dirais que la partie est pratiquement gagnée* [...]
 I say-COND.1SG that the match is practically won
 ‘I would say that the match is practically won’

In the verbal interaction from which the example is taken there is no ‘if’ on which French *je dirais* ‘I would say’ depends. In fact, in performative clauses, the conditional form primarily mitigates the performative and only exceptionally expresses conditionality.

Proceeding from narrow scope to wide scope, the first mitigators we want to mention in this overview are those that operate on single expressions. For instance, English *sort of* or French *une espèce de* ‘a form of’ add fuzziness to the relation between a noun phrase and its referent. Other expressions, for example, French *un peu*, German *ein wenig*, Italian *un po’*, Spanish *poco*, all meaning ‘a bit’, modify the relation between an adjective or a verb and its referent. The French parentheti-

cal clause *disons* ‘let’s say’ and its Italian and Spanish equivalents may also operate on single expressions, such as noun phrases, adjectives or verbs, and affect their appropriateness or precision. In Example (2), taken from Blanche-Benveniste, Rouget and Sabio (2002: 111), French *disons* ‘let’s say’ indicates that *données culturelles* ‘cultural data’ is not deemed a completely appropriate formulation by the speaker:

- (2) L1 [...] *ça faisait partie de ces – disons données culturelles* [...]

that made part of these say-IMP.1PL data cultural

‘That was part of these, let’s say, cultural data’

This is, however, only one of several scopes and functions of French *disons* ‘let’s say’ and its Italian and Spanish equivalents (see Hölker 2003; Schneider 2007: 111–114, 153; Schneider 2010). Italian and Spanish diminutive suffixes not only intervene on the semantic level, but also assume an interpersonal function by reducing the dimension and importance of a referent, thus indirectly mitigating its possibly negative meaning for the participants (cf. Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi 1994; Caffi 2007: 99–102). This is evident in Example (3):

- (3) *Está un poquito gordito.*

is a bit-DIM fat-DIM

‘He/she is a bit fat’

In the Chilean Spanish example (3), taken from Puga Larraín (1997: 100), the blatantly negative meaning of the Spanish adjective *gordo* ‘fat’ is mitigated in three ways: by *un poco* ‘a bit’, by the diminutive suffix applied to *poco* and by the diminutive suffix applied to the adjective itself.

The devices operating on single expressions modify the truth value of their propositions. They thus act on the semantic level, but also have an indirect impact on the interpersonal level. In fact, expressions that are marked as being vague or not completely corresponding to a concept, or expressions whose meanings are somehow minimized, have the side-effect of reducing the participants’ involvement.

Although performative clauses are cited as the most obvious means for indicating the illocutionary force of a speech act (cf. Yule 1996: 49), it has been shown that in everyday speech performative clauses are less common than expected and, if they occur, are mostly mitigated. Hedged performatives may appear as subordinate clauses and as parenthetical clauses (see Schneider, in press). Several types of mitigation devices are possible: a modal (e.g., Italian *devo dire* ‘I must say’), a semi-modal (e.g., English *I have (got) to admit*) a conditional suffix (see Example [1] above), a shift in person deixis from ‘I’ to ‘we’ (e.g., Spanish *diríamos* ‘we would say’), or a shift in temporal deixis (e.g., English *I wanted to ask*). Frequently these devices do not occur in isolation but are combined, as for instance in Spanish *diríamos* ‘we would say’, which makes use of conditionality in combination with a shift in person deixis.

An important group of devices operates directly on the speaker's or interlocutor's commitment to the speech act. Adverbs such as English *perhaps, maybe, probably, please* and parenthetical clauses such as English *I think, I believe, I suppose, I imagine* are most commonly cited in the literature. The speaker may also mitigate the commitment with parenthetical English *I don't know* and its equivalents in other languages (see Schneider 2007: 122–125). Especially in English, tag questions constitute another possibility for the speaker to reduce his or her commitment (and to involve the interlocutor). Indirect speech acts also have a mitigating effect, for example, when requests are formulated as questions.

Frequently, however, the commitment to the speech act is reduced in an indirect manner. For instance, the speaker may say that the addressee can see a state of affairs (e.g., French *tu vois* 'you see'), describe the source of information (e.g., Italian *c'è scritto* 'it is written', Spanish *dicen* 'they say'), or express the speaker's impression of a state of affairs (e.g., French *me semble-t-il* 'it seems to me'). All these mitigation devices are called *evidentials*. They do not directly refer to the speaker's belief or absence of knowledge but to the evidential circumstances of his or her statement. In many cases, they go along with a shift in person deixis, which either divides responsibility between the speaker and interlocutor or removes it from the speaker entirely. Another strategy of indirect mitigation is to attribute a certain knowledge to the addressee by using expressions such as English *you know* (see Östman 1981; Holmes 1986), French *tu sais* or *vous savez* (Hölker 1988: 74, 75). By saying that the addressee knows, the speaker divides responsibility for what he or she is stating. Often, however, in reality the addressee does not know and the speaker only implies that the addressee should know and that it actually should not be necessary to draw the addressee's attention to a particular point. In other words, *you know* may serve as a rhetorical device aimed at pre-empting possible objections by the interlocutor (cf. Hübler 1983: 148; Bazzanella 1995: 253, 254).

5. Concluding remarks and reading suggestions

The preceding sections have evidenced that mitigation is a phenomenon virtually omnipresent in verbal interaction that permeates several, if not all, levels of linguistic analysis. An effective management of interpersonal relations is hardly imaginable without the continuous aid of the expressions and linguistic devices illustrated in the review in the preceding section.

The present chapter can only provide a basic introduction to mitigation. In what follows, some suggestions for further readings are given. Markkanen and Schröder (1997), Clemen (1997), and Schröder and Zimmer (1997) provide concise overviews of the research area complete with references to relevant sources. More recent overviews are found in Kaltenböck, Mihatsch and Schneider (in press) and

Fraser (in press). Caffi (1999) contains a useful and succinct summary of the scope of mitigation. Caffi (2007), although based exclusively on Italian examples, represents the most complete account of mitigation. An overview of parenthetical clauses which function as mitigators, with examples from Romance languages, can be found in Schneider (2007). Borillo (2004) and Haillet (2004) provide interesting insights into recent French approaches to mitigation. Lakoff (1972) and Fraser (1975, 1980) remain fundamental insofar as they illustrate the progressive expansion of the notions of ‘hedging’ and ‘mitigation’. Prince, Frader and Bosk (1982) document an important stage in the debate regarding the scopes of mitigation devices. Haverkate (1992) contains the first account of deixis as a mitigation strategy.

Since Lakoff (1972), a lot of theoretical and empirical work has been done and our knowledge about the mechanisms of mitigation has reached a remarkable stage, a fact most impressively proven by Caffi’s (2007) account. Only now, however, are we starting to take into consideration the diachronic perspective and to examine how mitigation shaped verbal interaction in older stages of language and how the various devices came into being and evolved.

Notes

1. According to Kaltenböck (2006) and Schneider (2007: 88), the frequency of mitigating parenthetical clauses is higher in dialogues than in monologues.
2. While *ja* means ‘yes’, *doch* means ‘however, still’, and *denn* means ‘because’ in their full semantic form, their translation as modal particles is difficult and sometimes even impossible.
3. Weinreich (1963: 130) already writes: “For every language, finally, stock must be taken of all meta-linguistic operators such as English *true, real, so-called, strictly speaking*, German *eigentlich*, and the most powerful extrapolator of all – *like* – which function as instructions for the loose or strict interpretation of designata.”

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11. Respect and deference

Michael Haugh

Abstract

This chapter first focuses on how respect and deference have been invoked in pragmatics in the context of studies of politeness and social deixis, and the limitations of previous frameworks for understanding these notions. Current conceptualisations of deference and respect are then reconsidered in light of both the seminal work of Shils (1982) and Goffman (1956) on deference, as well as more recent work on respect. It is then proposed that greater attention be paid to evaluations of deference and respect in interaction, and their conceptualisations, to complement the overwhelming focus on forms in research to date. The chapter concludes by exploring the ways in which deference and respect can become the subject of discursive dispute, thereby highlighting a potentially rich area for further research.

1. Introduction

The notions of respect and deference have remained intimately linked in many of the studies in interpersonal linguistic research to date, particularly in the contexts of politeness, social deixis, and honorifics research. Deference has been, for the most part, defined as the expression of respect for and social distance from people of higher status, where status is assumed to be fixed prior to the relationship (Cutting 2002: 52; Fraser 2005: 68; Fraser and Nolen 1981: 97; Green 1996: 153; Hwang 1990: 42; cf. Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 178). Respect, on the other hand, has remained relatively undefined in the literature, although it is often linked to deference. The overlap between these two notions in pragmatics can be traced back to circularity in the commonsense understandings of *respect* and *deference*. For instance, relevant senses of *respect* are defined as follows in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

Respect (n):

1. *Deferential* regard or esteem felt or shown towards a person or thing.
2. The condition or state of being esteemed or honoured. (OED Online 1989, emphasis added)

From this entry we can see the intuitive understanding of *respect* is that it involves showing or feeling deference, esteem or honour towards others, among other things. A key dimension of *respect*, then, is showing *deference* towards others.¹ The relevant senses of *deference* are defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as follows:

Deference (n):

1. Submission to the acknowledged superior claims, skill, judgement, or other qualities, of another.
2. Courteous regard such as is rendered to a superior, or to one whom *respect* is due. (OED Online 1989, emphasis added)

In other words, *deference* is commonly understood as submitting to or showing regard to a superior as well as those who deserve *respect*. It follows that a key presumption underlying *deference* is that some persons are more highly ranked on some kind of hierarchical scale than others. In theorizing respect and deference in pragmatics, then, commonsense understandings of *respect* and *deference* have arguably proved crucial.

In earlier work, Shils (1982) and his student Goffman (1956), building on such commonsense understandings, proposed much more nuanced understandings of deference (and respect). However, in subsequently conflating deference and respect with both politeness (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987), and with particular linguistic forms under the umbrella of social deixis (Brown and Levinson 1979; Levinson 1979, 2004), not only have important distinctions been obscured, the important theoretical insights of Goffman and Shils have been largely lost. In this chapter, it is argued that such work be revisited. In doing so a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which these notions are conceptualised and manifested in interpersonal interactions and both within and across sociocultural groups can be achieved.

The chapter begins by reviewing how respect and deference have been invoked in pragmatics as particular linguistic forms within studies of politeness and social deixis (Section 2). It is proposed that the greater attention be paid to the emergence of deference and respect in interactions, to complement the traditional focus on particular forms in much of the literature. In Section 3, the notions of deference and respect are then reconsidered in light of both the seminal work of Shils (1982) and Goffman (1956) on deference, as well as more recent work on respect (Colwell 2007; Haugh 2004; Langdon 2007). In Section 4, the chapter concludes by exploring from a metapragmatic perspective the ways in which evaluations and conceptualisations of deference and respect can themselves become the subject of discursive dispute, thereby highlighting a potentially rich area for further research.

2. Respect and deference in linguistic pragmatics

Respect and deference have been associated for the most part in pragmatics with certain linguistic forms, in particular, honorifics, terms of address, T/V personal pronouns and special deference or respect vocabulary. The study of these deference and respect forms has come under the umbrella of either studies of politeness or social deixis.

2.1. Respect and deference as politeness

The move towards linking respect and deference with politeness can be traced back to Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), who, drawing from Goffman's (1955) work on face as well as Durkheim's distinction between positive and negative rites (partially via Goffman's [1956] distinction between presentational and avoidance rituals), re-conceptualised Goffman's (1956) broader notion of deference as politeness.² The term deference was reserved by Brown and Levinson (1987: 178–187) for a specific kind of negative politeness strategy (Strategy 5: Give deference). According to Brown and Levinson, deference involves conveying that the hearer is of a higher social status than the speaker, either by the speaker humbling and abasing him/herself, or raising up the hearer (1987: 178), a move largely consistent with the more commonsense notion of *deference*. The social distancing function of reciprocal deference was framed as “mutual respect based on a higher D [social distance] value”, but this was argued to be parasitic on the “asymmetrical use of deference to convey an asymmetrical social ranking” (1987: 178). They then proposed that since honorifics, including speech levels in Japanese, Korean, and Javanese, (formal) titles (e.g., *Professor*), and the T/V distinction in many European languages for second-person singular pronouns, were “direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants, or between participants or persons or things referred to in the communicative event” (1987: 179), they could be regarded as instances of this negative politeness strategy. Other examples of deference classified as a negative politeness strategy by Brown and Levinson (1987) included generalised terms of address for strangers (such as kinship terms in Tzeltal or *sir, madam* in English) (1987: 182), expressions of modesty or self-effacement (e.g., *It's not much I'm afraid*) (1987:185), and hesitant prosody and high pitch (1987: 187). In doing so, Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) treated deference as an instance of concern for the addressee's negative face, namely, the want to be unimpeded. They also argued that such deferential forms were not “automatic reflexes or signals of predetermined social standing” but instead were “typically *strategically* used to soften FTAs, by indicating the absence of risk to the addressee” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 182, original emphasis).

The notion of deference has also been utilised in Scollon and Scollon's (2001) reworking of Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Here, deference is used to refer to politeness which signals (social) distance and mutual independence between status equals, that is, where “participants are considered to be equals or near equals but treat each other at a distance” (2001: 54), while the term “hierarchical politeness” is used to refer to instances where “participants recognise and respect the social differences that place one in a superordinate position and the other in a subordinate position” (2001: 55). In other words, Scollon and Scollon's (2001) notion of deference is less closely linked to the commonsense notion, as they draw a clear distinction between the status indexing and distancing functions of deference.

Reference to deference in the context of studies of politeness has been made in a number of subsequent studies of particular languages or language varieties, although some have vacillated between a notion of deference as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) and that defined by Scollon and Scollon (2001).³ García (1992, 1993) and Placencia (1996), for instance, have argued that deference constitutes an important element of politeness in Peruvian and Venezuelan, and Ecuadorian Spanish respectively (as opposed to other varieties of Spanish where it is less salient according to Márquez Reiter and Placencia 2005). The use of deference and respect expressions as politeness strategies has also been noted in studies of refusals in Mexican Spanish (Félix-Brasdefer 2006), as well as forms of address in 18th century English letters (Fitzmaurice 2002), and in the Swedish parliament (Ilie 2005).

However, the move to subsume deference under the broader framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, in particular, treating it as a strategic means of decreasing imposition on the addressee, has been criticised. There have been, for instance, a number of scholars who have argued that deference and politeness should be treated as distinct, albeit overlapping, concepts (Agha 1993: 135; Cutting 2002: 52; Fraser 2005: 68–69; Fraser and Nolen 1981; Hwang 1990). Hwang (1990), for instance, argues that it is possible to distinguish between politeness, defined as a linguistic strategy used by the speaker to remove conflicts of interest and promote cooperation (1990: 48), and deference, defined as “a social fact reflecting the relative statuses of the participants on a hierarchical social dimension” (1990: 42). Hwang (1990) gives the following four variations of a request that the addressee put an item away to illustrate how politeness and deference forms do not necessarily co-occur in Korean (Hon = honorific; Pol = polite, Def = deferential).

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| (1) <i>apenim, ikess com chiwe cwu-si-kessupnikka?</i> | +Pol +Def |
| Father(Hon) this please put-away will-you-for-me(Hon) | |
| ‘Father, would you please put this away for me?’ | |
| (2) <i>apenim, ikess chiwu-sipsio</i> | –Pol +Def |
| Father(Hon) this put-away(Hon) | |
| ‘Father, put this away’ | |
| (3) <i>Inswu-ya, ikess com chiwe chwullay?</i> | +Pol –Def |
| Inswu this please put-away will-you-for-me | |
| ‘ <i>Inswu</i> , will you put this away for me?’ | |
| (4) <i>Inswu-ya, ikess chiwe-la</i> | –Pol –Def |
| Inswu this put away | |
| ‘ <i>Inswu</i> , put this away’ (adapted from Hwang 1990: 48) | |

According to Hwang (1990), Example (1) can be classified as both deferential, due to the presence of a deferential address term (*apenim*) and honorific infix (*-si*), and

polite, due to the framing of the request as a (conventionally) indirect “whimperative” and the inclusion of a politeness marker (*com*), while Example (4) can be categorised as neither deferential, due to the lowering address term suffix (*-ya*) and lowering imperative form suffix (*-la*), nor polite, due to the request being framed with an imperative form. Example (2), however, illustrates how a request may be classified as deferential, due to the presence of a deferential address term (*apenim*) and deferential imperative form suffix (*-sipsio*), but not polite as the request is in the imperative form. Example (3), on the other hand, is treated as an instance of a request which is polite, as it is framed as a (conventionally) indirect “whimperative” co-occurring with the politeness marker *com* (‘please’), but non-deferential since no honorific morphemes are present. It is worth noting, however, that such classifications (see also Fraser 2005: 69) ultimately rest on categorising particular forms as polite or deferential, and thus whether such utterances would be evaluated as *polite* or *deferential* or otherwise in actual interactions by participants is a question which remains largely unanswered by such work.

Others have argued that deference cannot always be treated as a kind of politeness strategy that redresses imposition on the addressee as claimed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Instead, they have suggested that deference and respect, particularly that expressed via honorifics or terms of address, are more properly treated as reflections of an underlying social order and societal interdependence (Gu 1990; Matsumoto 1988, 1989; Ide 1989; cf. Pizziconi 2003). Such a perspective is consonant with the above conceptualisation of deference as something “given unexceptionally as an automatic acknowledgment of relative social status” (Grundy 2008: 207). It is worth noting, however, that the claim that honorifics are necessarily deployed according to an *a priori* or fixed status has since been challenged by a number of scholars working with discourse-level data in Japanese (Cook 2006; Okamoto 1999; Usami 2002) and Korean (Strauss and Eun 2005). Furthermore, in a detailed critique of Matsumoto’s (1988, 1989) discussion of the formulaic greeting expression *yoroshiku onegaishimasu* (literally ‘please treat me favourably/take care of me’), for instance, Pizziconi (2003) rejects the claim that it can be glossed as a deferent imposition. Instead, she argues that the expression involves “a highly conventionalised and ritualistic negotiation of the role of benefactor/patron/superior etc. in a given situation” (Pizziconi 2003: 1485), an analysis which is arguably consistent with the claim that politeness in Japanese (and arguably other East Asian languages) involves the interactionally achieved ‘place’ of the interactants (Haugh 2005, 2007).

Another potential problem with subsuming deference under Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory is that deference expressions do not even always involve politeness. Honorific speech levels may be used to signify the speaker’s dignity or elegance (Ide 2005, forthcoming), or to express sarcasm and anger (Haugh 2007: 668–669; Okamoto 2002; Pizziconi 2003: 1492), for instance. In Example (5), Kobo-chan’s father indirectly criticises his mother’s cooking, to

which she responds with deferential forms that do not give rise to politeness but rather indicate her irritation.

(5) (Kobo-chan's father, mother and grandmother are eating dinner together)⁴

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|-----|
| 1 | Father: | <i>Gochisō-sama.</i>
feast-Hon
'Thanks for dinner' | [*] |
| 2 | Grandmother: | <i>Ara, mō tabe-nai no?</i>
oh longer eat-Neg M
'Oh, you're not eating any more?' | [0] |
| 3 | F: | <i>Kō-īu abura-kkoi ryōri wa su-kan.</i>
this kind of oil-thick food Cont like-Neg
'I don't like this kind of oily food' | [0] |
| 4 | G: ((taking the dish away)) | <i>Ara sō desu ka. Suimasen-deshi-ta.</i>
oh that way Cop(Pol) Q excuse me-Pol-Past
'Oh, is that right? [Well] sorry [then]' | [+] |
| 5 | F: ((watching his mother wash the dishes noisily)) | <i>Okot-ta?</i>
angry-Past
'Are you angry?' | [0] |
| 6 | G: | <i>Betsuni okocchai-ma-sen yo.</i>
not particularly angry-Pol-Neg M
'I'm not particularly angry' (Ueda 1998: 117) | [+] |

In response to the grandmother's inquiry whether Kobo-chan's father will have more to eat (line 2), the father claims the meal was too oily thereby implying he will not (line 3). It is evident that the grandmother interprets this as a criticism from her subsequent response. Through a marked up-shift to addressee honorifics, for instance, in a relationship where plain addressee forms are the unmarked norm, the grandmother enacts a place where she ostensibly has a lower status than Kobo-chan's father (line 4). In other words, through speech-level upshift, a distant and thus cold and angry tone is invoked by the grandmother, further evidence of which can be seen in the subsequent uptake by the father when he asks whether she is angry (line 5). In expressing her anger through a deferential form, she arguably implies that she regards the father's comment as offensive (cf. Haugh 2007: 669).

It would appear, then, that the relationship between deference and respect (forms), on the one hand, and politeness, on the other, is much more nuanced than allowed by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their approach to politeness, in that while such forms can give rise to politeness in many instances, they are not necessarily always associated with politeness. The place of honorifics and other deference and respect forms in theorizing about politeness arguably remains open to further debate, particularly in light of the move in politeness research towards

treating politeness (and impoliteness) as arising from evaluations rather than particular forms in interaction (see the chapters on politeness and impoliteness by Sifianou, Watts, Okamoto and Bousfield, this volume)

2.2. Respect and deference as social deixis

As previously noted, the study of deference and respect in pragmatics has also come under the umbrella of studies of social deixis (Brown and Levinson 1979; Cook 1998; Levinson 1979, 1983, 2004; Wetzel 1988). Social deixis is broadly defined as “the codification of the social status of the speaker, the addressee, or a third person or entity referred to, as well as the social relationships holding between them” (Huang 2007: 163). It encompasses four broad categories:

1. Referent honorifics: forms that show *respect* towards the referent
2. Addressee honorifics: forms that show *deference* towards the addressee
3. Bystander honorifics: forms that signify *respect* towards a bystander
4. Formality levels: forms that indicate the relation between the participants and the speech setting or event (Huang 2007: 164–165, emphasis added)

Linguistic forms treated as instances of social deixis include forms of address (e.g., title + surname; generalised forms of address such as *ayi* ‘aunty’ in Chinese), the T/V pronominal distinction (Brown and Gilman 1960), certain honorific affixes, clitics and particles in languages such as Japanese and Korean (as discussed above), the indexing of taboo addressees through certain forms found in ‘mother-in-law languages’ in some Australian Aboriginal languages such as Dyirbal (Dixon 1972), and respect and deferential vocabulary (e.g., respect vocabulary in Samoan; Duranti 1992).

However, there are a number of problems that arise from framing research into deference and respect within the bounds of social deixis. First, not all instances of social deixis give rise to respect or deference. Manning (2001), for instance, claims that the use of the nominal deictic *acw* (‘that place over there’) in Modern Northern Welsh can connote “some perduring, noncontingent relationship of ‘belonging to’, one, but not both, of the interlocutors” in certain situations (2001: 84). Moreover, since the focus in studies of social deixis is on linguistic forms, the ways in which they give rise (or not) to evaluations of respect or deference has rarely been touched upon in pragmatics. In other words, the terms deference and respect themselves are not fully defined in such work (except by implicit appeals to common-sense understandings of *deference* and *respect*), yet such terms are used as the basis of classifying different types of social deixis.

In the neighbouring discipline of linguistic anthropology, important work on the situated nature of honorifics and deference has been carried out. Cook (1998: 89), for instance, argues that “while honorifics are grammatical encodings of the pragmatic value of deference, when they are used in social contexts they index various shades

of situational meaning". In some contexts, the honorific "points to some aspect independently known" (Cook 1998: 89), and thus is presumptive in nature (Grundy 2008: 207). In other situations, the honorific may be used to "create some contextual aspect by picking out the referent" (Cook 1998: 89), and thus has a creative function where it is "used to bring a context into being" (Grundy 2008: 207). In other words, while honorifics and other deferential/respect forms may carry prototypical meanings of "distancing" or "respect", as Pizziconi (2003: 1490) suggests, their meanings are "actualized differently in different contexts" (see also Agha 1993, 1994; Cook 1998; Okamoto 1999, this volume). Indeed, as Strauss and Eun (2005) have recently argued, the use of such forms may be closely related to the "degree of relative sharedness of domains of experience and cognition between and among interlocutors" (2005: 619) rather than power or status differentials (2005: 646). It appears, then, that such forms involve more than simply the expression of respect or deference. In the following section, it is thus argued that the conceptualisations of respect and deference themselves need to be revisited in linguistic pragmatics.

3. Interactional and social perspectives on respect and deference

A review of extant literature in pragmatics has indicated that deference has been mostly conceptualised as a means of (un)reflexively indexing hierarchical status or social distance, while the concept of respect has largely been used without definition, as if its meaning were transparent. The notions have been variously applied to label particular linguistic forms, in theories of politeness, and to classify different types of social deixis. The question arises, then, whether such usages are consistent or they mask important underlying distinctions, particularly as the analysis of evaluations of respect and deference relative to the interactional positioning of self (group) and/or other (group) either (1) relative to each other, (2) relative to another (group), or (3) relative to the situation has been relatively neglected thus far (cf. De Fina, this volume).

As previously noted, the notion of deference was co-opted by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) from Goffman's (1956) earlier work, who in turn drew from the work of his supervisor Edward Shils (1982). Yet while Goffman and Shils used commonsense understandings of *deference* as their starting point, as did Brown and Levinson, both Goffman and Shils expanded considerably upon this in their theorisation of interaction and society, albeit eventuating in quite different understandings of deference. In the case of Goffman's (1956) work on interactional ritual, his focus was on broadening the notion of deference to account for the (orderly) behaviour of individuals in *interaction*. He defined deference as "that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed *to* a recipient *of* this recipient, or of something which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension, or agent" (Goffman 1956: 477, original em-

phasis). Deference was thus grounded in interaction by Goffman in that he defined it as something which can only be granted by others through interpersonal rituals. Goffman (1956) also moved the notion of deference beyond the traditional focus on “the rituals of obeisance, submission, and propitiation that someone under authority gives to someone in authority” (1956: 478–479) to include symmetrical deference where interlocutors express trust, capacity-esteem, affection and belongingness for the other (1956: 479). In other words, deference may be asymmetrical (i.e., directed by a subordinate towards a superior) or symmetrical (i.e., status or position independent).

Goffman (1956: 489) contrasted deference with the notion of demeanour, which referred to “that element of the individual’s ceremonial behaviour [...] which serves to express to those in his [sic] immediate presence that he is a person of certain desirable or undesirable qualities”. But in claiming that “an act through which the individual gives or withholds deference to others typically provides means by which he expresses the fact that he is a well or badly demeaned individual” (1956: 491), Goffman argued that to understand deference one needs to consider demeanour as well, since the actions to which they refer may overlap. In other words, the study of deference inevitably involves consideration of self-presentational concerns. Deferential behaviour was also contrasted with “profanation of rituals”, ranging from misperceptions arising in intergroup contact (1956: 493), playful or “unserious profanation” (1956: 494), through to serious aggression or hostility (Goffman 1956: 493–495), topics which have only just now started receiving attention within the context of politeness research in pragmatics (Bousfield 2008, this volume; Bousfield and Locher 2008; Eelen 2001).

While Goffman (1956) focused primarily on deference in interpersonal interactions, he also acknowledged that “deference images tend to point to the wider society outside the interaction, to the place the individual has achieved in the hierarchy of this society” (1956: 492), and thus that the study of deference must involve broader social, as well as interactional, perspectives. The broader social grounding of deference was more explicitly developed in Shils’s (1982: 143) work where he defined it as “acts of appreciation or derogation” of the other person. These deference actions were in turn reflections of what Shils (1982) termed “deference entitlements”:

occupational role and accomplishment, wealth (including type of wealth), income and the mode of its acquisition, style of life, level of educational attainment, political or corporate power, proximity to persons or roles exercising political or corporate power, kinship connections, ethnicity, performance on behalf of the community or society in relation to external communities or societies, and the possession of ‘objective acknowledgements’ of deference such as titles or ranks. (Shils 1982: 145–146)

He argued that for “acts of appreciation” to be recognised as deference actions, both cognitive beliefs about deference entitlements and evaluations of the extent to

which the actions indicate the said person has those deference entitlements have to be considered (Shils 1982: xix). Anticipating more recent work in discursive and postmodern evaluations of politeness as inherently argumentative and variable (Eelen 2001; Locher and Watts 2005; Mills 2003; Watts 2003), then, Shils (1982) argued against the view that deference entitlements could be in any way objectively granted:

There is a tendency in many societies to regard the deference system as something objective, as *sui generis*, as existing outside the judging persons and independently of their own evaluations and appreciations of persons and strata. This tendency to 'objectivize' the distribution of deference is in part a product of the perception of the deference judgments of other persons in one's own society. But it also represents a tendency to believe in the 'objectivity', the 'givenness' of deference stratification which is a product of a tendency to believe that in addition to our own tastes and dispositions there is a realm of normative being which exists independently of those tastes and values that deference judgments could not be regarded as giving rise to. (Shils 1982: 165)

In undertaking research about deference, Shils suggested that the researcher needs to focus on the ways in which cognitive beliefs about, and evaluations of, deference vary between individuals and across social strata rather than presuming homogeneity across interpersonal interactions. Shils also argued that deference goes beyond the deployment of particular linguistic forms to encompass what he termed "attenuated deference" in the form of "tone of speech, demeanour, precedence of speaking, frequency and mode of contradiction" and the like (1982: 158).

Thus, whether one adopts Goffman's (1956) very broad conceptualisation of asymmetrical and symmetrical deference, or Shils's (1982: 144) more tightly circumscribed notion of deference as tied to "attribution[s] of superiority or inferiority" and thus only asymmetrical, it is apparent that research about deference needs to move beyond the study of particular linguistic forms, and should be grounded in both the contingent and dynamic behaviour of individuals in interaction as well as in the broader societal milieu in which such evaluations are made.

Such insights into the analysis of deference can be applied to studies of respect, where, as previously noted, important nuances in the conceptualisation of respect itself have been relatively neglected. Recent work, for instance, suggests that respect can be defined in at least four different ways by (American) English speakers.

1. Respect as social power.
2. Respect as social rules or norms (i.e., "being respectful because that is the proper and polite way to act").
3. Respect as caring.
4. Respect as equality and accepting differences. (Langdon 2007: 471)

Work in linguistic pragmatics thus far has tended to focus only on the second sense of respect, in framing it as primarily an issue of (im)politeness, while the first sense has generally come under studies of deference. The last two senses of re-

spect have been relatively neglected, yet are arguably just as important in interpersonal interactions as the first two and so deserve closer scrutiny. There thus remains considerable work in defining respect and differentiating it from the notion of deference.

It is also important to note that conceptualisations of respect (and deference) are likely to vary across sociocultural groups. Haugh (2004), for instance, has argued that the notion of respect in Japanese (*kei'i*), which he glosses as 'vertical respect', is closely associated with the "place" of interactants that is claimed, attributed or disputed in interaction (Haugh 2004, 2005, 2007), and so is more often than not expressed asymmetrically. Across Anglo-Englishes, in contrast, *respect* tends to be associated with leaving "space" for interactants (Goffman 1956: 481; cf. Haugh 2006: 23) as well as acknowledging a person's "value", although crucially "without making salient their respective positions in a social hierarchy" (Colwell 2007: 443; cf. also Lawrence-Lightfoot 2000), and so is more often than not expressed symmetrically. The relative emphasis placed on horizontal and vertical dimensions (Pérez Hernández 1999) in conceptualising respect thus varies.

In the next section, however, it is argued that conceptualisations and evaluations of deference and respect differ not only across languages and cultures, but are themselves the subject of discursive dispute within sociocultural groups and wider society.

4. Conclusion: Towards the metapragmatics of deference and respect

While evaluations of deference and respect arise through interpersonal interaction, they can also themselves become the focus in talk-in-interaction or broader discourses largely played out in the media. The ways in which people talk about deference and respect, or what we might term the *metapragmatics* of deference and respect, can arguably provide insight into the ways in which evaluations of deference and respect arise in interaction, as well as the ways in which such evaluations may be contested.

At the macro level, the lack of *respect* (often implicitly linked to *deference*) experienced in public interactions in various English-speaking societies has become a discourse unto itself (Billante and Saunders 2002; Field 2006; Lakoff 2005a, 2005b; McDowell 2007). The "Respect Action Plan" of the British New Labour Government, initiated by the previous Prime Minister Tony Blair, for instance, aims to support "respectful behaviour in schools, in sport and leisure activities and in the community" (Respect Task Force 2006: 36). At the heart of the conceptualisation of *respect* in this programme is the idea that it reflects allegedly shared social norms or rules, as evident from the foreword to the "Respect Action Plan" by Tony Blair:

There are still intractable problems with the behaviour of some individuals and families, behaviour which can make life a misery for others, particularly in the most disadvantaged communities.

What lies at the heart of this behaviour is a lack of respect for values that almost everyone in this country shares – consideration for others, a recognition that we all have responsibilities as well as rights, civility and good manners. (Respect Task Force 2006: 1)

Although it is implicitly asserted by Blair that everyone “knows” what constitutes respectful behaviour, McDowell (2007) argues that such statements mask deeper contestation of the notion of *respect*. While it is explicitly claimed that the “Respect Action Plan” is not about “knowing one’s place” or showing deference to those of higher status (Respect Task Force 2006: 3), for instance, the way in which *respect* is framed in various policy statements associated with the “Respect Action Plan” as “an automatic act of deferral to a superior authority or to particular standards of behaviour” links it implicitly with deferential behaviour (McDowell 2007: 284). The ambivalence surrounding the core concept underlying such a major social programme thus reflects the ways in which *respect* and *deference* can be contested or discursively disputed in discourse.

At the interactional level, we can also observe how norms of deference and respect can be explicitly oriented to by participants. In Example (6), from a conversation between three female friends in their thirties,⁵ Janet is talking about a friend who has sent her son to a private school in an attempt to get him “to do what he is told”.⁶

(6) ICE-Aus: S1A-048: 10:52

- 316 J: but it's just u:m (1.0) ↑la:ck of (0.3) respect
 317 for human beings. But (0.8) when you see what-
 318 (0.5) I mean I sa:w what they did to
 319 him when he was little=I felt they didn't
 320 have respect for him either?
 321 A: m::m=
 322 J: =cause I think if- if you sa:y you can't thi:s
 323 (0.6) there deserves a reason for it? (.) but
 324 they weren't- they were doing- (0.2) that's
 325 because I say ↑so (0.2) ty[pe stu]ff?
 326 A: [mm::m.]
 327 [°mm°]
 328 C: [ye:s] my mother used to do that too.
 329 J: ↑YE:ah=
 330 C: =Ha:te it ha:ted it.

Here Janet frames the school to which the son was sent (line 316), as well as his parents (line 320), as lacking respect for their son. This lack of respect arises, according to Janet because the boy's parents (and implicitly the school) did not give reasons when they stopped him doing certain activities (not defined here) (lines 322–324). She then categorises this exertion of power as something which is diffi-

cult for the boy to challenge (“because I say so type stuff”, line 325), thereby insinuating that this was unreasonable on their part. While Alice gives a more equivocal response in the form of slightly elongated *mm* (lines 321, 326–327), and thus her stance in relation to this claim of disrespect remains ambivalent, Cathy implicitly ratifies Janet’s claim that such behaviour is disrespectful and unreasonable, when she claims her own mother acted in a similar manner (to the behaviour of the parents described by Janet) (line 328), and then displays a negative assessment of it (line 330). As Hutchby (2008: 238) concludes in relation to discursive claims of impoliteness, not only the speaker, but also the recipient plays an important role in ratifying claims that certain behaviour is (dis)respectful. While Cathy ratifies Janet’s claim, in leaving her stance ambivalent, Alice leaves open the possibility that she does not necessarily agree. In this way, it becomes apparent that evaluations of respect (and deference) are not only claimed and ratified, but may also be open to discursive dispute in interaction.

In this brief analysis of the metapragmatics of deference and respect, then, it has become evident that the ways in which these notions are understood and practised is locally occasioned or situation-specific. To better understand the pragmatics of deference and respect, further investigation of the conceptualisation and expression of respect and deference across a broader range of settings in different cultures needs to be undertaken (Colwell 2007; Green and McKerrow 2007; Morand 1996; Silverman and Maxwell 1978). In other words, in order to better understand the inherent argumentativity and variability in evaluations of deference and respect, it is suggested that widening the lens to include metapragmatic perspectives across a broader range of *settings* may prove fruitful. While such an approach means we are unlikely to ever reach an all-encompassing definition of deference or respect, it is suggested here that it is only through a greater focus on the interactional achievement of converging and diverging conceptualisations and evaluations of deference and respect in different interpersonal settings that we will move the field beyond the current reification of commonsense understandings of *deference* and *respect*.

Notes

1. Furthermore, *respect* is indirectly related to *deference* through the notions of *esteem* and *honour* which are defined as “favourable opinion; regard; *respect*” and “high respect, esteem, or reverence, accorded to exalted worth or rank; *deferential* admiration or approbation” respectively (OED Online 1989, emphasis added).
2. Goffman’s (1956) other important notion of demeanour was, notably, not incorporated into Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, a move that has subsequently been critiqued by numerous scholars (see, for example, Chen 2001; Haugh and Hinze 2003; Haugh 2004; Ruhi 2006).
3. Félix-Brasdefer (2006), for example, frames his work using Scollon and Scollon’s (2001) notion of deference politeness, but nevertheless uses deference in Brown and Levinson’s

- (1987) sense when explicating the use of a “formal title”, namely *señor*, ‘sir’ (Félix-Brasdefer 2006: 2174).
4. The following symbols, adapted from Mimaki (1989: 39–40), are used to represent the respective speech levels: + = addressee honorific; * = unmarked; 0 = plain addressee. The following symbols are used in the morphological gloss: Cont = contrastive marker; Cop = copula; Hon = other forms of honorification; M = mood marker; Neg = negation; Past = past tense; Pol = addressee honorific; Q = question marker. Following Kuno (1973), a mood marker indicates among other things question, information, order, emotional movements, and wishes.
 5. This excerpt is taken from the Australian component of the International Corpus of English (ICE) held at Macquarie University. I would like to thank Pam Peters and Adam Smith for allowing me access to sound files in this corpus for the purpose of close transcription. The names used here are all pseudonyms.
 6. Standard Jeffersonian conversation analytic transcription symbols are used here: ‘[]’ overlapping speech; ‘:’ elongation; ‘=’ latching; ‘↑’ marked rising intonation; ‘underlining’ speaker emphasis; ‘-’ cut off of the prior word or sound; ‘(.)’ micropause, ‘o’ markedly soft volume, ‘CAPITALS’ markedly loud volume.

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12. Swearing

Karyn Stapleton

Abstract

As a taboo activity, swearing is “forbidden” and hence carries the risk of censure. However, many people regularly use “swear-words” (expletives) in their everyday lives. Hence, it must be assumed that swearing fulfils particular communicative functions which are not easily accomplished through other linguistic means. Like other forms of speech activity, the functions of swearing are highly dependent on context, which includes social norms, formality, status differentials and social expectations related to speaker categories; in particular, gender and socioeconomic class. In light of these considerations, this chapter discusses the interpersonal functions of swearing under four main headings: Expressing emotion; humour and verbal emphasis; social bonding and solidarity; and constructing and displaying identity. Throughout, the discussion emphasises the nuanced and context-specific nature of swearing as an interpersonal activity.

1. Introduction

Swearing is a linguistic practice based on taboo, or that which is forbidden; expletives, or “swear-words” can be seen as referring to areas of social or cultural taboo, such as sex or bodily functions. However, as Andersson and Trudgill (1990, 2007) point out, these issues/activities are not “forbidden” in themselves; rather, they give rise to a set of conscious and unconscious rules about how they may appropriately be referenced or discussed. To use a swear-word, then, is to transgress a linguistic taboo; and as such, to perform particular interpersonal, social and psychological functions. Andersson and Trudgill (2007: 195) suggest that swearing can be defined as language use in which the expression:

- (a) refers to something taboo or stigmatised
- (b) is not to be interpreted literally
- (c) expresses strong emotions or attitudes.

Historically, swearing has occupied a distinctive and powerful place across languages and cultures (see G. Hughes 1991; Smith 1998; Grehan 2004; McEnery 2006; Ljung in press). Moreover, while changes in social values can alter the taboo status of individual words over time, there is a marked regularity, both cross-culturally and historically, in terms of expletive categories (Montagu 2001). In mod-

ern English, most recognised swear-words can be categorised as deriving from one of three taboo areas: i.e.,

- Excretory/scatological – those which relate to bodily functions and associated body parts (e.g., *shit, piss, arse*);
- Sexual – those which relate to sexual acts or to genitalia (*fuck, prick, cunt, wank*);
- Profanity – those which refer to religious issues (*damn, goddamn, bloody, Chrissake*).¹

As noted above, it is swearing itself (rather than the issues/activities to which it refers) which is taboo. Hence, as a linguistic practice, swearing is “forbidden” and carries the risk of censure. In the past, it was often legally or materially punished (see Smith 1998; Joseph 2006). Today, despite changing social mores, it is still likely to incur social censure/disapproval, while in formal institutional settings such as broadcasting, schools and courts of law, more concrete sanctions against swearing might well be expected. As G. Hughes (1991: 8) points out, “virtually all societies, even the most modern, retain some taboos against swearing”. It is notable, then, that despite these negative connotations, swearing remains an intrinsic part of languages and cultures worldwide. For example, Ljung (in press) compares swearing as a linguistic and pragmatic activity across twenty-five languages and cultures. Many people regularly use swear-words in their everyday lives. In fact, there is a ‘swearing paradox’ whereby offensiveness seems to be directly linked to usage frequency (Beers Fagersten 2007; see next section). It must be assumed that swearing fulfils some particular communicative functions, which are not easily accomplished through other linguistic means. In fact, it would seem that precisely because of its taboo nature, swearing is imbued with a force and potency which, in turn, allows it to fulfil a range of psychological, social and interpersonal functions. In this chapter, the interpersonal functions of swearing are discussed within four broad categories: expressing emotion; humour and verbal emphasis; social bonding and solidarity; and constructing and displaying identity. From this list, it can be seen that, like other forms of linguistic practice, swearing is highly versatile. Indeed, as shown by other researchers, the same swear-word can perform different interpersonal functions in different contexts; or might even perform more than one function simultaneously (see Andersson and Trudgill 1990; Crawford 1995; cf. Schnurr’s discussion of the versatility of humour as a linguistic strategy; this volume).

A common psychological perspective, dating from the time of Freud, has viewed swearing as a form of catharsis or emotional/tension release (see LaPointe 2006). This view is linked in part to an “aggressive” function described further in Section 3 below (cf. Fine and Johnson 1984). Other studies, however, particularly in the area of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, have highlighted the more nuanced and varied meanings of swearing in an interpersonal context. Like other forms of

speech activity, the functions and effects of swearing are highly dependent on the context in which it occurs, hence taking account of a range of social variables such as social norms, expectations, formality levels, status differentials and relationships (see Chen 1999; Beers Fagersten 2007; Jay and Janschewitz 2008). Research has also highlighted a relationship between swearing and social categories, in particular, gender and social class (e.g., Johnson 1993; McEnery and Xiao 2004; Rassin and Muris 2005; Murphy 2010). Social expectations and judgments based on these categories strongly affect the impact of swearing in interpersonal environments. Indeed, the meaning and ‘force’ of swearing as an interpersonal activity derive largely from these social frames of reference. Therefore social categories and judgments of swearing are briefly discussed in Section 2 below; Section 3 then focuses in more detail on the pragmatic and interpersonal functions of swearing in different contexts.

2. Swearing, social categories and social expectations

Swearing has often been seen as a forceful, even aggressive, activity; essentially, a form of “verbal violence” (Griffith 1996: 135). This view is reinforced in a gendered context by links between obscenity and sexual violence (Arveda Kissling 1991). It is unsurprising, then, that in many contexts, expletives are still seen as “anti-social” or offensive (Beers Fagersten 2001, 2007; Baruch and Jenkins 2006). Moreover, in most languages, swearing is strongly linked to the vernacular, thereby carrying connotations of “working class culture” and lower socioeconomic groupings (Cheshire 1982; S. Hughes 1992; Romaine 1999). In terms of social judgments, this means that the use of expletives is often associated with lower levels of education and/or socioeconomic standing; as reflective of standard versus non-standard language use (Mulac 1976; Macafee 1989). Expletives are thus often avoided by speakers for reasons of social image or social esteem. On the other hand, the vernacular nature of swearing and its inherent links with “slang” mean that the use of expletives can be a powerful means of establishing and reinforcing group identity for certain categories of speakers; most markedly for adolescents (de Klerk 1991; Stenström 1995, 2006) and for working class males (Baruch and Jenkins 2006; Gregory 2006).

To engage in swearing is to present a particular type of identity based partly on the expectations and ascriptions of one’s interlocutors. As noted earlier, the *context* in which the interaction takes place is of central importance in judging the interpersonal effects. Beers Fagersten (2007) notes that the swearing paradox can be explained by paying closer attention to the context in which swearing takes place. In her study, expletives were judged by participants to be more offensive when presented in isolation than when presented within a dialogue such as in Example (1):

Example (1)

Context: Two white, female undergraduate US students talking (about a smelly towel) in a public area on campus

Female 1: It smelled like **shit**. I had it around my neck and was like, ‘What the **fuck?!**’

Female 2: Eww, gross.

(Beers Fagersten 2007: 37)

Thus if the words are judged to be *contextually appropriate*, they are perceived as less offensive (and therefore more likely to be used by the participants themselves in such contexts).

Members of a shared community or culture also have generally consensual ideas about where and by whom swearing is an appropriate or inappropriate activity (Jay and Janschewitz 2008). The use of expletives by a candidate in a job interview (a context which is characterised by formality, ritual, status differentials and, usually, low levels of interpersonal familiarity) would be deemed highly inappropriate and could be expected to invite negative judgments from the interview panel. In most circumstances, it is also likely to negatively affect the applicant’s chances of being offered the job. On the other hand, the same interview candidate might engage in “social swearing” (Montagu 2001 – see Section 3 below) while enjoying drinks with friends later that evening. In this case, the context is marked by informality, solidarity, and a lack of status differentials. Swearing in this setting would be seen by many as not only appropriate, but as an expected form of social bonding; it would thus attract positive (or at least neutral) judgments from his or her peers.

The interpersonal effects of swearing, then, are shaped by both the context in which it occurs and the social stereotypes/judgments it invokes within this context. However, the link between swearing and social categories is not a simple or a straightforward one. Instead, categories such as gender, age, status and socioeconomic class all interact to produce particular identities and effects.

This point is especially well illustrated in the large number of studies on *gender* and swearing (see Mullany, this volume, for a more general discussion of gender and interpersonal pragmatics). Much of the empirical research on swearing has focused explicitly or implicitly on the issue of gender; in particular on gendered expectations and how these work to produce different interpersonal and identity effects. As such, some of these studies will also be referred to in Section 3 (in particular, Section 3.3 on social bonding and solidarity; and Section 3.4 on constructing and displaying identity). At this point, it is useful to note, broadly, the particular relationship between gender and swearing, and how this can affect the nature and outcomes of swearing within an interpersonal context.

Because of its associations with both aggression and vernacular/slang, swearing has traditionally been seen as the preserve of male speakers (Coates 1993; de

Klerk 1991, 1997). Hence, it is a commonly accepted way of presenting a “masculine” identity and also functions to build male (in-group) solidarity (de Klerk 1991; Menzie 1991; Benwell 2001). However, while some studies have indeed found that males use more expletives than females (e.g., Rayson, Leech and Hodges 1997), others have shown few gender differences in overall knowledge and usage (e.g., Risch 1987; Bayard and Krishnayya 2001). Nonetheless, because of social expectations – i.e., that swearing is more appropriate for men than for women – female use of “bad language” is undoubtedly subject to more social censure than that of their male counterparts. Hence the “popular myth” surrounding linguistic taboo (de Klerk 1992: 280) means that swearing inevitably acquires different meanings, and therefore functions differently, for male and female users (see also Farr and Murphy 2009; Murphy 2010).

To take one recent example, O’Neil (2002) examined interpersonal judgments made by undergraduate students on the basis of written vignettes which included both gender and “sexual profanity” as variables. His results suggested “not only that sexual profanity is still considered deviant, but that the degree of devaluation attached to swearing differs significantly for men and women” (O’Neil 2002: 781). Additionally, drawing on a related study by Gordon (1997), Stapleton’s (2003) study of Irish undergraduates suggests that women who swear can incur not only negative social judgements but also negative *moral* ascriptions in a way that does not apply to men.

For these reasons, the meanings attached to women’s swearing are particularly constrained, contextualised and variable. Hence to the extent that swearing functions as a means of male identity affirmation, it also offers women a way of negotiating gender boundaries and presenting contextualised versions of femininity. For example, through the use of swearing, women can choose to present identities which might generally be seen as gender-transgressing, but which are nonetheless wholly appropriate in particular contexts or as linked to particular social categories (S. Hughes 1992; Stapleton 2003; Stenström 2006).

3. Interpersonal functions of swearing

As noted earlier, although swearing can be a powerful form of catharsis, or tension release, this is only one of a range of subtle, complex and interrelated functions that it can serve. Montagu (2001) distinguishes between *annoyance swearing* and *social swearing*; the former can be seen as a relief mechanism for tension and stress, while the latter is oriented towards the development and maintenance of social relationships. Starting from this primary distinction, the major categories of interpersonal functions will now be discussed.

3.1. Expressing emotion and/or aggression

Jay (2000) suggests that the primary purpose of swearing is to express the speaker's emotional state to listeners. Moreover, the emotional charge of swear-words has been shown to pertain across languages, as demonstrated in studies of translation and/or multilingualism (see DeWaele 2004; Fernandez Dobao 2006). Swearing is primarily associated with the expression of *negative* emotions, in particular anger. This reflects Montagu's concept of "annoyance swearing" which sees one form of swearing as a relief mechanism for stress and tension. Rassin and Muris (2005), who examined Dutch female undergraduates' reasons for swearing, found the most commonly cited reason to be the expression of negative emotions, although, in this context, swearing was not felt to be the most productive or effective response to the situation. Stapleton (2003) found that, among a group of undergraduate friends, expressing anger and/or releasing tension was the third most common reason for using expletives (after humour/story-telling and verbal emphasis; see next section). The participants in Johnson's (1993) study also identified emotional release as a reason for swearing, although this motivation was stronger for women than for men (55 percent vs. 24 percent, respectively, reported emotional release as their sole reason for swearing).

It is important to note here that, while the cathartic effect of swearing might be seen as a psychological or intrapersonal function, the simultaneous *expression* of emotion through expletives creates communicative and interpersonal effects. In particular, swearing as the expression of tension/anger has often been associated with an aggressive or dominant interpersonal style (Griffith 1996). Indeed, Jay (2000) sees the cathartic functions of swearing as a replacement for raw physical aggression; and, as noted above, this feature is, in its turn, inherently linked with notions of power, dominance and masculinity (see de Klerk 1991). To this extent, swearing might well be threatening in certain contexts; and it is also a common method of delivering intentional insult and offence.

Just as we experience different emotions, however, swearing, as a form of emotional expression, can be used to convey a range of inner states and orientations – not all of them negative. Thus, expletive usage can convey happiness, sadness, excitement, enthusiasm, and fear, among other emotions (see Crawford 1995 for a detailed discussion of this theme). To take an example: the exclamation *Shit! I don't believe you!*, when uttered in response to the news that one has been selected for an award would generally be interpreted as an expression of happiness and/or excitement. The same exclamation, however, would most likely convey sadness or dismay when uttered in response to the news that one's friend had been involved in a car crash. What is common to both cases is an underlining or intensification of the particular emotion being experienced by the speaker. Similarly, the single expletive *fuck!* might convey anger or frustration in some contexts, but could equally be an expression of extreme fear or vulnerability; for example, when the speaker is

facing imminent danger or attack. Interestingly, as well as using swear-words as a form of emotional expression, some of Stapleton's (2003) respondents reported that they used such terms to *conceal* particular emotions, specifically fears and vulnerabilities. In this case, respondents used swearing to "appear hard" to others in their peer group.

The above section has outlined some of the interpersonal effects of swearing as a form of emotional expression. However, despite the heavy prominence traditionally accorded to emotion/catharsis, particularly in psychological studies of swearing (cf. Van Lancker and Cummings 1999), research has shown that, in an interpersonal context, this is not its primary function. As Jay and Janschewitz (2008: 268) point out, "most instances of swearing are conversational; they are not highly emotional, confrontational, rude or aggressive". The conversational functions of swearing align to Montagu's notion of "social swearing" and as such, will be discussed in the following sections.

3.2. Humour and verbal emphasis

As a form of taboo, expletives contain within them the ability to shock² and this imbues such words with the potential both to create humour and to verbally underline the importance or emotional charge of a message. A number of studies have demonstrated the role of swearing in jocular insults or teasing (e.g., Bayard and Krishnappa 2001; Baruch and Jenkins 2006). Norman's (1994) study of "obscene joking among Swedish working-class women", on the other hand, examines the way in which such humour is used both to create a sense of community among the women participants and as a way of coping with bodily pain and indignity. Anderson and Trudgill (2007: 197) distinguish between "abusive swearing" (which is derogatory) and "humorous swearing" (which is not). While both forms of swearing are directed towards others, humorous swearing creates a teasing or joking effect; "it is playful rather than offensive". An example of this is the exhortation to *Get your ass in gear!*

Verbal emphasis – both serious and jocular – can also be created through the use of swear-words; and this feature can be used as an expressive device in a range of statements, descriptions and narratives. Compare the effects of saying: *That meal was fantastic!* versus *That meal was fucking fantastic!* In the second case, the expletive *fucking* acts as an intensifier which strengthens both the force of the adjective *fantastic* and the speaker's personal commitment to his/her evaluation of the meal. In Stapleton's (2003) study, the two most commonly cited reasons for using expletives were: 'humour/story-telling' ("When you're telling a good story and you want to get a laugh") and the related function of 'creating verbal emphasis' ("It helps to get your message across"). Both of these functions are simultaneously relational and performative, and as such, they are highly context-dependent; what "works" in one socio-pragmatic context might very well be unsuccessful in an-

other. Limbrick (1991) also identified verbal emphasis as a function of swearing and further noted a gendered dimension to this; i.e. he found a tendency for women to swear more than men in mixed-gender conversations as a way of adding verbal emphasis and hence asserting their presence in a potentially male-dominated context.

3.3. Social bonding and solidarity

The use of expletives plays a central role in many group and community settings. In such settings, swearing can be seen as part of the everyday culture. Hence, as an interpersonal activity, it can be a way of bonding and expressing solidarity with the in-group. This function has been demonstrated in a number of contexts. Classic sociolinguistic analyses have considered how swearing can show alignment with vernacular speech varieties and, by extension, with working-class and/or masculine culture (see Cheshire 1982; Trudgill 1974). Other research has focused on groupings based on age; in particular adolescents and young adults (who commonly use slang as a resource for identity construction; see Forsskåhl 2001; also Section 3.4 below). Beers Fagersten (2001) for example shows how, in the speech of a group of American undergraduate students, swear-words function as a linguistic device for affirming in-group membership as well as establishing group norms and boundaries. Similarly, Stenström (2006) in a study of teenage girls' speech in London and Madrid highlights the phatic or social functions of swearing within both groups (see Section 3.4).

Recently, there has been a growing focus on the use of swearing in the workplace and the way in which this can create and reinforce workplace solidarity. For example, Baruch and Jenkins (2006) discuss how, on a male packing team for a mail order service, the use of strong swear-words was central to the (sub-)culture and solidarity of the group, as well as its boundaries with the most immediate out-group, which was the firm's office staff. Swearing also had strong associations with status, power and even acceptance within the group, to the extent that a new member would not be accepted *as* part of the sub-culture until he "proved himself" by swearing in a manner acceptable to the group; i.e., by passing the "profane linguistic 'initiation rite'" (Baruch and Jenkins 2006: 500). In another workplace-based study, Daly et al. (2004) show how members of a close working team on a factory floor in New Zealand used swearing both as a marker of in-group solidarity and as a *politeness* strategy in relation to face-threatening acts (FTAs). Specifically, this study demonstrated the solidarity effects of using the word *fuck* in two FTAs; refusals and direct complaints (which are about the interlocutor), as well as its function in the contrasting act of whingeing (where the complaint is about a third party). Here the use of swearing was shown to ameliorate the effects of FTAs and hence to function as a positive politeness strategy (see Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987). As used in whingeing, it also served to "signal in-group solidarity

within [this] particular community of practice” (Daly et al. 2004: 955; see also Holmes and Stubbe 2003). Example (2) from Daly et al. (2004) illustrates this point:

Example (2)

Context: Russell, a Samoan/European male aged 25–29, is a packer. Lesia, a Samoan male aged 30–34, is also a packer, but has responsibility for shift planning.

- Russell: fucking sick of this line (Lesia)
 Lesia: [voc]
 Russell: stuck here all the time
 Lesia: if you I put you on that line you’re getting worse
 Russell: ()
 Lesia: fucking worse, slow like an old man
 Russell: that’s what I want
 Lesia: if I put you on that line you falling asleep
 Russell: how much do we have to do on here
 (Daly et al. 2004: 951–952; transcription simplified from the original)

In this example, Russell makes a direct complaint to Lesia – that the packing line he is working on is slow and boring; while Lesia argues that any other packing line would be worse. Daly et al. note that Russell’s initial use of *fucking* might be seen as unexpected in the context of an FTA (where we would expect linguistic politeness strategies to address the threat to Lesia’s positive face). However, taken in the wider ethnographic context, the authors show that this term forms part of a shared interactive style of verbal humour and jocular abuse, which strengthens interpersonal relationships among the work team. Within this frame, Russell’s initial expletive functions as a solidarity marker and thus as a positive politeness strategy, which mitigates the potential FTA of his complaint. Notably, in his response Lesia also uses the word *fucking*. Although here functioning in a more ‘typical’ way (i.e., as a pragmatic intensifier), Lesia’s expletive can be seen within the same frame as Russell’s – i.e., as a positive politeness strategy and hence as an important part of the interpersonal negotiation of the complaint and its outcome.

Finally, there are a range of studies which focus on swearing as a gendered (in-)group activity; only a small number of these will be mentioned here. As noted earlier, its conventional associations with masculinity mean that swearing provides a powerful resource for male identity construction. To this extent, it can also be a point of male bonding and solidarity, as shown, for example, in Gregory’s (2006) ethnographic account of male working-class culture on a US loading dock. In this study, profanity was shown to be a means of making the work more bearable and of forging a common group bond. In a similar vein, Menzie (1991) has highlighted the role of obscenity in gender construction and group solidarity within the (male) halibut fishing industry in British Columbia.

Other studies have focused on the particularities of swearing as a form of *female* group bonding. Stapleton (2003) makes the point that because swearing is generally more proscribed for women than for men, it is often an indication of trust and interpersonal solidarity; i.e., the feeling that “it’s ok to swear with you because you are my friend”. This point reflects Norman’s (1994) study of Swedish working class women (Section 3.2 above), in which the use of obscene joking functioned to create a form of resistant community among the participants. It also draws on the work of Sutton (1995) who sees women’s swearing as an act of solidarity, or even affection, between women friends; and that of Risch (1987) whose female participants used taboo terms as a means of denigrating the (male) out-groups, thereby strengthening both the internal bonds and the external boundaries of the (female) in-group.

3.4. Constructing and displaying identity

Swearing provides a powerful, yet complex, resource for the construction and display of group and individual identities. (See also De Fina, this volume, for a general discussion of identity and interpersonal pragmatics). In particular, and as outlined in the previous section, swearing provides a means of demarcating group boundaries and affirming group membership (and hence group-based identity). For example, Beers Fagersten’s study of swearing as a linguistic/social practice among US undergraduate students showed that both expectations and use of swearing were related to categories such as age, ethnicity and gender; and how, in light of this, both the *use* and *avoidance* of swearing functioned to construct personal and interlocutor identities (Beers Fagersten 2001, 2005). In spontaneously recorded utterances, there was a tendency for participants to swear most frequently with interlocutors who were similar to themselves in terms of age, ethnicity and gender. Swearing, therefore, presented both the self and interlocutor as members of the in-group, who shared a particular social identity. On the other hand, the *avoidance* of swearing (which was most marked in the cross-generational context) was shown to function as a means of establishing social distance between oneself and the interlocutor; and hence, as a means of imposing an out-group identity on another. Similarly, using corpus data of teenage talk, Stenström has shown how swearing functions as a marker of group identity for teenagers, in counter-distinction to older speakers, and as a marker of gender identity within the group (Stenström 1995, 2003, 2006). For example, while both girls and boys used taboo language, the frequency of swearing was partly linked to the conversation topic. This was especially true for the girls, whose swearing increased when talking about sex and/or when they were being derogatory about boys (see also Risch 1987). In addition, boys generally were found to use more of the “stronger” expletives, especially when expressing frustration, as in Example (3) (taken from Stenström 2003: 105).

Example (3)

Context: Nick (a teenage boy) is relating his frustration and embarrassment at being prevented by other boys from watching a Chelsea football match on tv.

Nick: well, you see, all them Van den Berg he's <unclear> and their fucking faces, they come in yeah. right. you wanna wait for this bloody football na I just wanna watch the Chelsea please can I just watch the Chelsea, no piss off, please just let me watch the Chelsea, please just once let me watch the Chelsea and they turned the telly off and said right, you've turned the channel over and telly doesn't go back on. [Fucking annoyed!]

Jock: [mm]

Nick: The fucking so sad ones is going right you're clearing up house fuck off! I'm not fucking clearing up the house and he goes, right that's it, you're clearing the house for the rest of your life!

Particular types of swearing can be used to constitute oneself as an “authentic” member of a group or category, as illustrated in Armstrong’s (2004) analysis of the way in which the white rap artist Eminem uses violence and obscenity in his song lyrics to assert his identity as an authentic white gangsta rapper.³

With respect to a specific group-based identity, Dutton (2007) explores the role of “idiosyncratic swearing” by members of student evangelical groups. Drawing on fieldwork conducted with two British evangelising groups, he argues that by avoiding “conventional swearing”, the groups claim a moral power; while, simultaneously, their use of milder and/or idiosyncratic forms (e.g., *bog off*, *dog breath*) allows them to align with the identity of the broader student cohort, and hence, to actually evangelise more effectively. Hence, “disguised” swearing of this sort allowed for “a very subtle kind of evangelism in an environment in which swearing was so acceptable” (Dutton 2007). By using mild expletives, group members were able to present an accepted student identity which in turn provided a basis from which to evangelise to the broader student community.

Once again, gender has figured prominently in the study of swearing and identity. From a social constructionist perspective (see Benwell and Stokoe 2006), swearing can be seen as part of the active negotiation and display of particular *versions* of gender identity. However, these versions are shaped within (and hence constrained by) prevailing gender ideologies. Thus, as mentioned above, the social meaning of swearing is different for women and men. The use of obscenity is a straightforward and commonly understood way of constructing (at least some types of) masculinity – in particular, working class masculinity (see the studies by Menzie 1991; Baruch and Jenkins 2006; and Gregory 2006, discussed above). However, swearing is not conventionally associated with feminine identity in this way; hence, the more complex and circumscribed nature of female swearing gives rise to similarly nuanced and context-specific gender identities. Examples of this include S. Hughes’s (1992) study of “lower working-class women”, who use ex-

pletives as part of their everyday lives, and Stapleton's (2003) study of Irish undergraduates, who use what they term "bad language" as a resource for constituting themselves as "drinking women" or "women drinkers" within a pub-based community of practice. In the latter study, the male and female usage of expletives showed subtle but persistent gender differences in terms of identity negotiation and presentation. This issue is also partially reflected in Sutton's (1995) study of undergraduate sexual slang, in which the female respondents are seen as negotiating a specific version of femininity, rather than simply approximating to the male norm: "Rather than say that young women are 'talking like men', I see these women as imitating other women, whom they want to be like and who are different from the stereotypical image of woman" (Sutton 1995: 289). For Stapleton's respondents, swearing functions not only as a marker of group identity (i.e. to constitute membership of the drinking group), but also as a means of negotiating and displaying that identity in particular ways (specifically, as *female* members of this group, and hence, as "women drinkers" within the broader social context).

4. Conclusion

In this chapter, the main interpersonal functions of swearing have been discussed. A key point of the discussion has been the variability and context specificity of swearing. This highlights its status as a pragmatic resource which can be utilised in different ways and with different effects. Interestingly, recent research indicates that taboo language fulfils similar interpersonal functions in online or computer-mediated environments (Al-Sa'Di and Hamdan 2005; Subrahmanyam, Shahel and Greenfield 2006; see also Thelwall 2008, who discusses the role of gender, age and culture in swearing activity on the social networking site 'MySpace'). However, as swearing is becoming more routine across societies and cultures, it is often seen as losing its "shock value" (see Lawson 2004) and, hence, the interpersonal effects described above may become somewhat attenuated as time goes on. Certainly, the impact created by – for example – a young woman swearing on a TV show is not the same in 2010 as it would have been in 1960; and similarly, the interpersonal effects of swearing, for men and women, are gradually shifting with the passage of time. However, this is a matter of adaptation rather than annulment. As mentioned at the opening of this chapter, despite changes in meaning and function, the linguistic practice of swearing retains a unique capacity to shock, alienate, insult, abuse and generally cause offence. It is perhaps as a consequence of these very functions, that it is also a potent resource for other interpersonal functions, including the expression of positive affect such as enthusiasm, joking and story-telling, delineating and affirming group and individual identity, group bonding, and the display of affection and solidarity with

others. Swearing, then, continues to be a powerful and highly versatile interpersonal strategy, while providing a vibrant area of study within interpersonal pragmatics.

Notes

1. In practice, however, items relating to the latter category of profanity have become increasingly accepted as routine, and therefore non-taboo, in many areas of secular society (see Farr and Murphy 2009).
2. Although it should be acknowledged that swearing is losing some of its shock value in contemporary society (see Section 4).
3. As a white man, Eminem's authenticity is somewhat problematic within the black-dominated rap music scene. According to this analysis, he achieves authenticity by continually and explicitly asserting his whiteness while purveying violent, misogynistic and obscene lyrics, but crucially, avoiding the word "nigger/nigga".

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13. Humour

Stephanie Schnurr

Abstract

Humour is a particularly versatile linguistic strategy which performs a variety of interpersonal functions. Humour is not only an excellent means for reinforcing solidarity and creating a friendly atmosphere, but it may also be used to reinforce existing power relations, as well as to express resistance and to challenge interlocutors. However, due to its ambiguous and versatile nature many instances of humour serve different interpersonal functions simultaneously. This chapter discusses a few short examples to illustrate how the various functions of humour may be used in order to establish and negotiate interpersonal relations. It also addresses some of the theoretical and methodological challenges of defining, identifying, measuring and collecting humour. And a range of social factors are discussed that have an impact on the use of humour in interpersonal encounters.

1. Introduction

Although extensive research across various disciplines has been conducted on humour, it remains a highly complex and under-researched phenomenon. Humour is particularly interesting for interpersonal pragmatics as it may be used to perform a variety of interpersonal functions, sometimes even simultaneously. It is perhaps due to this complexity and multi-functionality that humour has been described as “one of the most difficult subjects to study” (Apte 1985: 13). This chapter commences with a brief discussion of the difficulties inherent in defining, identifying, measuring and collecting humour, before some of the interpersonal functions of humour are outlined. A particular focus is on humour to reinforce solidarity, to “do power”, and to express resistance. Failed humour is also covered briefly. The chapter ends with a discussion of some of the social factors that have an impact on the ways in which humour is used in interpersonal encounters.

2. Defining humour

Defining humour is a complicated, if not impossible task, and as Hatch and Ehrlich (1993: 506) maintain, humour “is much more readily demonstrated than described”. Moreover, since humour has been studied by researchers from diverse

disciplines including psychology, sociology, and linguistics, diverse definitions of this complex phenomenon have been developed.

2.1. Humour – a definition

The majority of research on humour has been conducted in psychology, where humour is generally understood in terms of psychological conception (Apte 1985), and where it is typically defined as amusing utterances which make an audience laugh (Duncan and Feisal 1989: 19). This relatively general definition has been adopted by researchers from other disciplines and is widely used (e.g., Clouse and Spurgeon 1995; Fatt 1998; Hatch and Ehrlich 1993; Smith, Harrington and Neck 2000).

However, humour may also occur without the speaker intending it (Raskin 1985: 27), and some instances of humour are not intended to result in amusement, such as sarcasm¹ and some instances of subversive humour² (see, e.g., Alberts 1992; Collinson 1988; Fahlman 1997; Morreall 1997). It thus appears useful to devise a more comprehensive definition. One such definition is proposed by Mullany (2004), who (based on a study by Holmes [2000]) defines humour as

instances where participant(s) signal amusement to one another, based on the analyst's assessment of paralinguistic, prosodic and discoursal clues. These instances can be classified as either successful or unsuccessful according to addressees' reactions. Humour can be a result of either intentional or unintentional humorous behaviour from participants. (Mullany 2004: 21)

This definition has several advantages; firstly, it incorporates less typical occurrences, such as unintended humour as well as failed humour. It may even be read in such a way that it also covers the “dark” side of humour, that is, those instances of humour which are designed to put down or personally attack the addressee, and which may thus not result in the amusement of *both* interlocutors. And secondly, this definition acknowledges that response strategies to humour may take a variety of different forms.

2.2. Laughter and other response strategies

Although laughter is the prototypical way of responding to humour, numerous studies have questioned the usefulness of viewing laughter as the sole indicator of humour (e.g., Berlyne 1972; Chapman 1983; Devereux and Ginsburg 2001; Haakana 2002; LaFrance 1983; Provine 2000). Although humour and laughter may have some features in common, they are not inseparable. Provine (1996), for example, found that most occurrences of laughter do not constitute responses to humour. In fact, less than 20 percent of the laughter uttered by the participants in his study was a reaction “to anything resembling a formal effort at humour” (Provine 1996: 42).

Instead, he observed that “[m]utual playfulness, in-group feeling and positive emotional tone – not comedy” constitute the situational settings which trigger laughter (Provine 1996: 42).

Relatively little research has been conducted on other response strategies to humour (e.g., Kotthoff 2003; Lytra 2007; Bell 2009). Hay (1995, 2001) is one of the few researchers who discusses the different ways of responding to humour in detail. She found that different types of humour are responded to in different ways, and that the appropriateness of the support strategies depends on the context in which the humour occurs. Interlocutors may react to humour in a variety of ways, either supporting or rejecting the speaker’s attempt at humour. They may produce more humour thereby acknowledging and ratifying the initiator’s use of humour, or they may echo the words of previous speakers and thus effectively support the humour. Further strategies to respond to humour are overlap and heightened involvement in the conversation, as well as a range of non-verbal responses, such as a smile or a nod.

The choice of support strategy depends on the type of humour involved. Self-denigrating humour, for instance, is often not responded to by laughter but rather by an offer of sympathy or a contradictory statement (Hay 1995; Holmes 2000). And some types of humour do not require any explicit support, such as humour which is already a support strategy (Hay 1995). Hence, Hay (2001: 60) maintains that to assume that “laughter is the sole means of supporting humor, is to obscure a great deal”. Instead, interlocutors have at their disposal a variety of different strategies among which they may choose depending on the situational context.

2.3. Identifying, measuring and collecting humour

In addition to defining humour, identifying instances of humour, in particular less obvious examples, poses another challenge for empirical research. This is particularly true since norms of what is perceived as humorous are likely to vary across different groups and may thus be difficult to decipher by non-group members (see, e.g., Coser 1960; Pogrebin and Poole 1988; Holmes and Stubbe 2003). And a substantial amount of inside knowledge is necessary to identify and understand what is “going on” in any humorous instance. In order to address this issue, empirical research often relies on a range of paralinguistic, prosodic and discursual clues, such as the speaker’s tone of voice, and the audience’s auditory as well as (where possible) gesticulatory responses (see, e.g., Holmes 2000; Mullany 2004).

The discrepancies regarding definitions of what counts as humour have resulted in different methodological approaches: some studies investigated humorous instances which were identified by the researchers as utterances that were intended to be amusing and also perceived as such (e.g., Holmes, 2000); while others counted verbal instances which were followed by laughter (e.g., Consalvo 1989; Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 1992). However, since humour and laughter do not

form an adjacency pair (Hay 2001), these studies have not necessarily captured humour but may simply have measured the occurrence of laughter instead. Other studies equated humour with jokes (e.g., Duncan and Feisal 1989; Linstead 1985; Duncan, Smeltzer and Leap 1990) and have thus potentially overlooked more subtle occurrences of humour, for instance, in the form of an amusing anecdote or a witty comment.

Another equally complex methodological issue deals with adequate ways of measuring humour. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the complex and slippery nature of humour, only relatively little research has attempted to measure humour quantitatively. Holmes and Marra (2002a), for example, counted instances of humour in the business meetings they recorded and then calculated an average index per 100 minutes. While this approach may have some advantages for a comparison of use of humour in similar contextual situations (such as business meetings), it presents a number of difficulties when applied to different types of conversations: such a method neglects the impact of contextual factors, such as the interlocutors' relationships. Moreover, counting instances of humour is not straightforward but is inherently difficult, and poses a range of questions, such as how to count extended sequences of conjoint humour, which typically contain numerous instances of different types of humour. Due to these methodological difficulties it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of empirical humour studies pursue a qualitative approach.

In addition to the absence of a common definition, another problem of humour research is the use of inadequate methodological procedures to collect data. Much of the early research studies on humour were conducted in laboratory settings or in artificial environments, often with students as participants (e.g., Chapman 1976; Cox, Read and van Auken 1990; Hampes 1992; Kreuz and Roberts 1995). These studies largely ignored the situational factors which have an impact on the occurrence of humour, and rather than measuring actual humour use, they often assessed stereotypical views held by participants. But since humour is inextricably tied to the context in which it occurs, it seems likely that laboratory studies are not able to capture the phenomenon in its entirety. These reservations also apply to other preferred means of collecting data, such as relying on self-report data (e.g., Chapman 1976; Decker 1991; Smith, Harrington and Neck 2000; White and Howse 1993), conducting interviews (e.g., Rosenberg 1998), and engaging in participant observation while writing down humorous instances from memory (e.g., Linstead 1985; Seckman and Couch 1989; Hatch and Ehrlich 1993).

However, perhaps the biggest disadvantage of these methodological approaches to studying humour is that they do not enable the researcher to capture what Kotthoff (2006a: 5) calls "the dialogical character" of humour, i.e., these methodologies do not provide insights into the complex ways in which humour is actually used by participants to perform a wide range of different functions. As a consequence, more recent humour studies acknowledge these disadvantages of ar-

tificial settings and tend to collect authentic discourse data in natural contexts in order to explore the various interpersonal functions humour may perform (e.g., Hay 2001; Habib 2008; Kotthoff 2003; Mullany 2004; Schnurr and Rowe 2008).

3. Interpersonal functions of humour

Humour is a versatile linguistic strategy. It is not only an excellent means of reinforcing solidarity, but may also be used to “do power”, as well as to express resistance and to challenge interlocutors. However, which specific functions a particular instance of humour performs is not always straightforward, and most instances of humour are multi-functional and serve different interpersonal functions simultaneously. In identifying the functions of a humorous occurrence, researchers may rely on various clues including response strategies and speaker’s intonation (Holmes 2000; Mullany 2004; Schnurr 2009).

3.1. Reinforcing solidarity

The most typical function of humour, which all instances accomplish to some extent, is to create and maintain solidarity among interlocutors (Holmes 2000; Hay 1995). This prime function of humour has been observed in research on interpersonal encounters in a variety of contexts, including informal gatherings of friends as well as more formal workplace contexts. In this interpersonal function, humour acts as “a means of establishing and perpetuating shared values, as a kind of social cement” (Barsoux 1993: 92). As such, it emphasises similarity and promotes solidarity among group members, as Example (1) illustrates.

Example (1) (taken from Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 1992: 115)³

Context: Undergraduate group. Helen works in a coffee shop.

- Helen: god we sell cappuccinos or well depending on the week
it’s usually cappuccinos seventy five cents
- Eve: I can’t wait until McDonalds gets espressos and cappuccinos
they will
- Helen: yeah
- Lau: that’ll be really good
- Eve: mc- mc-//mcspresso\ [laughter]
- Helen: /mc-\\
- Eve: //mc- mc spresso\
- Lau: /mc- mcpucchino\\ I [laughter]
- Bill: //mcpucchino oh my god\
- Eve: [laughs] mcpucchino//mcspresso\
- Lau: it sounds like /uh al\ [laughter]

- Eve: /al pacino\
 Lau: pacino [laughs]
 Eve: yeah [laughs] yeah they'll
 have al pacino do the [laughter]
 Lau: yeah Italian () [laughs]
 Eve: do the publicity for it yeah [laughs]

The humour in the example is conjointly constructed among the friends, who develop an amusing fantasy scenario. By creating fun names for the coffee range to be offered by a fast-food restaurant and by jointly developing an idea for a potential way of advertising the coffee, the interlocutors emphasise common ground and reinforce solidarity. This bonding function is also reflected in the frequent overlaps, joint laughter, and speakers extending and completing each others' humorous comments. However, this interpersonal function of humour is not only typical for humour used between friends but is also found in humour among strangers. The next example shows how humour may assist people who do not know each other well in creating solidarity and signalling common ground.

Example (2) (taken from Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997: 281)

Context: Two female strangers in swimming pool.

- Ann: what is this supposed to work on
 your legs stomach?
 Barb: your legs mostly
 I don't think it does much for the stomach
 Ann: oh, I'm not interested in the thighs
 they're beyond hope
 Barb: I've gained five pounds since I started swimming five years ago

Self-denigrating humour, i.e., humour in which the speaker is the target (Zajdman 1995), is a particularly useful strategy for creating solidarity between people who do not know each other well. By negatively describing her thighs as being '*beyond hope*' Ann portrays herself as a modest person who does not take herself too seriously. By exaggerating the look of her thighs she creates solidarity among interlocutors. And Barb's equally self-denigrating (and perhaps also exaggerated) reply about her weight gain further signals common ground and creates a friendly atmosphere. In analyzing this example Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997: 281) comment that "[b]y complaining about one's own physical, emotional or intellectual shortcomings, speakers show themselves self-effacing, allowing the addressee to perceive them as approachable." This example also illustrates that not all humour is responded to by laughter: rather, the production of more humour seems to be the appropriate way of responding in this context.

3.2. “Doing power”

In addition to reinforcing solidarity and creating a friendly atmosphere, humour may also be used as a vehicle for “doing power”. In fact, the inherently ambiguous nature of humour implies that it may be used to perform these two functions simultaneously, and that solidarity and power are inextricably intertwined with each other in humour (for example Hay 2001; Holmes and Stubbe 2003). This function of humour to combine the competing discourses of power and solidarity seems to be particularly valuable in a workplace setting, where it may be used to negotiate power relations while simultaneously expressing solidarity among interlocutors, as Examples (3) and (4) show.

Example (3) (taken from Holmes 2000: 172)

Context: In a workplace. Manager, Beth, to Administrative assistant, Marion, who is chatting to a secretary.

Beth: OK Marion I’m afraid serious affairs of state will have to wait
we have some trivial issues needing our attention

[All laugh]

Using a humorous ironic comment, Beth manages to get her potentially threatening message across (i.e., to tell her Administrative assistant to stop chatting and get back to work) while at the same time reinforcing solidarity among those present. In particular, using humour to communicate the negatively affective speech act, Beth avoids displaying power overtly (Holmes 2000: 172): rather than explicitly reminding her subordinate of her duties, she downplays her authority and emphasises their collegial relationship. The subsequent joint laughter, in which all participants engage, reinforces these positive interpersonal functions and creates a friendly atmosphere (e.g., Fine 1983; Barsoux 1993; Devereux and Ginsburg 2001). And irony, i.e., “a rhetoric device which consists in implying the opposite of what is said literally” (Haverkate 1990: 91), seems to be an excellent means of accomplishing this.⁴ However, humour may not only be used to downplay existing power relations but may also reinforce them, as in Example (4).

Example (4) (taken from Holmes and Stubbe 2003: 117)

Context: 9am meeting of white-collar group from commercial organisation is well under way when Rob Blair arrives late.

Sandy: however it’s a service we’ve provided for our customers
good afternoon Mister Blair

Rob: I forgot it was on

[laughter]

The manager’s criticism of Rob for coming late to the meeting is very explicit and thus potentially threatening. The humour derives from Sandy’s rather formal way of addressing his subordinate as ‘*Mister Blair*’, which is particularly marked in this

workplace where members do not normally use titles when talking to each other. Moreover, by greeting Rob with ‘*good afternoon*’ Sandy further emphasises Rob’s lateness as the meeting takes place early in the morning. However, wrapping it in humour considerably mitigates the negative impact of this speech act. Sandy thus manages to communicate his criticism in a way that allows him to also maintain collegiality and a good working relationship with his subordinate. The humour thus assists him in avoiding conflict, while still getting his message across.

In Examples (3) and (4) the humour mitigates the illocutionary force of the negatively affective speech act and assists the speakers in downplaying as well as emphasising their power, respectively. However, humour is not only employed by those who hold powerful positions, but is also a valuable tool for less powerful speakers, in particular, in a workplace setting where rights and obligations ascribed to particular roles and positions are less negotiable than in less formal encounters.

3.3. Expressing resistance and challenging humour

A relatively small number of studies have pointed out that there is also a “darker side” to humour as it may be used as a legitimate means of expressing dissent and challenging interlocutors as well as established practices and norms (Holmes and Marra 2002b: 83; see also Seckman and Couch 1989; Brown and Keegan 1999; Schnurr and Rowe 2008). In workplace settings, for example, it has been observed that humour, in particular subversive humour, may be used by subordinates as an acceptable means of expressing disagreement and questioning decisions, thereby registering a protest or even challenging more powerful participants. Employed in this way, humour may support relatively powerless interlocutors in their attempts to subvert existing power structures and the status quo, while at the same time reinforcing solidarity among those who participate in the humour (e.g., Collinson 1988; Rodrigues and Collinson 1995; Holmes 2000; Lynch 2002; Mullany 2007; Schnurr and Rowe 2008).

An example of how subversive humour may be used as a means of expressing resistance is illustrated in an email, which Richard, the Head of School in one of Hong Kong’s universities, wrote to the other members in his department. In this email Richard employs humour to make fun of the established (and in his view annoying) norms prescribed by the bureaucratic system of administration at his workplace.

Example (5) (taken from Schnurr and Rowe 2008: 116–117)

Context: Email sent by Richard to staff members in his department.

Subject: air-conditioning wars

Dear all

Please note that there will be no air-conditioning in offices this friday (public holiday) and the summer regime will come into force next week, which means that air-

conditioning will only be available for restricted hours (I think it is going off at 7:00pm). Last summer after heroic resistance led by Henry “rage against the machine” Morris we were able to get exemptions up to 9:00 p.m. If you wish to make a case, I will forward your request to the air-conditioning czar; please give the dates you will be in HK and a reason, i.e., you are working on a research project.

Thanks

Rich

Richard’s humour clearly has a critical edge to it as it evokes connotations of misuse of power, arbitrary decision-making, and non-democratic gaining and exercising of power. With his humorous description of the air-conditioning regulations, in particular the amusing terms of address, he expresses his criticism and resistance to this aspect of organisational reality. Although this email is not directed at the target of the humour (i.e., *‘the air-conditioning czar’* and those who make the rules in this organisation), using humour is an excellent means for expressing dissent while getting away with it and avoiding negative sanctions, as it leaves the user (or in this case, the email writer) the option to say that he was “just kidding” and that it was “only humour”.

Examples (1)–(5) have illustrated that humour may perform several diverse functions. The particular power of humour for interpersonal encounters, then, “lies in its flexibility [...] – it can function as a bouquet, a shield, and a cloak, as well as an incisive weapon in the armoury of the oppressed” (Holmes 1998). However, not every attempt at humour is successful. So what happens when humour fails?

3.4. When humour fails

Perhaps not surprisingly given that most instances of humour are successful, there is relatively little research which looks at failed humour (e.g., Bell 2009). Failed humour may have several causes. Carrell (1997: 183), for instance, claims that humour can “fail to fire for an audience” because there is not enough shared background knowledge. Further aspects which might have an impact on the success of humour are outlined by Hay (2001). She proposes that in addition to insufficient contextualisation some of the factors which may lead humour to fail are misjudging the relationship between interlocutors, trying to revive “dead humour” and portraying oneself inappropriately. Any failure of humour may result in a loss of the speaker’s face, and may have negative implications for the relationship between interlocutors.

The next section outlines some of the social factors which have an impact on the ways in which humour is used in interpersonal encounters. In particular, it explores the role of the relationship between interlocutors, gender, culture and ethnicity, as well as norms of what are considered appropriate ways of using humour in specific interpersonal encounters.

4. Social factors

4.1. Relationship between interlocutors

One of the most crucial factors impacting the use of humour in any interpersonal encounter is the relationship between interlocutors. Although humour is a strategy that is frequently used among friends, colleagues, and even strangers (as the examples above have illustrated), the specific ways in which it is employed depend, among other things, on the relationship between interlocutors.

Research has observed, for instance, that “joking behavior follows predictable status patterns”, and that interlocutors of higher status are more likely to initiate humorous sequences in a variety of contexts (Duncan 1982: 140). This seems to be particularly true for workplace settings, where humour is employed more frequently by those higher in the hierarchy (see, e.g., Coser 1960; Mulkay 1988; Pizzini 1991; Sollitt-Morris 1996). Social distance and the degree of intimacy have been shown to be particularly relevant for teasing⁵ (see, e.g., Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Wolfson 1988) and jocular abuse⁶ (see, e.g., Hay 1994; Daly et al. 2004). These rather aggressive and challenging types of humour are more frequently used between speakers who have a relatively close relationship, such as family, friends, and long-time work colleagues. Self-denigrating humour, on the other hand, seems to be a particularly valuable strategy in interpersonal encounters between people who do not know each other well (as Example [2] has illustrated).

4.2. Gender

Gender has an impact on humour in a variety of ways: not only do gender stereotypes about men’s and women’s use of humour exist, but humour is also a valuable means for expressing as well as responding to and challenging gendered perceptions.

Stereotypically, women are often portrayed as lacking a sense of humour, while men’s humour is more highly valued (see, e.g., Crawford 1995; Ehrenberg 1995). These stereotypical views have been the topic of a considerable amount of research (for an overview on gender research see Mullany, this volume). Most of this research, in particular, earlier studies, have reproduced and reinforced rather than challenged the stereotype of humourless women (Crawford 1995: 137). It was argued that women use fewer instances of humour, and that they also appreciate it less than men (Cox, Read and van Auken 1990; Tannen 1994; Ehrenberg 1995). These studies have also observed that gender differences in the ways men and women use certain types of humour, such as self-denigrating humour and formulaic jokes, coincide with stereotypical views of feminine and masculine behaviours (Jenkins 1985; Ervin-Tripp and Lampert 1992). However, more recent studies challenge these stereotypical perceptions and argue that contrary to the stereotype,

women do use humour regularly, and in some contexts more often than men (e.g., Smith, Harrington and Neck 2000; Holmes, Marra and Burns 2001; Mullany 2004, 2007; Schnurr 2008). Clearly, the “relevance of gender differs from context to context”, as Kotthoff (2006a: 4) notes in her “state-of-the-art-article” on humour and gender (see also the other contributions in Kotthoff (2006b) for a recent debate on gender and humour).

Hence, rather than comparing men’s and women’s use of humour, it appears more promising to explore the ways in which gender and humour are interlinked with each other, and to investigate how gender is made relevant in interlocutors’ humorous comments. This may be achieved, for instance, by using sexist humour (see, e.g., Mulkay 1988; Alberts 1992), or in attempts to exploit, resist and challenge existing gender stereotypes and inequalities (see, e.g., Holmes and Schnurr forthcoming; Eder 1993; Schnurr 2008). The next Example (6) shows how women in a predominantly masculine workplace use humour to make fun of gender stereotypes.

Example (6) (example taken from Holmes and Marra 2002b: 74)

Context: Meeting of a project team in a multinational white-collar commercial organization. Clara, the section manager, and Peg, a senior team member, comment on a male colleague.

- Clara: he wants to get through month end first
 he’s [smiling voice]: he can’t multitask:
 [females laugh]
- Peg: it’s a bloke thing
 [general laughter]
- Clara: it’s in the genes
- Peg: [laughs]

This example nicely illustrates how women employ humour to make fun of the masculine stereotype of being “a bloke” and thus not being able to work on more than one task at the same time. Clara makes a disparaging, teasing comment on the limitations of a specific colleague in relation to managing complex work demands ‘*he can’t multitask*’. Together with Peg’s supportive comment ‘*it’s a bloke thing*’, the gender orientation of the women’s humour becomes explicit. Through their humour, the women construct and emphasise female solidarity, while simultaneously subverting wider societal values which, especially in this workplace, tend to value male skills more highly than female.

4.3. Culture and ethnicity

Other social factors which have an impact on how humour is used and understood in interpersonal relationships are culture and ethnicity. Humour performs a range of important cultural functions, such as reinforcing social norms and expectations,

as well as expressing ethnic identities (see, e.g., O'Quin and Aronoff 1981; Duncan 1985; Holmes, Stubbe, and Marra 2003; Habib 2008). It thus seems that humour provides a valuable tool for gaining insights into cultural values and beliefs (see, e.g., Chiaro 1992; Fine and de Soucey 2005). In addition to ethnic jokes, i.e., jokes which are targeted at members of a specific ethnicity (see, e.g., Davies 1990), some research has explored culturally specific ways of using humour (e.g., Ziv 1998; Lytra 2007). In its function as a social boundary marker, the link between humour and culture is particularly strong: when it is used to make fun of members of another ethnic group, for instance, humour assists speakers in creating their ethnic identities, as Example (7) illustrates.

Example (7) (slightly abbreviated from Holmes, Stubbe and Marra 2003: 440)

Context: Two young Maori⁷ male friends chatting over lunch.

Mike: 'cause the other thing
you've ever found
like you talk to a Pakeha
and you trying to tell a joke and they don't get it

Kingi: yeah

Mike: but when you talk to a Maori //they do\

Kingi: /and they get it\ yeah yeah

Mike: yeah

This brief exchange between two friends demonstrates interlocutors' perception that members of the different ethnic groups in New Zealand use humour somewhat differently. The extract is taken from a longer interaction between two young Maoris who make fun of Pakehas' lack of a sense of humour. The overall tone of the conversation is very light and humorous, and throughout the exchange the friends provide several examples of things that Pakehas do not find funny and things Pakehas do that they perceive to be rather weird. Thus, by making fun of Pakehas who "do not get" Maori jokes, Mike and Kingi highlight and actively construct their ethnic identity as belonging to the Maori minority. Employed in such a way, humour functions as a boundary marker as well as an expression of ethnic identity (see also De Fina, this volume, on identity construction).

4.4. Discursive norms

In addition to the relationship of interlocutors, gender, as well as culture and ethnicity, the discursive norms that characterise a particular context and which are negotiated among participants are of particular relevance when it comes to understanding humour in any interpersonal encounter.

The impact of discursive norms is particularly crucial in larger groups whose members come together regularly (these groups often form so-called communities of practice). Over time group members develop "humour relations", i.e., norms

and expectations about who is allowed to use what type of humour to whom. These negotiated norms of using humour appropriately may depend on the nature of members' relationship, gender, and culture and ethnicity (as discussed above), as well as on a range of other factors, such as age and social class, not mentioned here. These differences in interlocutors' preferred use of humour in specific contexts are reflected on various levels, and include, among others, appropriate topics and targets for humour, as well as types and styles of delivering humour. In other words, which types of humour are typically used to signal group membership and whether jocular abuse and sarcasm, for instance, are acceptable means of reinforcing solidarity, largely depend on the discursive norms that characterise the group context in which the humour is to occur (see, e.g., Fine and de Soucey 2005).

This is clearly true for the jocular abuse and banter⁸ that Kuiper (1991) observed in the discourse of an all male rugby team in the locker room before and after the game. Team mates frequently used derogatory terms when addressing each other, such as *'morning, girls'*, *'you fucking old woman'*, *'you're late, cunt'*, *'fuck-face'* and many more (Kuiper 1991: 205). Through their frequent use of jocular abuse and banter, the team members reinforce solidarity and signal their group membership. This rather challenging way of using humour by jocularly abusing each other is characteristic for this particular group of speakers in this particular context and may not be appropriate in other contexts or among members of other groups (see also Hay 1994; Plester and Sayers 2007; Mullany 2007; Schnurr 2009).

5. Summary

This chapter has illustrated that humour plays a crucial role in managing interpersonal relationships as it may be used to perform a wide range of functions. In its most basic function, humour provides a valuable means to reinforce solidarity and create a friendly atmosphere. However, it may also be used to "do power", as well as to resist and challenge others. Humour may make others feel as part of the group, but it may also function as a boundary marker – explicitly excluding outsiders.

Humour often performs several, sometimes very different functions at the same time. It may, for instance, be used to communicate negatively affective messages (such as criticisms or disagreements) in acceptable ways while at the same time reinforcing solidarity and maintaining the addressees' (and the speakers') face needs. Due to its versatility, then, humour is a key strategy in interpersonal encounters.

The chapter has also briefly discussed some theoretical and methodological issues. In particular, it has outlined some difficulties inherent in defining humour, and in identifying as well as measuring and collecting it. While a lot has been written about humour, it is still an under-researched area of investigation. Humour is one of the most interesting subjects to study, and more empirical studies in natu-

ral contexts are needed in order to further explore the various functions of this strategy, in particular in its role for interpersonal pragmatics.

Notes

1. Sarcasm is defined as “a non-aggressive verbalisation (e.g., I love your outfit) framed as a hostile act through situational clues” (Alberts 1992: 155). However, some instances of sarcasm may also contain an element of aggression and may be used to attack the addressee’s face (Barbe 1995).
2. Subversive humour is defined as humour which “challenges or subverts the status quo” (Holmes and Marra 2002b).
3. The transcription conventions are listed below. The transcripts of the original examples have been slightly modified and shortened for the purposes of this chapter.

[laughs]	Paralinguistic features in square brackets
... // ... \ ...	
... / ... \\ ...	Simultaneous speech
(hello)	Transcriber’s best guess at an unclear utterance
?	Rising or question intonation
[...]	Section of transcript omitted
ke-	Incomplete word
[laughs]: yeah:	Laughter throughout the utterance of the word in between the colons
4. Although humour and irony may be distinct phenomena, they clearly “overlap significantly” (Attardo 2000: 12; see also Barbe 1995). And since Example (3) is also humorous (as reflected in the addressees’ response), this distinction is neglected here.
5. Teasing is defined as utterances in which the speaker expresses “a potentially insulting/aggressive comment but simultaneously provides/relies upon cues that the utterance is to be understood as playful/nonserious” (Alberts 1992: 155).
6. Jocular abuse means abuse that is “perceived as jocular” by the addressee and that is delivered “in such a way that the recipient is unlikely to interpret it at face value” (Hay 1994: 29).
7. Maori are the indigenous people of New Zealand (they make up about 15 percent of the population), while Pakeha are New Zealanders of European origin.
8. Banter has been described as a means to “deflate someone else’s ego to bring them to the same level as others” (Plester and Sayers 2007: 158). This can be achieved through various humour strategies including teasing and jocular abuse.

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Part III: Interpersonal issues in different contexts

14. Interpersonal issues in the workplace

Bernadette Vine

Abstract

The ways in which interpersonal strategies and the negotiation of power emerge in the workplace are explored in this chapter. Language in the workplace is an area that has received increasing attention over the last decade, and an overview of research conducted on spoken interaction between colleagues at work is provided. New data from the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project is presented to illustrate the devices and issues that arise. Three aspects of social talk which have been researched – small talk, narrative and humour – are considered in relation to solidarity and power, as well as to the way people construct, maintain and negotiate different facets of identity. Interpersonal issues, however, are not only relevant when considering social talk. Research which focuses on the transactional and task-related aspects of talk between colleagues and which highlight interpersonal issues are also reviewed.

1. Introduction

The focus in this chapter is the ways in which people build solidarity and enact and negotiate power and identity through their discourse in the workplace, paying attention to interpersonal issues. There are many different types of workplaces: in some only some participants are at work, e.g., medical settings (see Davis, this volume), legal settings (see Cotterill, this volume) or service settings (see, e.g., Asmuss 2007; Cheepen 2000; Kuiper and Flindall 2000; Moore 2008; Ryoo 2005). Interactions in these settings also involve strangers or people who do not interact on a regular basis. This factor has important implications at the interpersonal level since social distance is often high and the maintenance of on-going relationships is not generally a factor. Service talk is also often “highly regulated and standardised” (Cameron 2008: 143) and the transactional aspect is of primary importance (Kraft and Geluykens 2008: 222).

In the last ten years or so, many linguistic researchers have turned to the analysis of workplace data involving colleagues engaged in interactions in their workplaces, such as staff meetings and one-to-one face-to-face interactions. Initially, the main focus of this was the task-oriented nature of workplace discourse, with less attention being given to relational aspects (Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris 1995; Boden 1994, 1995; Francis 1986; Willing 1992). More recent workplace

studies have explored a range of interpersonal issues and some of the many different linguistic strategies employed to take account of these factors. The discussion below begins by examining research that highlights strategies which speakers use to build solidarity and which are generally associated with social rather than transactional talk (Section 2). In particular, three factors have been the focus in this research: small talk (Section 2.1), narrative (Section 2.2) and humour (Section 2.3) (see also Schnurr, this volume). Although all three of these can be used to express solidarity, the use of each also has implications in terms of power relationships. All three are therefore also examined from the point of view of power.

When people work together on an on-going basis their relationships are continually constructed, negotiated and maintained. Part of this involves each individual's identity as well as the group's identity, and small talk, narrative and humour have been seen to be important devices in the presentation of self. Facets of identity, such as gender and ethnicity, as well as leadership or professional roles have also received attention from workplace researchers and these issues will also be discussed in Section 2 (see also Mullany, this volume and De Fina, this volume).

Small talk, narrative and humour are often seen as part of the social rather than the core business talk in an institutional setting. The constant presentation of self and the need to maintain relationships, however, means that interpersonal issues permeate all talk at work (Koester 2006). In research on workplace directives, for instance, the focus is on the way people use language to get things done, and issues of power and politeness together with their implications for solidarity building and relationships, are always relevant. Research on a range of transactional/task-related aspects of workplace talk which highlight interpersonal issues will be examined in Section 3.¹ This includes elements of meeting management and turn-taking (Section 3.1), the expression of face-threatening acts (Section 3.2) and the use of interpersonal markers (Section 3.3).

Within each section, new examples will be presented from the Wellington Language in the Workplace Project database. This sociolinguistic project began in 1996 with the aim of identifying characteristics of effective communication in New Zealand workplaces and is still continuing today. A number of researchers have been connected with the project over the years, publishing research on a range of different aspects of talk at work, with a strong focus on interpersonal issues (see, e.g., Chan 2005, 2007; Chiles 2006, 2007; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b; Holmes 2006; Marra 2003; Schnurr 2005, 2009; Vine 2001, 2004a).

2. Social talk at work and interpersonal issues

Despite the popular view that it is distracting or irrelevant, social talk has been seen to have an important role in furthering transactional goals in the workplace. In fact, as Coupland (2000b: 6) notes in relation to small talk in the workplace, the rapport

that this builds “furthers and contests the instrumental and transactional goals of the institution” and is an integral part of workplace talk. The interpersonal function of social talk is essential to the effective running of a company. This section provides an overview of workplace research on three types of social talk – small talk (Section 2.1), narrative (Section 2.2) and humour (Section 2.3). These have all been seen as forms of social talk, although business talk and social talk are often intertwined and are seen as existing on a continuum (Holmes 2000a).

2.1. Small talk, solidarity, power and identity

An important way to build solidarity in the workplace is through the use of small talk (Holmes 2000a; Mirivel and Tracy 2005; Mullany 2006).² At an interpersonal level, small talk “constructs, expresses, maintains and reinforces relationships” (Holmes and Stubbe 2003b: 96) and its use at the beginning of an interaction gets work started on a positive note (Tannen 1994: 65; Laver 1975: 221).

Although it is now well-established that small talk occurs frequently at the boundaries of work-focused interactions (Schwartzman 1989; Boden 1994; Holmes 2000a; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b), several researchers also examine its use during sections of primarily transactional talk. Mullany (2006), for instance, looks at the interweaving of small talk into business talk by women managers to create solidarity and collegiality and Koester (2006: 58) refers to small talk that occurs during task-focused interactions as “relational episodes.” Holmes and Stubbe (2003b: 96) also note that small talk can be used during interactions as a time-filler, as a means of relieving tension, and as a way of creating an informal atmosphere during more task-focused activities. One managing director from the Wellington Language in the Workplace database who actively and explicitly encouraged a very informal culture in his workplace was Daniel (Holmes, Vine and Marra 2009). One of the devices he used to achieve this was small talk. Frequently he would insert and encourage small talk during business meetings. In Example (1), Daniel checks with Maureen during a meeting of the management team that everything is lined up for the company’s Christmas lunch:

Example (1)³

- Daniel: so everything’s all lined up for that day then Maureen
 Maureen: yep
 Daniel: okay + what are we eating
 Maureen: [quietly]: spit roast:
 Daniel: spit roast eh we got a pig lined up +++
 I’ll have you know I only put on a hundred grams while I was away

The Christmas lunch is an item on the agenda that Daniel wants to check. Maureen confirms that everything is ready for the lunch. Daniel acknowledges this and after a pause asks what is on the menu. The important thing is that everything is orga-

nised. His enquiry about the food is not necessary to being able to tick this item off the agenda. He then takes the small talk even further by commenting on the fact that he did not put on weight while recently away on a business trip.

Small talk has an important relational function, and as many researchers have noted is not in any way 'small' as the name suggests (see, e.g., Mullany 2006). Small talk in the workplace has been seen as an important device for creating solidarity and building team. If a workplace has a focus on solidarity and good team relationships then small talk is a salient feature of interaction (Fletcher 1999). Daniel's use of small talk creates an informal friendly atmosphere in his management meetings.

Small talk also contributes to the construction of power relationships in the workplace. It can be used as a less direct, more covert way of doing power. People in positions of power tend to be the ones who manage the small talk at work (Tannen 1994; Holmes 2000a; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b). Superiors have the right to minimise the small talk or cut it off and get (back) onto business. They can also actively encourage it, as in Example (1) with Daniel, and use it as a device to limit social distance and create an informal atmosphere.

Mullany (2006) sees power as a fundamental issue when considering the role of small talk in the workplace, "even when interactants appear to be using small talk to display collegiality and solidarity" (Mullany 2006: 62). The higher status women in her study used small talk in powerful ways, to reduce social distance between them and their subordinates, but also as an in-group identity marker between women, excluding the men present and creating social distance.

Subordinates may also use small talk as a device to manage the power relationship. They may use it, for example, as a precursor to a request (Holmes and Stubbe 2003b: 105) or as a way of resisting power. Holmes and Stubbe (2003b: 104), for instance, show a subordinate resisting a superior's repression of social talk by repeatedly talking about her personal situation.

In the pre-meeting section of a team meeting from another company in the Wellington Language in the Workplace database, the mere presence of a superior stops small talk. Two younger women who have junior positions in the team have arrived in the room first. One starts talking about the music at her recent wedding and when another young woman enters she is also drawn into the conversation. When an older woman with higher status enters, however, they stop talking. The meeting has not started yet and the younger women could have continued their discussion. However, there is a pause in the conversation as the older woman sits down. The younger woman who entered last then asks the more senior woman about a work report. She engages her in conversation, but the topic is work related.

When considering professional roles, small talk has been seen as an important device for effective leaders in paying attention to relational goals and presenting themselves as good leaders (see, e.g., Vine et al. 2008). The fact that they are engaging in small talk is important here, although topics are also relevant. Within a

New Zealand context, a range of leadership styles have been identified (Holmes 2005a; Marra, Vine and Holmes 2008). If a leader is adopting a motherly or fatherly style of leadership then attention to personal situations is part of this. If their leadership style is more one of being a good mate or a good bloke then a possible topic of small talk may be rugby (an important aspect of identity for many New Zealand males). In Example (1), Daniel uses small talk to help create an informal atmosphere in his meetings. As a leader he tends to project the image of a good bloke (see Marra, Vine and Holmes 2008) and his informal style is a big part of this, including his use of small talk.

Many aspects of identity may be evident in the content of small talk. For instance, drawing on North American data, Koester (2006: 141) gives an example where the speakers build a picture of themselves as cosmopolitan and knowledgeable of European culture, while in Mirivel and Tracy (2005: 20) the topics of small talk (and other pre-meeting talk) directed at the staff assistant – coffee, bagels and the agenda – affirm her identity as the assistant.

Small talk is one linguistic device which has typically been associated with women's speech (Coupland 2000b; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b; Mullany 2007). As seen earlier, Mullany (2006) notes its use as a tool to mark in-group identity by women managers with other women. Holmes (2006) identifies its use being associated more with feminine communities of practice (2006: 91), although the judgment of a community of practice as being feminine may in part be due to a higher use and acceptance of small talk.⁴

Small talk can also work at the level of organisational identity. Tracy and Naughton (2000: 75) comment that small talk at the beginning of an interaction enacts identity by clarifying "participants' relative status or relationship well-being." This, however, goes beyond the individual, since "[i]nstitutions, too, have identities and talk is a central means through which these group-level identities are supported or contested" (Tracy and Naughton 2000: 80).

2.2. Narrative, solidarity, power and identity

Narrative is another device which the manager from Example (1), Daniel, makes frequent use of in creating an informal atmosphere and building solidarity in his meetings. As noted by Thornborrow and Coates (2005: 1), "stories have a pervasive role in our everyday life" and as such have been researched in a large range of contexts, including many different types of workplaces, from legal settings where narrative is an integral part of evidence giving and gathering (e.g., Harris 2005; Johnson 2008) to professional white collar workplaces where narratives in workplace meetings can perform a range of functions (see, e.g., Holmes and Marra 2005; Marra and Holmes 2004). They can entertain, justify and explain, instruct and establish social norms and are an important device for building solidarity. Often they perform several functions at once.

In Marra and Holmes (2004), the sociable function of workplace anecdotes is highlighted, as the authors focus on the distinction between oral reports and narratives used to entertain. The two women managers they studied both use stories to emphasise solidarity and “de-formalise the workplace environment” (Marra and Holmes 2004: 211).

Example (2) contains a narrative told by the managing director of a company during a meeting of the management team. The company has been having problems with some new equipment and the managing director, Seamus, and the general manager, Jaeson, are going to have a meeting with a representative from the company that provides the equipment. This is not the first time Seamus and Jaeson have met with representatives from the company to try and sort out the problems.

Example (2)

- [laughter throughout extract – not noted in transcript]
- Seamus: the last time this happened it was in front of his boss as well
but he’s just such an idiot he needs it
he got his business card out and started
writing the complaints on the back of his business card
and he ran out of space
and Lenny Lenny head honcho kept saying
haven’t you got a pad haven’t you got a pad
get a pad for god sakes get a pad
and he kept writing on this //card\
Jaeson: /and\\ then Seamus says
and then another thing and then he goes
jez you’re gonna run out of business [laughs]: cards soon:
Seamus: that’s what he said and then he said
make sure you don’t put them in and give them to someone
+ (all those complaints on them)
I said to Jaeson we should cut down a little tiny pad
about that big
Jaeson: a really thick pad [laughs]
Seamus: give it to him and tell them to take some note
because we’ve got some big problems

The narrative here relates an experience shared by Seamus and Jaeson when they last visited the company that provides the equipment. There have been problems with the equipment, but this story does not serve any practical task-related purpose. It does, however, build solidarity and also provides relief and an outlet for some of the tension and frustration that the members of the management team, including Seamus and Jaeson, are feeling in relation to the equipment problems and their attempts to get these rectified. Part of the way it does this is by the picture that

is presented of the representative from the other company as stupid and incompetent – and by association Seamus and the members of his company are portrayed as competent. Seamus also exploits the entertainment value of the story, and Jaeson adds to this, both portraying themselves as good guys.

Thornborrow and Coates (2005:7) note that the most important function of narratives is to “tell us who we are: they are central to our social and cultural identity” and as seen in De Fina (this volume) narrative is a major focus of research on identity negotiation. Holmes and Marra (2005) analyse the function of anecdotes told by two managers and the way the managers construct their identities as either the “tough boss” or the “ordinary, fallible person”. In both cases narrative enables them to mitigate their position of authority and the tension between maintaining their status as a leader and showing workplace solidarity. The importance of narrative as a tool for leaders to build solidarity is a factor which has been picked up by business consultants. Unlike small talk which sometimes is viewed negatively (Mullany 2006), narrative is seen in a positive light. Gargiulo (2006: 62) for instance notes that “(f)or leaders strategically focused on the critical nature of relationships, the capacity of stories to help people bond is one of the greatest tools they have at their disposal”. The focus of his whole book is on the use of stories by people in positions of power, as summed up in the subtitle: “to improve communication and build relationships” (Gargiulo 2006).

As with small talk, various aspects of identity may be expressed through narrative and narrative can function on several levels at once. Holmes (2005b), for example, highlights the complexity of narrative as it reflects personal, social and professional identities, while Marra and Holmes (2008) consider the role of narrative in constructing ethnicity in a New Zealand Maori workplace. They explore the intersection of narrative and identity as they contribute to both individual and group identities. As Marra and Holmes (2008) show, storytelling can be used as a creative and socially acceptable strategy for expressing identity in a workplace context.

2.3. Humour, solidarity, power and identity

Finally, like small talk and narrative, humour is a valuable resource for building solidarity in the workplace (Holmes and Marra 2002a; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b: Ch. 6; Schnurr 2005, this volume). Part of the effectiveness of the narrative in Example (2) is that it contains humour, adding and enhancing its effectiveness as a solidarity building and tension relieving device. Example (3) provides a further example of humour from the same workplace.

Example (3) is taken from a meeting during which the management team has been discussing at length changes that are going to be taking place in the company. They will be expanding their product range and producing a new catalogue. This example comes 30 minutes into the discussion and so far there has only been the

odd quick humorous comment amongst the work talk. This example is extended with several people contributing to the construction of the humour.

Example (3)

- [there is laughter throughout example – not noted in transcript]
- Jaeson: now um Seamus is quite keen that that the catalogue doesn't have a an American sort of flavour
you know so you got this um busty um girl with big teeth + um so
- Harry: is that why they put Tom and Fred the two ugliest buggers in the outfit
- Jaeson: well what I was gonna say + is is that um
some of you may be approached to to be models in +
in this um catalogue
- Harry: I was and where was I
- Jaeson: (h-) holding a () and a [brand of beer]
+ wasn't what we meant [laughs]
so um yeah you might be approached and asked to be in
I know Paul has several engagements already ...
we may have to pay to have Paul on it [laughs]
book him in
- Paul: not a bad rate
- Seamus: and Ivo looks like a professional model so (he's out)
- Jaeson: Ivo you look like an you're like one of th-
like an American basketball player or something you know
um so er and the other thing we thought of [laughs]: doing:
was we wanna have Seamus //+ in a little\ a little cameo
in every shot [laughs] I thought it was a great idea
in the background running the [machine] or sweeping
or driving the forklift I think that'll look great
- Seamus: /no we're not doing that\\
- Ivo: some kind of disguises
- Seamus: yeah that's what that's what he that's what he said
- Jaeson: different different things # just sitting there in every shot
- Sharon: unfortunately Seamus will be doing nothing else
but being //a fulltime model in that case [laughs]\
- Seamus: /yeah I'm not yeah but that's n- that's not necessarily the problem\\
I don't think it will be a good thing

The humour arises from the topic of a new product catalogue. Jaeson comments that Seamus, the managing director, does not want the catalogue to look “American”. They want to use people who actually work in the company rather than hiring models. Others add humorous comments, Harry joking that this is why they have put Tom and Fred in it, these two men being the ‘ugliest’ people working in the company. Neither man is present at the meeting. Harry then jokes that he has been

left out and Jaeson teases him that they do not want photos of people holding cans of beer. Jaeson then teases Paul, who is good-looking, about being involved and Paul responds by saying he will not charge too much. Seamus then joins in the joking too, teasing Ivo that he is too good looking. Jaeson picks this up and then moves the humour along, mentioning an idea to have Seamus as a cameo in each shot. Ivo also joins in at this point, suggesting Seamus wear disguises. Finally, Sharon joins in, commenting that Seamus will become a full-time model. Jaeson, Harry, Paul, Seamus, Ivo and Sharon all contribute to the humour here and several members of the company, including some who are present at the meeting, become targets of the humour. Seamus is the highest level leader present followed by Jaeson. The others report to Jaeson and the humour has a levelling effect. Everyone present joins in the laughter and the collaborative nature of this example enhances its team building function (cf. Holmes and Marra 2006).

The solidarity and relationship building and maintaining function of humour in the workplace is highlighted by a number of researchers, including Holmes and Marra (2002a, 2006) and Vine et al. (2009). In Vine et al. (2009) boundary marking humour which draws on different 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' is explored. Boundary marking humour builds solidarity when the speaker(s) and their audience all belong to the same in-group that is being referenced. When one or more of those present does not belong to the in-group however, humour can be used in a subversive manner. Unlike the example above, a subordinate can use humour as a distancing device which emphasises boundaries between the speaker and the target of the humour (Holmes and Marra 2002c; Schnurr, this volume). Humour therefore, serves as a valuable strategy for subordinates to challenge power structures and subvert repressive or coercive discourse from superiors (Holmes 2000b; Holmes and Marra 2002c; Mullany 2007). The advantage of using humour in this way is that it gives the speaker the option of saying they were 'just joking'.

As a resource for leaders, humour is also seen as an acceptable strategy for a superior to use in maintaining a position of power (Holmes 2000b). It can be used to soften directives and criticism (Holmes and Stubbe 2003b: 110; Mullany 2004), although underlying this softening and apparent enactment of solidarity there is still the enactment of power (Mullany 2007: 89).

At a basic level, humour is a useful strategy for paying attention to the relational aspect of leadership. Seamus, the managing director of the company in Examples (2) and (3), did not often initiate humour, but did contribute and allowed humour in his meetings. After the section of talk presented in Example (3), Jaeson is ready to get back to the work talk, returning to practical issues in relation to the catalogue, but Seamus continues the humour, see Example (4):

Example (4)

- Jaeson: problem is is that by the time you get back to from Australia
all the catalogue will be finished
- Seamus: especially when um Jaeson started calling it where's Wally
[laughter]
- Jaeson: he went off the idea real quick
and I handed him a a red and white striped h- hat

Seamus brings up a factor that involved Jaeson making fun of Seamus. This had occurred in a private interaction which did not involve the whole management team. It has been hinted at previously, but now Seamus explicitly makes his team aware of the joke: that his suggested "cameo" should involve a costume. Jaeson had referred to Seamus as the character "Wally" from the "Where's Wally?" books (known in some countries as "Where's Waldo?"). These books contain detailed pictures in which the reader must locate the character Wally who wears a red and white striped hat. Jaeson suggests that spotting Seamus in the background of photos in the catalogue, would be like hunting out Wally. The added insult here is that a "wally" in New Zealand (and British) slang is a silly person. Seamus not only continues the humour here at a point where Jaeson is returning to serious issues, but he also makes himself a further target of the humour. At a basic level, speakers who use humour are generally seen in a positive light and the use of humour creates an image of being a good sort. There are not many speakers in the Wellington Language in the Workplace database who do not at some point utilise humour. Although humour is not as frequent in work talk as it is in private settings (Holmes 2006: 108), it is a salient feature of workplace interaction in New Zealand workplaces.

As well as creating an image of being a good sort, humour is a device that speakers use to construct different facets of identity (Hay 1995; Holmes and Marra 2002b; Schnurr 2005; Kotthoff 2006). These identities may at times be contradictory and humour is a strategy which can help reconcile tensions between apparently conflicting identities, e.g., for women leaders who wish to "do femininity" *and* achieve their leadership objectives (Schnurr 2008).

Boundary-marking humour plays an obvious role in the presentation of aspects of identity, with different in-groups and out-groups being referenced. Holmes and Marra (2002b), for instance, note the use of humour to mark ethnic and gender boundaries, and in Vine et al. (2009) members of the same work group are seen to orient to common institutional, gender or ethnic boundaries at different times, thereby reinforcing and asserting different shared aspects of their identities.

3. Transactional talk and interpersonal issues

The discussion so far has looked at some specific strategies that are generally associated with social rather than transactional talk (Drew and Heritage 1992), although much of the research noted has shown these devices occurring at least some of the time within sections of task-focused interaction. Humour, for example, has been seen as a strategy which can ease tension during business meetings and small talk may precede a request. Research which focuses on features of transactional or task-related workplace discourse is outlined in this section, beginning with a focus on meeting management (Section 3.1). Studies of some specific face-threatening acts in the workplace are then reviewed – including directives, disapproval and disagreement (Section 3.2). Mitigation is a common factor which arises in these studies and which is oriented towards interpersonal goals. This mitigation can occur at a number of levels (cf. Schneider, this volume). As Koester (2006) shows, relational goals can be evident throughout discourse, at the level of individual turns or even lexical items. Modal items, hedges, vague language, and idioms can all contribute to this, and these factors will be considered in Section 3.3.

3.1. Meeting management and turn-taking

In Holmes, Stubbe and Vine (1999) a number of factors are examined to show how leaders enact power in the workplace. Three of these involve aspects of meeting management – setting the agenda, summarizing progress and closing an interaction (see also Holmes and Stubbe 2003b). These are all ways managers exert control and explicitly shows their power and position.

Managers generally also control other aspects of meeting management more directly related to turn-taking – who holds the floor, who selects speakers and how turn transitions occur. In an examination of the language of male managers when they chair meetings, for example, Bilbow (1998) found that the chairs held the floor 40 percent of the time. In some workplaces, the role of chair is shared around between members of a team or work group. In these situations, the chair will influence these aspects of turn-taking (Kell et al. 2007), although experience and seniority will affect how much the manager steps into this role. Turn-taking will also be affected by the manager and his or her management style. In the management meetings from the company where Seamus and Jaeson work, Jaeson is the general manager and as such chairs the meetings. He controls the agenda and the transition from one topic to another. As seen in Holmes and Chiles (2010), however, Seamus, the managing director, sometimes gets involved in the practical aspects of getting things done and one way this is manifested is the way he asks direct and at times confrontational questions. Questions select speakers, and so are a way of controlling turn-taking.

Another case of dominance from a superior in terms of turn-taking is noted by Fairclough (2001), where a doctor interrupts a student several times. Fairclough interprets this as an indication of the doctor controlling the student's contributions, interruptions here being used as a device to exercise and reinforce power.

The following three examples are taken from a meeting involving a manager and an assistant. They show the balance of power moving back and forth between the participants and the way this is reflected in the turn-taking:

Example (5a)

Suzanne: but I think we need to as you say um e- effectively signal that we need more information (and that)

Julia: yeah

Suzanne: be worthwhile # could you talk to Pete and say that this is what Hohaia's asked you for

Julia: yeah

Suzanne: and say what our thinking is ...

In Example (5a), the manager, Suzanne, dominates the talk time. Julia's contributions here are limited to *yeah*, and her second turn is directly elicited by Suzanne's question. The interaction continues in this way for several more seconds. Suzanne then touches on the issue of what has happened in the past in relation to the topic under discussion, as in Example (5b):

Example (5b)

Suzanne: ... this has probably been discussed in the past so he may not be so worried about that so it'd be just //good if\

Julia: /[sighs]: it hasn't\ been [sighs] it honestly it hasn't actually had that this mis- much of an impact because

Suzanne: yeah

Julia: the output two is two point five and really that'd make us go down to one point eight //which\ is five or six hundred thousand

Suzanne: /mm\

Suzanne: mm

Here we see Julia's first substantial turn in this section of talk. Suzanne's turns now consist of *yeah* and *mm*. Julia has worked on the issue in the past and has expert power in this situation, i.e., power due to skills and knowledge as opposed to legitimate power due to position (French and Raven 1959). She correspondingly takes and holds the floor. The next section of talk is shown in Example (5c) and shows the floor passing backwards and forwards between the two interactants.

Example (5c)

- Julia: and that is a significant chunk of what
//would normally yeah go in\ and there's no balance
- Suzanne: /yeah seven hundred thousand mm\\
- Suzanne: yes //we don't yeah there's no balancing it out
so they in the mid nineties we had those sorts of issues\
Julia: /and yeah () and we've never had +
yeah not\\ since I've been here
//have we actually had + yeah\
Suzanne: /but yeah it's quite a different + process\\ that you go through
//now\ absolutely okay
Julia: /yeah\\

There are several overlaps in this section. In the first Suzanne clarifies the figure being discussed and the interruption is collaborative rather than disruptive (cf. Coates 1996, 2004). The next overlaps also sound collaborative, but Suzanne begins to take back the floor in the second overlap and refers here to her experience and knowledge of what has happened in the past. She has worked in the organisation longer than Julia, who was not present at the company during the mid nineties. Suzanne regains the floor after the third overlap. Julia's last overlap is once again minimal and involves her just saying *yeah*. The progression through these three examples nicely illustrates the negotiation of power and roles that occurs in real workplace interaction and the way it is reflected in turn-taking. As the balance of power moves back and forth, so does the floor. Suzanne, the manager, allows Julia to have a share of the floor and although Example (5) begins and ends with Suzanne having a position of dominance in terms of turn-taking and roles, the middle section demonstrates negotiation of these factors. Her willingness to do this, although in a position of institutional power, shows attention to interpersonal factors, as well as the fact that Julia has the relevant information that Suzanne needs.

3.2. Face-threatening acts

The expression of face-threatening acts such as directives, disapproval and disagreement in the workplace is another part of task-related work talk that demonstrates the way people pay attention to issues of solidarity as well as power in business discourse. In a study of directives, requests and advice between women in a government workplace, Vine (2001, 2004a) concluded that there were no cases where these speech acts were not mitigated in some way. Utterances containing unmitigated direct forms tended to occur in specific situations and were mitigated by factors outside the immediate utterance (see also Vine 2009). Contextual factors were important at different levels. The purpose of an interaction could affect the

forms used: direct forms being more common in interactions where the main purpose was to give instructions. So could the immediate discourse context: extended discussion of an issue could then result in a direct form, the preceding discourse acting as mitigation. In Example (5a) above, part of which is repeated below in Example (6), Suzanne prepares to give a directive in lines 1–2, agreeing with something Julia has already said and explicitly acknowledging the validity of Julia’s comment ‘as you say’, whilst placing this within the context of what they need to do as a workplace about the issue. At the beginning of line 4 she further reinforces her upcoming directive, commenting on the usefulness of the action: ‘be worthwhile’. The mitigation in lines 1, 2 and 4, all soften the upcoming directive, and when it comes, Suzanne uses a conventionally indirect form, a form which also mitigates its impact.

Example (6)

- 1 Suzanne: but I think we need to as you say um e- effectively signal
 2 that we need more information (and that)
 3 Julia: yeah
 4 Suzanne: be worthwhile # could you talk to Pete
 5 and say that this is what Hohaia’s asked you for

Koester (2006) also notes the frequent mitigation of directives and instructions, concluding that the speaker who is in the dominant role of instruction-giver or issuer of directives

seems to try to compensate for the discursive imbalance by avoiding direct forms (which might indicate a presumption of dominance) as well as by using various solidarity devices to make the encounter less one-sided and more interactive and interpersonal. (Koester 2006: 122)

In a study of disapproval and negative feedback, Chan (2007) notes the use of mitigation by people in positions of power to express these speech acts. Mitigation is not always present however and she highlights the importance of the immediate context and the way that the interaction plays out. The norms of the workplace, the particular community of practice are also seen to be relevant. The community of practice is also a relevant and useful construct when considering the expression of other face-threatening acts, such as disagreement. In a study on the way people “do disagreement” in workplace meetings, Holmes and Stubbe (2003a) illustrate a range of ways people manage conflict. One influential factor on how overtly and explicitly disagreement is expressed is the workplace culture. The role and interaction style of individuals is also important; those in authority can either exploit their position of power by pressuring others to change and accept their viewpoint, or they can play down power differences and resolve the conflict through negotiation.

In examining conflict in workplace talk, Koester (2006: Ch 6) notes an interesting shift into a conflictual mode of discourse (see also Kotthoff 1993). This is

characterised by an initial hedging and delaying of disagreement. Disagreement then becomes more direct and there is a corresponding reduction in the use of hedges, vague language and other interpersonal markers.

3.3. Interpersonal markers

Koester (2006: 55) refers to a number of words and phrases that speakers can use in transactional talk to show relational goals. She calls these ‘interpersonal markers’ and these include modals (e.g., *can*, *will*), hedges and intensifiers (e.g., *just*, *actually*), vague language (e.g., *or something*) and idioms (e.g., *have a word*). In a corpus-based study of interpersonal markers in workplace talk, Koester (2006: Ch 5) found that these markers occurred less frequently in workplace situations where speakers were focused more on relational goals, such as talk involving office gossip and small talk, than in work-focused talk, e.g., decision making interactions. When the focus of talk is social, interpersonal goals are central and there is not the same need to use interpersonal markers; this aspect is taken care of. The need to pay attention to interpersonal issues when the focus is on task-related goals, however, means the speakers use other devices to take account of this. Koester notes that interpersonal markers are multifunctional, they “can perform transactional as well as relational functions” (Koester 2006: 106). They therefore also play a very important role in task-related talk, allowing speakers to orient to both transactional and relational goals.⁵

Interpersonal markers were frequent in the directives, requests and advice examined in Vine (2001, 2004a). And there are many present throughout the sections of talk presented in Section 3.1. In Example (5a), the directive is expressed as a modal interrogative using *could*. *Could* was the second most frequent central modal used in directives in Vine (2004b), after *can*, and is associated with a high degree of tentativeness and politeness (Biber et al. 1999: 485; Coates 1983: 121). Other devices which show Suzanne orienting to interpersonal issues in this section of task-related talk are her use of vague language: (*and that*) and *sorts of issues*, as well as her use of the hedges *I think*, *quite* and *just*.

Julia also makes use of interpersonal markers. The sections of her speech from Example (5b) and (5c) are repeated below, without the overlaps or turn changes.

Example (7)

- 1 Julia: [sighs]: it hasn't: been [sighs] it honestly it hasn't actually
 2 had that this mis- much of an impact because
 3 the output two is two point five
 4 and really that'd make us go down to one point eight
 5 which is five or six hundred thousand
 6 and that is a significant chunk of what would normally
 7 yeah go in and there's no balance

8 + and yeah () and we've never had +
 9 yeah not since I've been here
 10 have we actually had + yeah

Actually occurs twice here (lines 1 and 10), and she also uses *really* (line 4), both of these acting as intensifiers and adding emphasis to what she is saying. Her use of *honestly* (line 1), *significant* (line 6) and *never* (line 8) also strengthen her message. She also uses the modal *would* (lines 4 and 6). In a corpus-based study, Koester (2006: 80) found half of the uses of *would* occurred in collaborative discourse. Another noticeable aspect of the last four lines of this section of talk is Julia's use of *yeah*, once in each line, marking agreement with what Suzanne is saying. Even in this short task-focused interaction therefore, there are many aspects of the discourse which show the speakers orientating to interpersonal issues.

4. Conclusion

A vital element of interaction between colleagues in the workplace is the building and maintaining of relationships. This is an ongoing process and three important social devices that help to do this and that have been examined in workplace settings are the use of small talk, narrative and humour. There are a number of issues related to the use of social talk at work, such as who can use it and in what contexts, that have implications in terms of power. Power in the workplace is a constant and salient aspect of interaction due to the professional roles and skills of interactants and the need to achieve goals and outcomes. A crucial way in which power is expressed and resisted in any setting is through language. The more powerful person in a workplace interaction tends to have the most control over social talk (Holmes and Stubbe 2003b) and can therefore actively build solidarity as well as enact power, especially in more formal meetings. Subordinates can also utilise these devices in ways that reinforce solidarity or as a way of resisting power.

From an interpersonal perspective, small talk, narrative and humour all play an important role in the construction, negotiation and maintenance of identity. For each individual and each group, there are different aspects of identity that may be brought to the fore at different times (Ivanic 1998: 11). The groups an individual belongs to are referenced in their talk as well as in the talk of others around them (Sunderland and Litosseliti 2002: 7). This is an area that has been receiving increasing attention from workplace researchers and a number of aspects of identity have been examined – including gendered, ethnic and professional identities.

Interpersonal issues are also an integral part of transactional talk in the workplace, since, as Koester (2006: 53) notes, “relational goals and relationship building pervade all aspects of workplace talk, even talk that is fully focused on a workplace task.” This can occur at a number of different levels, from aspects of meeting

management, to the expression of face-threatening acts, to the use of interpersonal markers. At all of these levels people can enact and resist power and solidarity. It is not the linguistic form or strategy that is powerful, rather it is a question of who uses it and in what precise context. The same strategy can be used to show solidarity or exercise power, or even to do both, as Tannen (1994) points out:

what appears as attempts to dominate conversation (an exercise of power) may actually be intended to establish rapport (an exercise of solidarity). This occurs because (...) power and solidarity are bought with the same currency: The same linguistic means can be used to create either or both. (Tannen 1994: 23–24)

What this quotation highlights apart from the multifunctionality of strategies is that hearer interpretation may be different from speaker intention. The use of language in context determines the function and effects of an utterance. This is an under-researched area of workplace discourse and would certainly benefit from further investigation in a range of workplace contexts.

Notes

1. There has been a great deal of research on business discourse in intercultural and cross-cultural contexts (e.g., Willing 1992; Clyne 1994; Spencer-Oatey 2002). A few of these studies will be mentioned here, but for a detailed review of research in this area see Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson and Planken (2007).
2. Of course this is not true for all cultures, and the norms for small talk vary (see, e.g., Clyne 1994).
3. Transcription conventions: All names used in extracts are pseudonyms. Line divisions are intended to support understanding and typically represent sense unit boundaries.

[laughs] :	Paralinguistic features and other information in square brackets, colons indicate start/finish
+	Pause of up to one second
... // \ ...	Simultaneous speech
... / \ ...	
()	Unclear utterance
(hello)	Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
#	Signals end of "sentence" where it is ambiguous on paper
–	Utterance cut off
...	Section of transcript omitted
4. Community of Practice (Wenger 1998) is a concept that is becoming used increasingly in workplace research (e.g., Chan 2005; Schnurr 2005; Holmes 2006; Mullany 2007). It refers to the way that each workplace, and team within it, has its own set of norms and the linguistic strategies which are appropriate for interaction between members of the group. (Compare also De Fina, this volume, on Communities of Practice.)
5. Other factors people may use at this level include swearing (Daly et al. 2004; Stapleton, this volume) and code-switching (Jariah Mohammed Jan 2003). There has been no corpus-based study of these factors in workplace data, but it would be interesting to see if they patterned in a similar way to the interpersonal markers investigated by Koester (2006).

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15. Interpersonal issues in court: Rebellion, resistance and other ways of behaving badly

Janet Cotterill

Abstract

Much of the linguistics literature on trial interaction over the past 25 years has sought to describe the mechanisms of witness examination and cross-examination in the adversarial courtroom. Seminal early work in the field, for example by Atkinson and Drew (1979), O'Barr (1982), Harris (1989), and Woodbury (1984), has in the main concentrated on the identification and/or quantification of asymmetrical turn-taking and questioning patterns between lawyers and witnesses in court. However, underpinning the majority of this work, and reflected in more recent research consolidating these initial findings, is the assumption that there exists a relatively homogenous group of individuals – 'witnesses' – with clearly defined identities and roles who follow a set of pre-ordained and prescriptive interactional rules which are generally understood and adhered to by trial participants. Drawing on a unique 12 million word corpus of courtroom data from English Crown Courts in the late 1990s, this chapter focuses not on transgressions of the law, but rather on transgressions of language, and attempts to describe some of the strategies and practices of witnesses who appear to break these interactional 'rules'; how, when and why they do so and what the potential consequences might be for their credibility in court. The attempts by witnesses to construct these alternative identities are the focus of the chapter, with particular attention paid to the interpersonal and interactional dynamics of such apparently subversive behaviour.

1. Introduction: The sanctioned interpersonal dynamics of courtroom interaction

The field of language and law or forensic linguistics is a relatively new, but increasingly significant specialisation within applied linguistics. There are numerous recent works that introduce the reader to this area of linguistic investigation (e.g., Cotterill 2002, 2003; Gibbons 2003; Coulthard and Johnson 2007); there is also a journal addressing the topic explicitly (*International Journal of Language and the Law*, previously *Forensic Linguistics*) and there are organizations, such as the *International Society of Forensic Linguistics* (available at <http://www.iafl.org/>) or the *International Association for Forensic Phonetics and Acoustics* (available at <http://www.iafpa.net/>), which demonstrate the scope of interest in this research

field. The aim of this chapter is not to give a general overview of all aspects of language and the law; instead, it focuses on the *interpersonal dynamics* of courtroom interaction.

A relatively large number of participants are present in the courtroom and contribute directly or indirectly to the interaction during the witness examination phase. Figure 1 illustrates the lines of interpersonal interaction which take place in the typical criminal court room in the adversarial system.

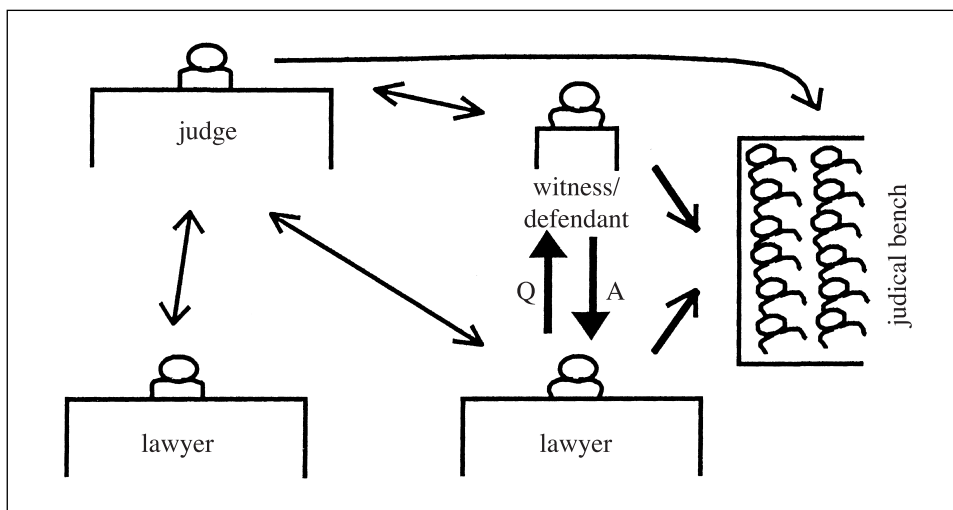


Figure 1. The interpersonal dynamics of courtroom interaction

The interactional rules of courtroom interaction. In terms of interactional relations in the courtroom, it is clear that an interpersonal hierarchy exists between the participants. The judge, as the most powerful participant, is able to interact with any of the other individuals present in the courtroom. Not only this, but he/she is also able to question any of the legal or lay people present with a variety of speech acts including questions (the judge can ask any of the lawyers or witnesses at any time), declarations (he/she is able to announce judgements, decisions relating to objections and other statements throughout the trial), in addition to a range of performatives, including the swearing in and dismissing of witnesses, the calling of adjournments and the requirement for lawyers to attend the judicial bench at sidebar sessions. The most obvious performative carried out by the judge is of course the sentencing of the defendant at the end of the trial phase if he/she is found guilty of the crime.

In contrast, the lawyers – next in both the legal and linguistic hierarchy – must give way to the power of the judge and although they are able to address the judicial bench, this must be accompanied by the appropriate levels of politeness and

deference. Finally, the witness sits at the bottom of the interpersonal and interactional pile. During the witness examination phase of the English criminal trial, the central focus of courtroom interaction, the trial *professionals*, the lawyers and judge, are able to benefit from the seemingly archaic rules and protocols which are entirely familiar to them, whereas the witnesses and jurors, the *lay* participants in the process, are typically unaccustomed to such an environment, and are at a disadvantage both legally and linguistically. For them, the judicial process can be a bewildering and threatening affair, where the casual conversational rights of generally equal access and free negotiation of turns and turn types are suspended, to be replaced by a hierarchical system of interaction, where control and constraint is the norm.

Thus, in the trial-by-jury system, the familiar features of conversational management are, as Matoesian (1993: 79) notes, “systematically transformed and exploited to manage the powerful interests and interactional contingencies of legal disciplinary regimes”. Whilst casual conversational talk is managed relatively spontaneously with turn-taking negotiated at a local level, in the courtroom, many of these norms are pre-determined, with pre-allocation of turns and turn-types the rule rather than the exception (see Atkinson and Drew 1979, for a detailed description of the turn-taking system in court).

In terms of participants, interaction in the adversarial criminal courtroom differs in a number of significant respects from its casual conversational counterpart. Perhaps the most significant constraint on the construction and presentation of these multiple and conflictual versions of events is the fact that this evidential picture is built up by means of question-and-answer adjacency pairs in a dialogic interaction between lawyer and witness which explores the events and circumstances of the crime under scrutiny. The stories told in court are not narrated by the person or persons present at the time, the witness(es), but rather are elicited by means of the lawyer’s questions. The lawyer was not present at the crime scene; the witness, who, conversely, may have been present, cannot typically claim to possess the same courtroom storytelling skills as the lawyer. The result is a mutual dependency, where both parties need the other in order to enable the story to be told effectively within the confines of the trial framework.

Power-asymmetrical interpersonal identities in lawyer-witness interaction. In dialogic lawyer-witness interaction, there is also a high degree of power asymmetry. Whereas in casual conversation, the management of turn-holding is a highly-skilled, locally-negotiated matter, where participants attempt to negotiate the smooth transition of the turn from one speaker to the next, thereby avoiding face-threatening clashes. In the courtroom context, such considerations of politeness, face and cooperation are attended to less significantly. This is because the default position in power-differential interaction is that the more powerful of the interactants may hold the floor until they are ready to give it up. Then, and only then, is it possible

for the less powerful participant to join in, at the discretion of the other, more powerful, speaker. This powerful imperative means that in terms of interpersonal dynamics, the default rule for the witness is ‘speak when spoken to’ and ‘answer questions when they are put to you’. If the witness fails to do this, s/he can even be punished to the point of imprisonment by use of the contempt-of-court law.

The majority of the large body of literature on the language of the courtroom over the past two decades has focused on the elucidation and exemplification of the asymmetry inherent in courtroom questioning. A succession of studies conducted by researchers such as Atkinson and Drew (1979), O’Barr (1982), Bogoch and Danet (1984), Woodbury (1984) and Luchjenbroers (1997) have all concluded (un-surprisingly) that the courtroom is a highly power-asymmetric interactional context, resulting in unequal turn-taking allocations and differential questioning and speech act rights, with lawyers being variously described as ‘controlling’ (Woodbury), ‘coercive’ (Bogoch and Danet) and ‘restrictive’ (Luchjenbroers) in their questioning of witnesses. Perhaps more surprisingly, these strategies are present both in direct and cross-examination, although they are significantly more common in cross examination questioning. Luchjenbroers (1997), for example, found a proportion of:

- (i) a doubling of wh-questions during examination (16.7 % vs. 8.1 % during cross-examination), and (ii) a much higher incidence of both declarative and tag questions during cross-examination (49.8 % and 7 % vs. 27.2 % and 2.3 % during examination). (Luchjenbroers 1997: 488)

In Danet’s (1980) study, closed question types showed a 47 % occurrence during examination, but an 87 % occurrence during cross-examination (Luchjenbroers, 1997: 482). This type of question form and distribution can be seen to reinforce the identity of the lawyer as ‘powerful’ and the witness as relatively ‘powerless’ (O’Barr 1982). This chapter will focus on questions put to witnesses during cross-examination.

The default requirement is for the witness in court to provide ‘preferred’ second-part responses – answers to the lawyer’s questions – which adequately satisfy all four of the Gricean maxims. When they take their oath prior to testifying, witnesses swear to tell ‘the truth, (maxim of *quality*) the whole truth (*quantity*) and nothing but the truth (*relation*)’ thereby ostensibly satisfying the first three of the four criteria for optimally cooperative talk (Grice 1975). By going through the legally binding performative utterance of the oath, witnesses effectively agree to be ‘co-operative’ participants, under threat of perjury charges.

The fourth maxim, of *manner*; (‘avoid obscurity and ambiguity’), is managed by means of the requirement for witnesses to be ‘responsive’, in other words to answer the question to the satisfaction of both lawyer and judge.

At this micro-level of Q-A [question-answer], the lawyer, and ultimately the judge, controls the interaction; in addition to the rule on ‘responsiveness’, lawyers

have turn-taking control over answers which are considered too lengthy, or which stray into areas which the lawyers would rather leave unexplored, since they may be damaging to their case. In both instances, the lawyer is able to limit the witness's response through the judicious and timely use of interruptions and objections. In summary, witnesses are poorly placed in the interactional hierarchy of courtroom talk; they have no control over the talk of other participants in the trial process, and only a very limited control over their own contributions.

These are the *de facto* rules of interpersonal interaction in the courtroom. However, although the majority of witnesses conform to the norms of interaction described above, there is a significant minority who, whether accidentally or deliberately, contravene these rules and conventions. This form of rebellion and resistance in interactional terms is the focus of this chapter and was inspired by a case involving a young boy who was the victim of a vicious attack resulting in his death and the subversive testimony of one of the key witnesses, a young woman. I will first describe the details of this case before moving on to analyse examples of this phenomenon in my own extensive corpus of English courtroom data.

The case of Damilola Taylor: A witness behaving badly? In April 2002, a remarkable trial was held in London to assess the guilt or innocence of several defendants in a murder case involving a young boy called Damilola Taylor. Unusually, it was the interpersonal linguistic aspects of the trial and the self-construction of the witness' identity rather than the legal outcome which caused it to be reported extensively in the UK press and beyond. The aspects examined focus predominantly on the interpersonal pragmatics of one particular witness who effectively 'broke the rules' of courtroom interaction perhaps due to naivety, perhaps due to other factors, many of which will be discussed in due course.

Damilola was a 10-year-old boy originally from Nigeria. In November 2000, he was killed with a broken bottle which severed an artery resulting in him bleeding to death in a stairwell not far from his home. The first trial of four youths in 2002 resulted in all four being acquitted. Crucially, two were acquitted on the direction of the judge after he ruled that not only the testimony of the prosecution's key witness, a 14-year-old girl, but also her *behaviour*, had been unreliable and unacceptable; the jury found the other two defendants not guilty.¹

Below are presented two extracts from broadsheet newspapers at the time, *The Guardian* and *The Independent* respectively, which reported on the testimony of the witness concerned. It is necessary to present newspaper reports of the case rather than the actual transcripts themselves for two reasons: firstly, transcripts of English trials are not readily available as they are in, for example, the US; secondly, and more importantly for this study, it is highly unusual for the media to comment on interpersonal aspects of the testimony of witnesses; they normally restrict themselves to commenting on the evidence itself without evaluating its appropriateness and acceptability in court. The media's treatment of this case is

therefore unusual, and, I would argue, can tell us a great deal about the interpersonal expectations that operate in a legal context. For these reasons, the headlines and extracts provided are extremely salient to the current study. Those parts of the extracts which relate specifically to the contravention of rules and regulations in courtroom interaction are highlighted in italics. Although these are clearly *representations* of the interaction, and to some extent must be viewed as *interpretations*, there is sufficient verbatim reproduction of the interaction to justify their inclusion as 'data':

Damilola witness clashes with QC

(*The Guardian*, 5 February, 2002)

The Damilola Taylor murder trial was interrupted yesterday when a 14-year old girl who claims to have witnessed the fatal attack *asked to go home after angrily denying that she was lying to the court*. [...] Accusing her of pretending she could not remember, Mr Griffiths said her story had been shown to be untrue. (emphasis added)

In this extract, it can be seen that the witness displays challenging and maxim-flouting behaviour in what was described as a 'clash' between herself and the cross-examining lawyer. By resisting the suggestion that she is lying in such an aggressive way, she is clearly constructing her power identity as parallel with that of the lawyer. It is not only the length of her turn but also the fact that it is described as 'angry' which represents a significant illustration of her counter-normative behaviour.

She then takes a lengthy and face-threatening turn:

Speaking from behind a screen, the girl replied: "*That is not true. For one, I'm not a liar because I told two or however many lies. You may think that I am a liar [... but] no matter how many times you try to catch me out you are not going to catch me out, because I am not lying.*" (*The Guardian*, 5 February, 2002, continued, emphasis added)

In this turn, she aggressively denies the accusation that she is lying. This is clearly unusual and unacceptable behaviour in the context of the courtroom conventions of politeness and attention to face. Her identity is constructed as equal in status to that of the lawyer in terms of her speaking rights; both the length and tone of the contribution construct her as sharing turn-taking rights with the legal professionals in court. She thus refuses to play the role of respondent in the Q-A adjacency pair and illustrates resistance to the questioning style of the barrister.

Finally, she refuses to accept the normative convention of being released from the witness box, which is ordinarily accomplished via a performative produced by the lawyer stating that he has 'no further questions' followed by the judge stating 'you may step down'. Rather than allow this standard sequence to occur, she herself asks if she can go home after requesting a break, something for which one of the legal professionals, either the judge or the lawyer, is more typically responsible:

Mr Griffiths replied: “Which police officer gave you that little speech to say?” But the girl denied being coached by police and *asked the judge for a break*. When the court sat again, *she refused to answer Mr Griffiths’ questions, accusing him of talking to her as if she were “a little girl”*. He replied: “But you are a little girl. You are only 14”. *Staring at the 46-year-old barrister, she replied: “If you are going to talk to me like that, I will talk to you like you are a little boy”*. Then she asked if she could go home. (*The Guardian*, 5 February, 2002, continued, emphasis added)

The second extract, taken from *The Independent* newspaper reporting on the following day in court, continues the theme of resistance and rebellion. On this occasion, we are told that the witness leaves the court without permission, asks on two occasions to ‘go home’, uses inappropriate language in the courtroom by swearing and throws documents from the desk. Even her tears, a common feature of testifying witnesses (particularly female ones) are portrayed as transgressive in the courtroom setting. This time, the interaction is portrayed as a ‘duel’, employing a commonly-seen metaphor of trial talk as war (Cotterill 1999):

Tearful witness storms out of Damilola court

(*The Independent*, 6 February, 2002)

An extraordinary duel played out between a schoolgirl giving evidence in the Damilola Taylor murder trial and a defence QC^[2] which left the young witness in tears yesterday. *In just one hour in the witness box, the 14-year-old stormed out of court, twice asked to go home, swore at the barrister, thrust court papers off the desk and wiped away tears.*

When the lawyer raised his voice, he was admonished by her for shouting ...

Speaking from behind a screen, the girl endured 22 minutes of cross-examination before walking out of court, exclaiming: “*Do you know what? I’m going home*”. After an adjournment of an hour and a half, the girl returned.

During the next 38 minutes of questioning, she became increasingly upset, wiped her eyes with a large handkerchief and *occasionally shouted at Mr Griffiths for “winding her up”*.

The girl told the counsel: “I don’t like the way you are talking to me.” “Do you know what I haven’t got time for, yeah? I’m a liar. For one I’m not. For two, you’re trying to wind me up.” “You’ve got there now. Are you happy, are you really happy? See, you don’t like it when I don’t answer your questions. Now I’m asking you a question, you can’t answer it can you?” Mr Griffiths summed up the 999 call. The entire story, he told the girl, was “just your imagination”. “*It wasn’t my imagination,*” she retorted. “*It’s your f***ing imagination. I want to go home now. I am not playing with this man any more.*” (emphasis added)

It is the witness who reprimands the cross-examining lawyer for raising his voice, a role-reversal indicative of her perceived status: ‘*When the lawyer raised his voice, he was admonished by her for shouting.*’ The journalist goes on to report her use of slang as she accuses the lawyer of ‘winding her up’ and the South London youth colloquial tag ‘*yeah?*’. She explicitly challenges the traditional Q-A speech act adjacency pairing of the courtroom by accusing the lawyer of not ‘*lik[ing] it*’ when

she becomes the questioner. Finally, she ends her testimony with the extreme expletive '*fucking*', declaring her wish to go home and construing the trial process as a game in which she no longer wishes to participate.

As Cutting (2002: 72) notes, "verbal exchanges [...] tend to run more smoothly and successfully when the participants follow certain social conventions". The powerful transgressive verbal behaviour of the normal conventions of the courtroom demonstrated by the witness in this trial provides the impetus for this chapter. Although the example above taken from the Damilola Taylor trial is perhaps extreme, as shown by its newsworthiness, witnesses nevertheless frequently break the rules of courtroom interaction, constructing alternative and subversive identities, and this process is the focus of this study. In this chapter I will examine data from a unique corpus of 12 million words of English courtroom interaction collected in the late 1990s. While direct recording or broadcasting of courtroom proceedings is not permitted in the UK as it is in many other countries, the data is nevertheless available via official court transcripts.

2. Interpersonal dimensions of power and control in court

Relatively little has been written on the topic of power and control in legal interactions previously, and interpretations of the interpersonal ramifications of such variables are generally implicit. Rather, most researchers (from early work by Atkinson and Drew [1979] to more recent research by for example Conley and O'Barr [1998], Luchjenbroers [1997] and Stygall [1994]) seem to illustrate the ways in which lawyers adopt the identity role of dominating their witnesses and the acquiescence of those witnesses to the written and unwritten rules of the courtroom. The majority of work in this area is oriented towards the expression of the power of the legal professionals and witnesses' conformity to it. As Harris (1989) notes:

They [these researchers] have much less to say about 'resistance'. Indeed, there has been relatively little explicit examination of the means at the disposal of less powerful groups or persons [...] who attempt to resist the imposition of control, or whether, indeed, these groups or persons have any such means. (Harris 1989: 133)

There are two main exceptions to this tendency: Wodak (1985) examines the interaction between judge and defendant, showing that defendants do not always defer to the judge in the ways traditionally illustrated. She also concludes that the result for the defendant is usually a negative one in terms of the way in which jurors consider defendants who behave in this way (see O'Barr [1982] for a discussion of juror interpretations of defendant behaviour).

Wodak's article takes a sociolinguistic perspective on the authority of the court and the law. She points out that these norms are highly context specific, varying widely even from one legal jurisdiction to another. Wodak discusses the variables

of both social class and gender in determining behaviour in court and influencing its consequences, arguing that those defendants who do not present a “socially acceptable image” (1985: 184) are less likely to achieve what is for them the positive outcome of an acquittal. Wodak (1985: 189) describes a witness with a “doubly negative status role” since she is both working class and female. Wodak’s argument is supported by the work of O’Barr and his colleagues (1982), who correlated social and gender variables with issues of credibility and jury perceptions of truthfulness and competence in what they termed ‘powerless speech’.

Harris (1989) is perhaps the most relevant article in this context. She examines what she terms ‘defendant resistance’ to power and control in court. In so doing, she argues against the homogeneity of the category of ‘witness’ and the assumption that witnesses inevitably fall into line during questioning in court:

Power relationships are firmly rooted in social interaction, and the very notion of interaction pre-supposes some sort of linguistic reciprocation so that resistance is potentially possible, even where the less powerful participant (as in many courts) is continually placed in the position of respondent rather than initiator through successive discourse acts. (Harris 1989: 131)

For Harris (1989: 137), resistance in this setting involves not only the flouting of the Gricean cooperative principle but also “the attempt to open to linguistic negotiation that very asymmetry which reinforces and maintains institutional power”.

The aim of this chapter is to add to the work by Wodak and Harris in examining examples of resistance and rebellion by witnesses in English courts and demonstrating some of the occasions where witnesses do not behave in legally or linguistically sanctioned ways. This both re-constructs and re-presents their identities as subversive and transgressive by the ways in which they fail to conform to the traditional roles ascribed to them by the legal system and the courtroom environment. The data which follow indicate a rejection of the perceived universal acquiescence and submissiveness of witnesses and defendants.

The expected speech acts (Austin 1962) of the lawyer as questioner and the witness as compliant respondent are not always present in the courtroom. This has parallels with other transgressive behaviour in power-asymmetrical contexts, for example in the classroom. Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) describe the acts and moves of classroom discourse in their (I)nitiation (R)esponse (F)ollow-up model and ascribe these roles to teacher and pupils respectively. Cutting (2002: 26) claims that the IRF model of interaction is “typical of transactions of a formal and ritualistic nature with one person in a position of power over the other, controlling the discourse and planning it to a certain extent”. However, as any teacher will concur, pupils do not always provide appropriate and complete responses nor do teachers always play the role of initiator, elicitor or provider of feedback. Identities are therefore potentially fluid in such power-asymmetrical contexts, even with the powerful roles of ‘teacher’ and ‘lawyer’ clearly circumscribed and delineated.

In the courtroom, the normal rules of locution do not apply either, whereby interlocutors generally produce truthful and cooperative utterances which are interpreted as such by the receiver. The illocutionary force of utterances is frequently obscured by both sides, whether deliberately in an attempt to mislead or misguide or accidentally – the difference between an *unwillingness* and an *inability* to respond to an interrogative. Levinson (1979) has argued that in courtroom language “not all interactive contexts are co-operative ones and participants in such contexts are acutely aware of this and so modify their discourse strategies accordingly” (Levinson 1979, as quoted in Harris 1989: 136). In addition, the perlocutionary effect of both questions and responses is blurred by the fact that both questions and answers are intended not primarily for either party but rather for a third sanctioned ‘overhearing’ group in Goffman’s (1981) terms, namely the jury. The cohesion of the narrative is also disturbed by the fact that it is split into direct examination and cross-examination, meaning that the jury must work hard in order to make sense of the conflicting and dichotomised evidence presented to them by both sides.

In this analysis, I will focus on (1) a Gricean (Grice 1975) interpretation of the court data, which Harris (1989) described as ‘marked’ both in terms of length and type of contribution, as well as (2) the expected norms of interaction and engagement and the ways in which the supposed weaker participants in fact transgress and violate the interactional ‘rules’ of courtroom discourse. The data examined comes from a large (12 million word) corpus of courtroom discourse in English courts which gives a flavour of the kinds of phenomena constituting face-threatening, challenging and rule-violating behaviour.

I will address three levels of interaction and the conflicting interpersonal identity construction which is produced: (1) what provokes this behaviour (in other words why the individuals choose to represent their identities in this way), (2) how these roles are manifested linguistically, and finally (3) what the reactions and responses to these representations are from the legal professionals in court. It is important to adopt a functional and contextualised approach to this type of analysis. For example, not all counter-questions constitute face threats or challenging behaviour, since mishearings, requests for permission and so on are clearly not expressions of resistance but rather represent an expression of metapragmatic interrogatives, where witnesses are attempting to gain clarification or authorisation from legal professionals or their administrative colleagues. It is not only linguistic attempts at clarification which are relevant here, silence too, as Wodak (1985: 183) points out, may be indicative of “misunderstandings, due to the planning of [the defendant’s] response or due to interruptions”. Nevertheless, as Harris (1989) points out, the courtroom is a specialised instance and:

though a counter-question may not be a challenge in ordinary conversation, it may well be, as Mishler claims, an attempt to resist control by placing the former questioner in the position of respondent. (Harris 1989: 142)

3. Gricean perspectives on courtroom interaction

If we begin by looking at the fundamental interactional rules of courtroom interaction, there are four essential categories to be considered:

- Participants: *Who* speaks and to whom?
- Setting/Context: *Where* and *when* are they speaking?
- Topic: *What* are they speaking about?
- Purpose: *Why* are they speaking?

In analysing courtroom interaction these four categories make differences along legal-lay lines apparent and relate to variations in power, specifically the asymmetry between lawyer and witness. Typically, the lawyer will dominate each of these categories, determining who speaks and to whom (usually topic initiation and floor holding is carried out by the lawyer); in terms of context, the legal constraints of the courtroom mean that the predominant interaction is controlled by the legal professionals, both lawyer and judge. As far as the topic is concerned, again traditional conventions dictate that the legal professionals, and not the witness/defendant are responsible for topic initiation, maintenance and change. Finally, the purpose of interaction is clearly defined with the aim of courtroom talk, i.e., the elicitation of evidence and the construction of opposing narratives. As the data here will show, this is not always the case in the contemporary English courtroom.

In Gricean terms, the cooperative principle (Grice 1975) can be adapted to the courtroom context. An adaptation of the Gricean maxims is applicable here, since the working of the maxims of the cooperative principle associated with casual conversation are very different in the courtroom. Thus, a modified set of maxims is applicable to courtroom identities and interaction. I will now illustrate how the cooperative principle is subverted and exploited in adversarial trial settings.

Grice's work, as is now familiar to every linguist, consists of four principal conversational maxims:

Four Conversational Maxims (Grice 1975):

- Maxim of Quantity
- Maxim of Quality
- Maxim of Relevance
- Maxim of Manner

This analysis will consider each of these in turn in the context of courtroom interaction, specifically the ways in which they apply to the role identities of lawyer and witness.

Maxim of Quantity:

- 1 Make your contribution to the conversation as informative as necessary.

[In the courtroom: Answer the question asked of you by the lawyer/judge in a concise way.]

- 2 Do not make your contribution to the conversation more informative than necessary.

[In the courtroom: Avoid verbosity and excessive detail in your response (cf. also the maxim of manner). This is generally achieved through the use of closed questions by the lawyer. Typically, the lawyer or judge will curtail a response which contains extraneous detail.]

Maxim of Quality:

- 1 Do not say what you believe to be false.

[In the courtroom: Tell the truth. This is reflected in the oath where each witness swears to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. This also relates to the maxim of quantity, since the witness promises to divulge everything which is relevant.]

- 2 Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

[In the courtroom: This maxim relates to the legal categories of hearsay and speculation, neither of which are permissible or admissible as evidence in court. In other words, the witness is required to respond only if their knowledge is accurate and preferably provable. Witnesses are not allowed to 'make up' evidence or speculate about things they have not seen, heard or witnessed.]

Maxim of Relation:

Be relevant

[In the courtroom: This maxim attempts to prevent the witness from waffling or rambling in their response (legal proceedings are lengthy enough without irrelevant contributions from witnesses).]

Maxim of Manner:

- 1 Avoid obscurity of expression.
- 2 Avoid ambiguity.
- 3 Be brief (avoid unnecessary wordiness).
- 4 Be orderly.

[In the courtroom: This maxim is perhaps the most problematic because written law is full of contradictions of this maxim. As Tiersma (1999) has commented, legal language is often obscure, ambiguous, overly wordy and disordered. This can also be true in the context of a jury trial, where there is a clash of legal and lay language.]

There are four principal categories which have been identified as salient to the current analysis in terms of the way(s) they intersect with the Gricean maxims outlined above. These are:

- Questioning relevance
- Diverting discourse sequencing
- Challenging the authority of the law and/or the lawyers
- Challenging lexical formulations proposed by lawyers

This fourth category was addressed in Cotterill (2004) where I attempted to illustrate how witnesses are able to challenge lexical formulations which may be ideologically damaging to their position. In the 2004 article, I demonstrated how these reformulations represent a face threat and (in particular) a breach of the Gricean maxim of quality since the witness is not straightforwardly responding to the question posed. This chapter will focus on the first three of these categories, as discussed in the next section.

4. Rebellion and resistance in the English courtroom

Category one, challenging the relevance of questions posed, clearly relates to the topic of interaction in systemic terms and usually represents an opportunity for opposing counsel to raise an objection. The second category, involving attempts by witnesses to deviate from the intended sequencing designed by the lawyer, operates at a discourse or textual level. The final category relates to interpersonal challenges to the authority of either legal principles or the individuals who represent them in the courtroom. In interpersonal terms, all of these categories relate to the overarching identity constructions prescribed and proscribed for lawyers and judges, jurors and witnesses by the courtroom environment and the legal system within which all of these participants are operating.

The remainder of this chapter will examine representative instances of these phenomena, all of which are prominent in the English data. All names have been changed in the data extracts in order to maintain some degree of anonymity, although these court events are a matter of public record. In addition, turns by the lawyer/attorney are marked as ‘A’ with witness responses marked ‘W’.³

4.1. Questioning relevance

Challenges to the relevance of the question are common in the corpus of UK data. These emanate from both the opposing lawyer and the witness. It is sanctioned behaviour on the part of the lawyer to raise an objection to the relevance of the question, indeed there is a recognised category of objection which permits opposing counsel to do so: ‘objection: irrelevant’. However, in the case of the witness, such

behaviour is transgressive of his/her recognised and accepted role, and places his/her identity in the category of both rule- and role-subversive, as in Extract 1, taken from a sexual assault case:

Extract 1

- 1 A. It's right, isn't it, that in 1994 you made allegations
 2 against your step-father, XY.
 3 W. What kind of allegations?
 4 A. That he would beat you and that sort of thing.
 5 W. I said that he would hit me, yes.
 6 A. And that it was making your mum ill.
 7 W. With me arguing with him all the time because we didn't get on then.
 8 A. It was really a question, wasn't it, Miss W, of you not being
 9 prepared to do as you were told, wasn't it?
 10 W. No, not really.
 11 A. And at the time you wanted to be the centre of attention because your
 12 brother was in hospital at the time, wasn't he?
 13 W. Yes, I wanted some more attention.
 14 A. Yes. So you made quite a fuss, didn't you?
 15 W. Yes.
 16 A. And the result was that the local authority, social services came in ---
 17 W. What's this got to do with it anyway?
 18 A. Can you just answer the question? That's right, isn't it?
 19 W. It's got nothing to do with this case anyway, has it?
 20 JUDGE: Well, it is for others to judge whether it has or not. You, I
 21 am afraid, must answer the questions. You make these allegations and
 22 you have to answer questions that are asked of you.

In Extract 1, the witness resists the insinuation that her allegations are nothing more than attention-seeking behaviour even though she has previously admitted she 'wanted some more attention' (line 13), thereby undermining the credibility of her protest. Her resistance comes after a series of questions which build in intensity, a series of tag questions in addition to *so/and*-prefaced narrative-building interrogatives (see Johnson [2002] for a discussion of the use of such questions as a way of increasing the perceived damage done to the witness' testimony). It is interesting to see the legal response to this attempt at rebellion in lines 20–22. The judge intervenes immediately and simultaneously reminds the witness that she must defer to others in assessing the relevance of any questions posed and also that, in the role of witness, she has an interactive duty to be responsive to those questions; pragmatically speaking, she must conform to the maxim of quantity and answer the question. The judge is extremely prescriptive in his language, using the strong modalities of 'must' and 'have to' in his reprimand. He seems to be referring both to the 'higher power' of the law and legal convention in his re-

sponse. His use of ‘I’m afraid’ seems to indicate that even he is confined by these rules.

In a second example, also taken from a sexual assault case,⁴ and also involving an interaction between a male barrister and a female witness, the witness again challenges the relevance of the question asked her: ‘so what’s he got to do with it?’ (line 5). The effect on this occasion is an attempt by the lawyer to justify his question, which is then interrupted by the judge in line 7:

Extract 2

- 1 A. Oh, I see, it’s all granddad’s fault, is it?
 2 W. Yes.
 3 A. Right. And what about BC, because, of course, granddad
 4 wasn’t the only person you’ve made allegations about, was he?
 5 W. So what’s he got to do with it?
 6 A. That’s what ---
 7 JUDGE: Would you not answer *in that way*, please. You answer
 8 the questions. If you don’t know the answer to the questions, you may
 9 say so, but you can’t answer *like that*. [my emphasis]

The judge in this case makes reference to a set of underlying and unspoken pragmatic rules, norms and protocols, which the witness is apparently subverting by challenging the lawyer in this way. The judge’s use of ‘in that way’ (line 7) and ‘like that’ (line 9) are highly suggestive of pre-existing and prevailing imperatives, although he is not explicit about exactly what the witness has done wrong. He does cut the witness some slack by telling her that ‘if you don’t know the answer to the questions, you may say so’ (lines 8 and 9) but the judge indicates that a lack of knowledge is the only appropriate condition within which a challenge is appropriate and acceptable. Becoming the questioner, rather than the respondent in the Q-A speech act pairing, is thus construed as an unacceptable identity construction on the part of the witness.

In Extract 3, we find a further challenge to the relevance of questioning, where the witness interrupts the lawyer’s interrogative to question its relevance to the matter being discussed. Again, the witness is adopting a challenging role with respect to the lawyer, who is supported by the intervention of the judge. Here we see a clear illustration of the interpersonal hierarchy in the courtroom:

Extract 3

- 1 A. Now at the time, of course, you knew, didn’t you, that BC,
 2 that there was some dispute between B and your mum about who
 3 was the father of M and J.
 4 W. Yes.
 5 A. Yes, and you feel very strongly about that, don’t you?
 6 W. Hmm.

- 7 JUDGE: Sorry, let's get it straight. There are so many names here,
 8 Mr. N [the attorney], I am getting lost again in mist.
 9 A. I am going to take it in stages, your Honour.
 10 A. There is a dispute between your mum and BC.
 11 W. But, excuse me a minute, what's this got to do with this?
 12 JUDGE: I'm afraid you can't ask questions like that; you are in the
 13 witness box to tell us the truth and if you don't – as I say, you are
 14 entitled to say: "I don't know the answer to a question", but what you
 15 are not entitled to do is to say: "What's this got to do with it."
 16 W. Yes.
 17 A. It may be that it has everything to do with it; it may not. Do you
 18 follow?
 19 W. Yes.
 20 JUDGE: Right.

As previously indicated this is a prime territory for the opposing counsel to produce an objection. Here the witness seems more aware of the face threat which her challenge represents since she prefaces her defiance to the question posed with a conventional politeness marker 'excuse me' (line 11). Although unfortunately we do not have the sound file to accompany the transcript, it is likely that this may have been sarcastic in tone since the 'excuse me' co-occurs with 'but' and 'a minute'. The witness is superficially polite in her request for speaking rights, even though she is contravening the courtroom convention by challenging the line of questioning. The issue she is trying to avoid is the suggestion that her testimony is not truthful. The attorney's response reveals evidence of a concealed agenda or at the very least a different one, one which is unknown to the witness: 'It may be that it has everything to do with it; it may not' (line 17).

The judge explicitly instructs her on what she is allowed to say and what she is not, making reference to the truth condition in the oath sworn by the witness and employing the notion of what she is and is not 'entitled' to do (lines 12–15). The attorney's assessment that 'it may be that it has everything to do with it; it may not' does not suggest with whom the decision lies, since it is a conditional modal statement using 'may' but there is undoubtedly a decision to be made by somebody. In pragmatic terms, he is saying that the perlocutionary force of any response ultimately lies with the jury; however, this is not explicitly expressed. The witness states that she 'follows' what the judge is saying and the questioning continues.

Extract 4 provides a final example of a challenge to the relevance of questioning. In this example the witness draws on a principle which is enshrined in the UK police caution (equivalent to Miranda in the US), relating to the defendant's right to silence when they are arrested and interrogated. They are, however, warned that if they decide to remain silent and the case later goes to trial, negative inferences may be drawn from their silence by the jury.

Extract 4

- 1 A. I just want to take instructions on one matter and I
 2 am nearly finished.
- 3 A. Can I ask you one last question? Why are you wearing gloves?
- 4 W. Do I have to answer that? Is that relevant?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 W. (Crying) (Addressing the Judge) Can I have 2 minutes, please?
- 7 JUDGE: Yes. All right. Members of the Jury -----
- 8 W. No. It is okay. I am wearing gloves, because I don't want to show
 9 Mr. F my hands, because he bribed me to grow my fingernails at £10
 10 a time. That is why I not wearing gloves [sic]. I don't want him to
 11 know whether I have nails or not.
- 12 A. When have you ever mentioned that to anybody else apart from
 13 today
 14 in the course of these proceedings?
- 14 W. Why should I mention it? I have come into Court. It is my right to
 15 wear gloves.
- 16 A. I asked you very carefully at the beginning of my cross-examination
 17 whether there were any other matters other than the matters that we
 18 went through and you said that there were not. Did you not?
- 19 W. There were other matters.
- 20 A. I asked you very carefully. I took you through a summary of the
 21 matters that you were alleging against Mr. F. Did I not? Do you
 22 remember that?
- 23 W. You don't have all the matters. They are locked away in here.
- 24 A. I took you through a summary. Do you accept that?
- 25 W. Yes. I remember going through a summary with you. You did not ask
 26 me about the gloves then. You have just asked me and I have given
 27 you my question (sic) my answer.
- 28 A. Why did you not say that Mr. F was asking you and was paying
 29 you to grow his fingernails (sic).
- 30 W. You did not ask about that. I have only answered what you have
 31 asked me.
- 32 A. I took you through a summary and I very carefully asked you is there
 33 anything else and you said: "no"?
- 34 W. No. I would not have imagined that relevant.
- 35 A. You would not have imagined it, because you have got the gloves on
 36 your hands, have you not?
- 37 W. Well of course. Yes.
- 38 A. They did not remind you?
- 39 W. It did not remind me.
- 40 A. Yes the gloves on your hands did not remind you to mention the

- 41 growing of the fingernails at £10 a time?
 42 W. I don't understand what you are trying to say or what you are trying
 43 to get out ----

The witness here displays quite a sophisticated strategy, implicitly relating to the issue of negative inferences that can be drawn if you do not 'mention *when questioned*' (taken from the UK police caution) something which you later rely on in court, a phrase encoded in the police caution. I address some of the problematic aspects surrounding the wording of the police caution in Cotterill (1999), however, in this instance the wording seems to work to the witness' advantage in so far as she uses it to argue that she should not be required to mention something if she has not explicitly been asked about it. In other words, she argues that if the police officer and/or examining lawyer did not see the issue as relevant, she does not need to raise it herself.

Courtroom conventions are suspended and the witness becomes upset, provoking the suggestion of a temporary adjournment by the judge (line 6). Issues of relevance and the apparent conflict between what is relevant to the lawyer and what is relevant to the judge or the witness is central to the debate in this extract. The sanctioned role of the lawyer in questioning relevance is adopted instead by the witness, as she states 'No. I would not have imagined that relevant' (line 34). In terms of the interpersonal dynamics of this exchange, the witness takes on the identity role of the lawyer in determining what is and is not relevant to the questioning.

4.2. Diversion of discursive sequencing

The second category outlined above involves attempts by witnesses to deviate from the intended sequencing designed by the lawyer and relates to the subversion of the lawyer's agenda by witnesses. By diverting the lawyer's intended discursive sequencing, witnesses may attempt to resist control of the questioning process. In Extract 5 below, the witness attempts to divert the intended sequencing of the cross-examining lawyer in an attempt to resist control. Her challenge to the identity of the lawyer as primary (or even sole) questioner consists of a series of turns where she not only denies the accusation put to her in lines 1–3, but goes on to ask a series of face-threatening questions of her own: 'nothing had happened to me?' (line 11); 'was you there?' (line 13) and 'if I was making it up, why would I go to SCOUT? (lines 22–23):

Extract 5

- 1 A. Didn't you go running to the door: "Hello mummy, great to see you".
 2 You won't ----
 3 W. No, that's not what I did, no.
 4 A. No. Or: "Hello mum, can I go home with you please?"
 5 W. No.

- 6 A. “Mum, can you stay please? Don’t go.” Anything like that?
 7 W. No.
 8 A. No. That’s because nothing had happened, isn’t it, L?
 9 W. Sorry?
 10 A. That’s because nothing had happened to you, had it?
 11 W. Nothing had happened to me?
 12 A. No, that’s right. That’s what I am suggesting.
 13 W. Was you there?
 14 A. That’s what I am ----
 15 W. Obviously you – why would I be in the court if nothing happened to
 16 me?
 17 A. It is the question I am putting to you: nothing had happened.
 18 W. Something happened to me. That’s why I’m here today.
 19 A. And sisters and mum. Yes, sure. Are you making this up, L?
 20 W. No, I’m not making it up.
 21 A. No. You know, don’t you, that from 1985 onwards ----
 22 W. Can I just say something? If I was making it up, why would I go to
 23 SCOUT, which is a place for child abuse.
 24 A. I will come to that in a minute.
 25 W. Exactly.
 26 JUDGE: You wait for the questions and you will be given an
 27 opportunity to deal with any point you want to, but do not just
 28 volunteer. You wait for the questions that A. puts to you.
 29 A. Thank you very much.

When this witness resists the questioning of the lawyer and attempts to subvert the lawyer’s agenda, she resorts to a form of words which confirms her non-legal and possibly socio-economic status by using the non-standard form ‘was you there?’ (line 13). Her repetition of the statement put to her in line 10 (see lines 15–16) also represents a challenge to his authority. The witness interrupts the lawyer on several further occasions until he in frustration summarises his line of questioning with ‘it is the question I am putting to you: nothing had happened’ (line 17). This is clearly a question in non-interrogative form but rather a straightforwardly declarative statement put to the witness, one which she subsequently denies. With a clear politeness marker and request for the floor – ‘can I just say something?’ (line 22) – she turns the questioning around and asks the lawyer a question instead. The lawyer’s response is revealing of the pre-existing agenda and discursive structure which underlies the lawyer’s sequence of questions and attempts to control the narrative elicitation. The lawyer responds with ‘I will come to that in a minute’ (line 24), clearly indicating that he has an intended and concealed agenda. The witness’ request for speaking rights is followed by the lawyer’s apparently innocuous topic holder. She seems satisfied with ‘I will come to that in a minute’ with her response of ‘exactly’ (line 25),

seeing the lawyer's statement as congruent with her own agenda whereas in fact it reveals the divergent nature of his questioning and the power structure at play. The lawyer signals a clear structure to his questioning, indicating that the issue at stake, namely the witness going to SCOUT, is something which he does not intend to deal with at that point, but rather later on. He is therefore asserting his control over the sequencing of questions over the attempted intervention of the witness.

This control by the legal professionals (lawyer and judge) involving attempts by witnesses to deviate from the intended sequencing designed by the lawyer over the lay participants (witnesses and defendant) is further confirmed when the judge intervenes, reminding the witness of the requirement to conform to question and answer adjacency pair and turn-taking conventions (lines 26–28). The cross-examining lawyer here seems grateful for the reinforcement provided by his legal colleague, the judge. The judge's generous suggestion that the witness will have her chance to speak is in fact not supported by the subsequent discourse. As Tiersma (1999: 159) *inter alia* has asserted, "with a narrative, the story-teller herself decides how to tell her tale, while a question-and-answer format allocates control to the questioner, in this case, the examining lawyer".

The witness' contribution in Extract 6 from a trial involving fraud and theft breaks perhaps three of the Gricean maxims – those of quantity, relevance and even manner in a single section of testimony. In addition to the face-threatening clash of naming which occurs at the end of this exchange (lines 15–16), the central part of this extract illustrates the flouting of the maxim of quantity, where the witness tries to resist the lawyer's attempts to elicit further information (lines 6–10):

Extract 6

- 1 A. And you had other private loans as well from people – from other men.
 2 W. Yes, I had ---
 3 A. I do not want to interrupt you. You had ---? You were going to tell
 4 us ---? You had what?
 5 W. No.
 6 A. Do tell us. You had what?
 7 W. No, I'm following on from your question.
 8 A. No, what were you going to say? You had --- Were you going to
 9 tell us the other loans you had?
 10 W. No.
 11 A. You were not.
 12 W. I had had other loans.
 13 A. Right. Okay. Can you recall now who from?
 14 W. Yes, I had a loan from Mr. J B.
 15 A. Mrs. R, other than telling us once more ---
 16 W. I'm Miss R, Mr. C.
 17 A. I do apologise. Other than telling us what you did, which we can all

- 18 see and we have heard from you what you did, can you give us a reason
 19 for what you did?
 20 W. No, I did it for my mother.

The maxim of quantity is the point at issue in Extract 7, taken from later in the same trial. The lawyer first produces a multiple proposition question consisting of convictions for prostitution and dishonesty followed by the confirmatory tag question ‘that is right, is it not?’ (line 2), one of the most frequently used tags in the cross-examining lawyer’s repertoire (Woodbury 1984; Stone 2009). The witness disagrees with part of the question and offers to provide further information. This opportunity is denied her by the lawyer’s brief response of ‘I do not’ (line 4). Although the witness is not in a position to then respond more fully, rather than simply accepting the closing down of her potential turn, this witness is able to add a sarcastic coda in the form of ‘No. I did not think you would’ (line 5). Her interpersonal identity here extends well beyond the normative expectation of a submissive witness, who would typically be expected to accept the restriction placed on her contribution without comment. By adding ‘no. I did not think you would’ (line 5), she is able to effectively have the last word in this challenging exchange:

Extract 7

- 1 A. All of those convictions were really for prostitution with one for
 2 dishonesty. That is right, is it not?
 3 W. It was not actually dishonesty. If you would like me to elaborate I will?
 4 A. I do not
 5 W. No. I did not think you would.
 6 A. Did you plead guilty to the theft?
 7 W. Yes. I did.

Extracts 8 and 9 illustrate instances of turn-type challenges to the conventions of the court. In Extract 8, which is indicative of more widespread tendencies in the data, there is a subversion of the strict Q-A dynamic required by the trial system:

Extract 8

- 1 A. To save me going through each individual date, because it would be
 2 laborious for everybody, perhaps I can deal with it this way: between
 3 the time that you moved in and December of 1984 you were telling
 4 the Social Services that you were more than happy to be with the Fs?
 5 W. Yes.
 6 A. There were of course times when you felt that both Mr. and Mrs. F
 7 were being a little strict with you. That is right is it not?
 8 W. Two occasions, I recall.
 9 A. Yes. I said “times”, that you felt that perhaps the rules for coming in and
 10 out were too strict. The rules for what time you should be home. Those

- 11 sort of things the ordinary things that parents impose on their children?
 12 W. I think that is a natural teenage reaction, is it not?
 13 A. Yes. Because they did try on occasions restrict your comings and goings,
 14 did they not?
 15 W. When Mr. F found out that I had a boyfriend, yes. I was grounded for
 16 three months.

The witness here echoes the style of the lawyer by mimicking the ‘positive statement + negative tag’ structure typical of classic cross-examination (Berk-Seligson 1999; Stone 2009).

The final example in this category suggests that the use of counter-questions, as suggested by Harris (1989), are indeed not simply used for clarificatory purposes but rather may also be indicative of attempts to resist control. Extract 9 provides an illustration of this strategy.

Extract 9

- 1 A. First, Mrs. C, I suggest to you that you are lying about the indecent assault. Mr. F did not indecently assault you at all, did he?
 2
 3 W. On that occasion?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 W. I am not lying. I have taken an oath.
 6 A. I suggest to you that you are?
 7 W. No. I should imagine you would, but I am not.
 8 A. I have dealt with K in relation to the bus journeys and I do not come
 9 back to that, but I move past that. You used to tell K, did you not, that
 10 you were into boys. You liked boys. That is the sum of the conversation
 11 that you had. I like boys? I like going out with boys? Things like that?
 12 W. Is that not a normal teenage thing?
 13 A. I am just suggesting it is not. I am just suggesting that you did tell her that.
 14 W. I do not recall telling her to that and I do not know how, sir, you
 15 would know that I told her that.
 16 A. We will see later on.

In addition to challenging the lawyer’s suggestion here that she is lying (‘I am not lying. I have taken an oath.’, (line 5), the witness responds with a bald on-record face-threatening denial (‘No. I should imagine you would, but I am not.’, (line 7). This witness turns the typical adjacency pair structure on its head and poses a question of her own by asking ‘is that not a normal teenage thing?’ (line 12). The lawyer, however, resists her attempts to rebel and resorts to a further reference to his overarching agenda which supersedes any attempt by the witness to subvert the discourse. By stating simply ‘we will see later on’ (line 16), the cross-examining lawyer is able to assert his power over the topic control and discourse structure of the exchange by referring to a metapragmatic destination of which the witness has

no knowledge and over which she has little control. His interpersonal and legal role is clearly the more powerful in comparison to that of the witness. Despite this, she attempts to assert herself even though she is outnumbered by legal professionals present in the courtroom and ‘outpowered’ by the interpersonal dynamics of the interactional dyad.

4.3. Interpersonal challenges to the law

The third and final category to be examined in this chapter consists of those interpersonal challenges to the authority of both the law and legal professionals as representatives of it.

The witness in Extract 10 shows an awareness of the law which enables her to challenge the lawyer’s question by disputing his right to ask her about what she may or may not be about to say (line 3):

Extract 10

- 1 A. Because your [sic] going to say that K told you that Mr. F had indecently assaulted her, are you not?
 2
 3 W. I did not know you were allowed to bring that up.
 4 A. I bring it up. That is what you are going to say. Is it not?
 5 W. Yes, it is. That is the truth.

The witness has mixed success with this strategy. It could be seen as an unsuccessful challenge in some respects in so far as the lawyer’s response is simply to say ‘I bring it up’ (line 4) followed by a ‘statement + tag question’. The witness backs down and answers the question straightforwardly. However, she also manages to add a pre-emptive evaluative tag of ‘that is the truth’ (line 5).

The final witness to be studied is able to occupy the moral high ground by drawing on the oath she has taken as a sincere and moralistic reference to the Bible (lines 16–18):

Extract 11

- 1 A. He said to you, then why do [sic] not you ask for a move [of housing placement]. If you do not like it, why not just ask the social services?
 2
 3 W. That is what he said to me, is it?
 4 A. That is what I am suggesting he did say to you?
 5 W. I am sorry. I don’t recall.
 6 A. You do not remember. You said to him, I cannot do that. I cannot ask
 7 for a move, did you not?
 8 W. I don’t recall.
 9 A. You said I cannot ask for a move the only way I can do that is if I
 10 accuse somebody of interfering with me?
 11 W. No. That is outrageous.

- 12 A. That is what you told F, is it not?
 13 W. No. That is not. No that is not. I have not come this far 13 years on to
 14 stand in this dock and lie. That is not true.
 15 A. I suggest that that is exactly what you are doing.
 16 W. You would suggest because that is your job, but I am not lying. I sug-
 17 gest to you that I am telling the truth the whole truth and nothing but
 18 the but the truth, as sworn on this holy Bible.

In theory, her credibility relies on the interpretation of her identity by the jury and by any character witnesses who may be called. However, resorting to references to the oath she has taken represents an attempt by her to literally call on a higher source to add to the trustworthiness and believability of her evidence. The interpersonal dynamics of the witness box rely on the oath where the witness swears to tell 'the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth'. It is the job of the cross-examining lawyer to put reasonable doubt in the minds of the jury. Not only does she refer to the lawyer's suggestion as 'outrageous' (line 11), she goes on to invoke the maxim of quality by repeating the oath reiterating her truthfulness and supporting this by referring to the 'holy Bible' (lines 16–18). This appeal to morality is her attempt to demonstrate the quality of her evidence by reminding the jury that (a) she has sworn an oath to tell the truth and (b) that she has done so on the holy Bible. Adopting legal wording is an attempt on her side to add to her credibility and power by putting her on parallel with the attorneys and judge.

5. Resistance and rebellion in the courtroom: Some concluding observations

In this chapter, I have attempted to show some of the ways in which witnesses attempt to resist the control inherent in the courtroom. Whether witnesses do this knowingly or naively is questionable and would be an interesting area of further research, although which is the case would be difficult to determine. Nevertheless, there are many examples of instances where witnesses do not conform to the rules of courtroom interaction and these are clearly documented by other researchers, including myself (see, for example Bogoch and Danet 1984; Wodak 1985; Harris 1989; Cotterill 2003).

With so much of the literature focusing on ideologies of power, control and domination (O'Barr 1982; Drew 1992; Matoesian 1993; Gibbons 2003) the modes of resistance and rebellion present in my data and discussed in the chapter have largely been overlooked or downplayed. In terms of interpersonal pragmatics, the strategies illustrated in my data cover a spectrum comprising the flouting of all of Grice's maxims, most frequently those of quantity and quality, and challenges to the accepted conventions of turn-taking, topic control and change. The data does

suggest that a fair proportion of witnesses do indeed 'behave badly' in interactional terms. Ultimately, however, their attempts to subvert and transgress are more often than not met with responses from the legal professionals, both lawyers and judges, which remind witnesses of the restricted speech and behavioural roles and rules which underpin the legal process in court.

Notes

1. There were a series of retrials and hearings and as a result in 2006 the two brothers were convicted of the manslaughter of Damilola Taylor and sentenced to eight years in prison.
2. A QC is a senior barrister, with the initials standing for Queen's Counsel. In order to be appointed as a QC, the barrister is asked to serve the courts for a period of at least 10 years.
3. All extracts in this chapter are taken from the cross-examination phase of criminal trials. These are the most obvious adversarial sites for rebellion and resistance although the phenomena discussed here also occur to a lesser degree in direct examination questioning.
4. The vast majority of instances of witnesses' attempts at resistance and rebellion in the data are derived from cases of rape, sexual assault or child abuse. More research is needed to determine whether this clear tendency in my data is a more widespread feature of these dynamics or is merely coincidental. It is the author's perception that the former is the case and that such interactional behaviour is commonly found in trials of this type.

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16. Interpersonal issues in health discourse

Boyd Davis

“the spoken language is the most important tool in medicine”
(Cassell 1985: I.[i])

Abstract

An overview of emphases in research on health discourse identifies a number of threads including discussions of provider-patient interactions (PPI) over the last thirty years, with some references to earlier and still-salient core texts and to new trends in analyses of spoken and written interpersonal interactions. The chapter includes some consideration of work in medical communications that focuses on issues of power, authority and asymmetry in PPI, and a brief discussion of interpersonal pragmatics in current work in clinical linguistics. Empirical examples drawn from Alzheimer’s talk are presented to suggest the intersection of social and cognitive aspects of applied pragmatics and to highlight the growing impact of interpersonal pragmatics in health discourse.

1. Introduction

A major challenge in tracing interpersonal pragmatics in health discourse is that within the majority of the studies focused on language in medical settings, pragmatics constructs are seldom the explicit or exclusive focus, though they may be a part of the larger discussion. Instead, pragmatics is more typically embedded within studies combining a variety of theoretical approaches from discourse, sociolinguistics, conversation analysis (CA) and ethnography. Few studies of provider-patient interaction (hereafter PPI) are cast within a pragmatics framework; that is, they are not focused on testing some aspect of theory focused on language use and interpretation. We have not yet seen a confluence of studies of health discourse focusing exclusively on areas within the domain of pragmatics such as speech acts, inference and intended meaning, politeness theory, or relevance theory. Accordingly, we cannot always confidently disentangle an approach focused on interpersonal pragmatics from one that is focused on interactional sociolinguistics, and it may be that the two approaches are closer than practitioners from either perspective have realized. It would be difficult, for example, to conduct a study of language use, spoken or written, in interactional sociolinguistics that did

not draw on pragmatic constructs; the reverse is equally true: the difference may be in the approach privileged by the researcher. Researchers in speech and communications disorders, such as audiologists and speech pathologists, are, however, engaged in a lively discussion of pragmatics in interpersonal communication, a language-grounded discussion which is a crucial part of their practice (see, for example, studies keyed to pragmatics in autism spectrum disorders such as the focus on emergent pragmatics by Damico and Nelson (2005) or the practitioner-oriented study of communicative intents by Hewitt (2000)).

A second challenge involves disentangling the various groups who study language in health encounters. Overall, we can distinguish four distinct groups of researchers who study language use in medical contexts, and they have only recently begun to collaborate and to incorporate constructs from each others' fields: linguists who study health discourse, clinical linguists, health communications studies specialists and clinicians. *Clinical linguists* are interested in understanding language so that they can more effectively treat those with language disorders. They form a branch of linguistics which can incorporate pragmatics, discourse, or sociolinguistic perspectives. They are medically-trained clinicians who work with people in the role of patient or client, seeking to remedy or ameliorate a particular language condition or disorder. Many clinical linguists are speech pathologists or audiologists who want to focus on the study of language *qua* language as well as on patient applications. *Health communications studies specialists* research the ways that language is used in (real-world) clinical settings from the disciplinary perspective of Communications Studies. They focus on both communications within health care and also about healthcare, targeting a range of audiences, which can include patients, healthcare and medical personnel, community members and policy makers. Finally, *clinicians* (medical practitioners such as doctors, nurses, etc.) form a fourth group. They include persons who are trained in clinical practice in medicine, nursing, dentistry, pharmacology, and the like and they study language in order to enact more effective care and achieve more favorable patient outcomes as a result of better communication. The last two groups are both focused on improving interpersonal and group interactions in clinical situations. Despite the fact that each of these groups studies language use in medical settings, the differences in their foci and ultimate research goals make the distinctions between them important.

In addition to the challenges related to the variety of approaches to the study of language and the wide array of researchers who undertake that study, a third challenge relates to the lack of cross-disciplinary awareness of research that has already been undertaken. There is an extensive body of work on health care discourse, particularly in the continually-expanding and perhaps even "over-researched" area of provider-patient interaction (PPI) (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 12). In addition to the wealth of work in health discourse by linguists, however, there is also a huge amount of work by medical researchers and clinicians, by clini-

cal linguists, and by scholars in communications. Most of this research uses some features of pragmatics, though not always acknowledging it as such, but the various fields often lack communication among each other. Each discipline indexes its own material: a medical researcher seeking a discussion of health discourse would start by searching PubMed (an online abstracting service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health), a nurse would begin with CINAHL (*Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature*), and a linguist could start with LLBA (*Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts*). Linguists interested in pragmatics in health discourse would benefit from using all three tools. However, since the use of *interpersonal pragmatics* as a search term is not yet used consistently in the medical and healthcare databases a search using this term will not necessarily find much of interest, and would therefore limit the researcher's ability to get the complete picture of current research on interpersonal pragmatics in medical settings.

As noted above, medical communication research often operates within a wide array of theoretical approaches; researchers of pragmatics and health discourse must wrestle with differentiating their work from (and bridging their research with) studies that draw on other theoretical frameworks within the field of linguistics and/or communication (e.g., interactional sociolinguistics). For example, language speaker performance and speaker-hearer coordination have been examined in psychology and psycholinguistics. Clark (2004) highlights multiple studies in his summary of the pragmatics of language performance for the Horn and Ward (2004) *Handbook of Pragmatics*, a collection focused on formal, as opposed to applied pragmatics (on which see also Bach 2004). Clark wants to look at spontaneous interactive (non-invented) language in which speakers signal what (content) and how (display) they say something – using joint coordination of action as in, for example, interjections or indexical expressions such as pronouns – to ground or make common what they are talking about. Bach (2004) first reviews the illocutionary force of performatives, moves to summarize types of speech acts, both as taken from Austin (1962), and examines the notion of communicative intentions, including the notion of inference and relevance. His discussion of differences between semantics and pragmatics leads to a discussion of applied pragmatics which focuses on the changes in signification caused by *and* and *or*. *And* and *or* are small words, perhaps more familiar in discourse studies (see Schiffrin 1987; De Fina, Schiffrin and Bamberg 2006) but small words, like small talk, have emerged as a thread in the pragmatics of interpersonal discourse (see, for example, studies such as Fox Tree and Schrock [1999] on *oh*). Here, discourse markers are seen as helpful for understanding repairs and similar pragmatic or social processes in spontaneous speech. This study is one of a series of discussions by diverse hands leading to the recognition that many discourse markers act as pragmatic markers (see Haberland and Mey 1981). This study is only one example of the ways that multiple theoretical approaches can be combined to enhance our knowledge of interactional strat-

egies in medical settings, yet the practice of bridging theoretical approaches is relatively rare.

In addition to studies examining interactional markers, many discourse studies of health interactions have also often focused on power; for example, studies of power have long been attractive to both sociolinguists and conversation analysts. Health discourse is notable for its asymmetrical power relations, whether studied as provider-caregiver-patient interaction or as patient-illness narrative (Dougherty and Tripp-Reimer 1985; Ainsworth-Vaughn 1998; Heritage and Maynard 2006a, b). Research begun several decades ago, such as Beckman and Frankel's (1984) analysis of how medical interviews differ from everyday conversation or Kuipers' (1989) description of medical discourse as situated action, were expanded in the 1990s to investigations of frames and schemas (Tannen and Wallat 1993) and institutional practices (Sarangi and Roberts 1999). More currently, much research on medical discourse interrogates cross-cultural situations and multilingual participants (Hamilton 2003; de Bot and Makoni 2005). These studies, which draw on a range of theoretical perspectives, incorporate but do not feature constructs in pragmatics, compounding the challenge of differentiating work in pragmatics from work that draws on other, if allied, perspectives.

Ainsworth-Vaughn (2005) draws a useful distinction between studies focused on language and those skills-based studies that fall into what she calls the *praxis* literature, i.e., studies of actual practice which examine specific outcomes, particularly in patient-provider interactions. The praxis studies are voluminous; and because of their understandable emphasis on outcomes, their functional agenda (Kasch 1984) and their focus on identifying excellence in evidence-based practices, they typically privilege the process of coding the variables in PPI and are often, as Ainsworth-Vaughn (2005: 453) notes, "atheoretical about language." A similar dichotomy is highlighted by Heritage and Maynard (2006b: 357), between process analysis, which ignores "context or content of medical visits" and the microanalysis of discourse, which includes context as a critical component of analyzing any interaction. They explain that patient-centered practice is taught to medical providers in a way that reduces communication to a model that aims to prioritize "skills in communication and in empathy" (Heritage and Maynard 2006b: 357); they summarize earlier efforts to quantify interaction, an effort undertaken with success by Roter (see Roter and Hall 2006). Heritage and Maynard are well-known conversation analysts, housed in departments of sociology; Roter is an expert in health communications, well known for her work with language interaction. It is worth reiterating that, while there are four groups of researchers with different training and different goals, they are beginning to collaborate and to incorporate constructs from each others' fields. Clinical linguists are using discourse analysis (Guendouzi and Mueller 2006); Roter and Frankel often work with Conversation Analysis.

In what follows, brief highlights of current work in clinical linguistics illuminate what could become an agenda for future work that emphasizes the role of

pragmatics in general and interpersonal pragmatics in particular. Next, an overview of emphases in health discourse, beginning with medical emphases (Section 2), will highlight without any pretense to exhaustiveness a number of threads in PPI discussions over the last thirty years, with some references to earlier and still-salient core texts, followed by an examination of analyses of spoken and written interpersonal interactions in the medical community (Section 3).¹ I then shift to consideration of power, authority and asymmetry in PPI, since these factors are critical components of interpersonal interactions in medical contexts and research examining them would often benefit by explicit appeal to pragmatics constructs (Section 4). In Section 5, several examples drawn from Alzheimer's talk suggest the intersection of social and cognitive aspects of applied pragmatics. Finally, Section 6 offers a brief conclusion.

2. On the clinical side

In the field of clinical linguistics, pragmatics has always been a focus for practitioners in speech and communications disorders: in practical terms, therapists must work to identify and then remediate language skills of impaired speakers. Their emphasis on interpersonal pragmatics extends beyond pronunciation or lexical retrieval to include knowing when and how to speak, looking at indirect speech acts, humor, metaphor and similar aspects of interpersonal interaction. Researchers wanting an overview of how pragmatics plays a crucial role in clinical linguistics and in speech and communications disorders can consult collections edited by Ball (2005; Ball et al. 2008) or the monograph by Guendouzi and Mueller (2006) on discourse-level phenomena in dementia.

The well-known linguist Charles Goodwin (2003) has been using conversation and discourse techniques for a number of years to explore social processes of aphasic conversation, which include pragmatics. But multiple theories about pragmatics and interpersonal communication are being tested in the clinical area. Hewitt (2000) calls for a situated, open-ended analysis of communicative intent that goes beyond clinicians' more typical checklists and samples. Within cognitive science, some researchers have begun to espouse Cognitive Pragmatics theory, which claims that extralinguistic phenomena such as gesture and facial expressions are part of a speaker's intentionality (Cutica, Bucciarelli and Bara 2006). For language research in autism, which is "traditionally focused on high-level pragmatic deficits" (Eigsti, Bennetto and Dadlani 2007), de Villiers, Stainton and Szatmari (2007: 305) draw on relevance theory to find a "rich array" of pragmatic abilities in the face of severe impairments in tasks such as metaphor or indirect speech acts.

"Emergent pragmatics" is explained by Perkins (2005: 372): in this approach, pragmatics is seen not as a level of language or a discrete module but as emergent and interactional, occurring within the interpersonal domain. Damico and Nelson

(2005) draw on emergent pragmatic theory and use conversation analysis to identify behaviors designed to compensate for deficits in autism. In a sure-to-be controversial discussion, Cummings (2007: 396) calls clinical pragmatics to task, asking whether it is “a field in search of phenomena.” After reviewing several widely differing definitions of pragmatics, she identifies behaviors she believes to have been misclassified as pragmatic, i.e., non-verbal, and hence non-linguistic, behaviors, which include faulty attribution of communicative intentions, missing the pragmatic point of exchanges, and distorting the notion of context, particularly by “reducing it to a single preceding utterance in a conversational exchange” (Cummings 2007: 409). Clearly, researchers of interpersonal pragmatics in healthcare discourse will find a number of entry points where studies of inferencing or of implicature, or of politeness as well as power, can bring new insights.

While much of the research on PPI has focused on spoken interactions, interpersonal pragmatics is also beginning to impact studies of written discourse in healthcare settings; researchers can begin with studies such as Butters, Sugarman and Kaplan (2000), who discuss the impact of variability in medical terms used in informed consent situations. They note that persons writing the consent documents for potential participants or subjects in medical research studies must become more aware of “how language interacts with context in the pragmatics of the informed consent disclosure situation” (Butters, Sugarman and Kaplan 2000: 150). Greater awareness is necessary because people do not always have shared or common meanings for terms such as *medical research* (e.g., the term ‘medical research’ can refer to either a treatment or investigation) and differences in understanding can impact the validity of informed consent. More recently, the Internet has become a locus for research in pragmatics: for example, investigators are reviewing support groups, flyers, discussions of drugs, patient-patient discussions of symptoms and conditions and, in the instance of Locher (2006), soliciting and offering advice. Interpersonal pragmatics has much to offer the study of written discourse as well as spoken, signed, and interpreted interaction.

3. Earlier studies from the medical community: The task, the process and the physician

Research on communication in medical settings undertaken by medical practitioners has evolved considerably over the past 50+ years. Between the 1950s and the 1980s, the majority of the work on health discourse was undertaken by medical practitioners and researchers. Not only does that work show the development of various emphases, such as PPI, it also offers multiple opportunities for replication and revision from a linguistic pragmatics or interpersonal pragmatics stance. Praxis-oriented studies performed by medical researchers from the 1950s through the 1980s focused on the role of the doctor in any interaction, with an additional

emphases on ethics, consent, and disclosure. However, they often included concepts that were pragmatic in force. Sebeok and Umiker-Sebeok's (1986) and Sebeok's (1991) work on medical semiotics, for example, emphasized the physician's task as identifying and eliciting indexical signs of illness from the patient. In a special issue of *Health Communication*, Frankel (2001) reviews earlier efforts to look at clinical interaction, and to code and analyze interactions using first the identification of pattern variables by the system devised by Bales (1950) and modified later by Roter (1977). The Roter Interactional Analysis System (RIAS) with modifications that incorporate the patient's contribution to the medical task at hand continues to be used. According to Heritage and Maynard (2006b), two studies in particular, Korsch and Negrete (1972) on observations of pediatric encounters and Byrne and Long (1976) on doctor-patient interviews, set the bar for collecting interactions and identifying patterns and routines: they situate such efforts within the functionalist perspective of the times, and as grounded in the sociology of Talcott Parsons (1951).

An example can be seen in Bain (1976): this early coding study sought to validate findings and methods demonstrated by Korsch and Negrete (1972) for PPI in Scotland, identifying the kinds of "verbal components" used by either participant in the interaction. Another functionalist example can be seen in asymmetrical nurse-patient communication which is seen as task-oriented, and classified in terms of functions. As summarized by Kasch (1984: 80), these functions are: *instructional* to convey information that helps patients "adapt to the system," *relational*, "for securing cooperation and compliance," *identity-oriented*, to present self and offer "altercasting (face support)" to create positive images of patients to themselves, and *regulative*, which controls the environment and influence patient behaviors. Pope (2008, private communication) notes that such functional approaches fit fixed clinical tasks and agendas but miss crucial social and discursive features in PPI. Moreover, the shift that these studies reflect from physician-centered research to a wider examination of the patient's role in performing medical tasks opened new opportunities for a more comprehensive understanding of the interactional dynamics at work in this setting.

However, not all research during this time is exclusively focused on specific patient skills: a growing emphasis on social as well as medical factors can be seen as grounding language-based analyses. Kasch (1984: 78), for example, may focus on functional competence, but also calls attention to social aspects of the medical or nursing encounter, such as taking the perspective of another; the themes of social context and discourse as practices (see Foucault 1972) are stressed in early work by Mishler (1984; cf. Mishler et al. 1981), best known for his emphasis on the ethnomethodological approach and the metaphor of the two voices: that of the life-world (the social world of the patient) and the technical voice of medicine. Discourse and conversation analysis are used in several still-central texts: West (1984) raises the issue of what information it is that gets exchanged in asymmetrical rela-

tionship, and uses conversation analysis techniques to examine turn-taking, interruptions, and question-answer sequences; chapters in Fisher and Todd (1987) which examine situation-cued patterns of talk (see, for example, Tannen's chapter (1983) on doctor/mother/child talk). Fisher and Groce (1990) expand discussions of authority and asymmetry in discussing how accounting practices manage social activities. Within a combination of pragmatics with conversation and discourse analysis, politeness strategies are incorporated in the review by Robins and Wolf (1988) of the Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) framework to explain how inexperienced medical students repair conversational breakdowns, and in Aronsson and Rundstroem (1989), who look at politeness and facework as doctors talk with children and with parents about allergies. By 1989, von Raffler-Engel could ask questions such as these in the introduction to her collection of articles on doctor-patient interaction:

How is the doctor-patient interaction structured in a particular culture? What takes place during the process? What causes misunderstandings, lack of cooperation and even total non-compliance? What is the outcome of the interaction and how does the patient benefit from it? Finally, [...] [h]ow can the interaction be improved so that an optimum outcome is assured for the patient with maximum satisfaction to the physician? (von Raffler-Engel 1989: xxiii)

Although a number of linguists are strongly engaged during the 1980s with looking at language and power interactions in medical contexts, much of their work is involved with laying ground for theory and application in discourse or sociolinguistics, not necessarily with pragmatics, although a number of features of speech act and politeness theory are beginning to be applied.

Cicourel's work during the 1980s and 1990s is a case study of the growth of a number of disciplinary approaches, including pragmatics (Cicourel 1987, 1992, 1995). As the 2007 special issue devoted to him in *Text & Talk* (Vol. 27, issues 5–6) makes clear, Cicourel has been an individualist from the outset, passionate about exploring a wide range of social phenomena by using and shaping the perspectives of a range of disciplines (Briggs 2007). In 1987, he authors a review article of Searle's *Intentionality*; in 1995, he draws on ethnography to reveal differences between expert and novice physicians in how they elicit information from their patients, keyed to the amount of medical speech they use. Ethnographic techniques mingled with pragmatic constructs are present, for example, in his 1992 study of context, as he develops the term: "an institutionalized framing of activities" (Cicourel 1992: 294), within which "emergent processes of talk appear that create a more narrow view of 'context' in the sense of locally organized and negotiated interaction" (1992: 295; see also Bamberg 2008: 2, who claims that "[c]ontext is not the surroundings of language and text! Rather, language and texts are aspects of how speakers contextualize, i.e., cue how they want to be understood in situations (contexts)").

4. Power, bad news, and crossing over disciplinary boundaries

By the early 1990s, a number of researchers focus on interpersonal interactions in the praxis or process literature, as well as in the discourse literature. Techniques are beginning to cross over from linguistic disciplines into medical communication, so that these threads intersect. Emphases on the medical side include (1) seeing communication as crucial in the medical interview, and (2) viewing coding of interviews as especially important in identifying measurable outcomes and in defining evidence-based practices for appropriacy in encounters. The clinician-based approach to communication is no longer exclusively focused on the doctor; it has broadened to examine the role of other providers such as nurses or residents in transcripts of audio- and video-recorded interactions. However, the medically-oriented analysis is most often focused on examining data for identification and maintenance of power asymmetry in PPI. Discussions of context, so crucial to pragmatic interpretation, are subsumed in the identification of variables such as age, ethnicity, or education, as those can be tied to medical outcomes. Freimuth, Massett and Meltzer (2006) describe the research published in the first ten years of the *Journal of Health Communication*, noting that, while PPI is still a major focus, peer networks and communication among other professionals begin to emerge as valuable for study. A full study of PPI research across the fields of medical education, patient education, and health communications would do well to begin by reviewing a lifetime of studies by Frankel (2000, 2001), for example, who is as comfortable in a discourse journal as in one devoted to medical or patient education.

In discussions focused on features of language use, the themes of power, asymmetry, and bad-news delivery receive prominence. Interpersonal pragmatics is again largely embedded in the emerging studies combining sociolinguistic, ethnographic, discourse or CA perspectives. Ainsworth-Vaughn (1994, 1998, 2005), for example, long emphasized power, comingling pragmatics with discourse and sociolinguistics first, to discuss power asymmetries keyed to interruptions, questions, topic control and the invoking of affiliations. Face-threatening acts, for example, are discussed in Ainsworth-Vaughn (1998) with an example about “Mr. Frisell,” who consistently tried to flirt and use sexual joking in interactions with providers and caregivers. Mr. Frisell’s jokes and sexual references signal that he wanted to lower physician status. Ainsworth-Vaughn (2005: 454) gives an extensive review of discourse in medical encounters appearing in the *Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton 2005), explaining that the discourse literature examines “control over the emerging discourse” and that the praxis literature focuses on “control over future action.” In a useful review of this *Handbook*, Dittmar and Forsthoffer (2006: 1524) note the incorporation of pragmatics into individual discussions of discourse, such as that by Kendall and Tannen (1997) on gender, or Ainsworth-Vaughn (1994, 1998) on medical encounters. In terms of the application of explicitly pragmatic tenets, Coupland and Jaworski (1997) look at a range

of frameworks including relevance, politeness, and “pragma-semiotics” with data from audiology, noting the overlap between discourse accommodation and positive politeness (see also Giles, Coupland and Wiemann 1990). Power and solidarity are explored in studies such as Grainger (2004) in research on joking, using politeness theory from Brown and Levinson (1987); Locher (2004: 91) looks at power in relational work, calling for an examination of interactional dynamics, which includes context, speakers, situation and norms and finds that

[a]t the heart of any interpretation of power exhibited between social actors will always be *contextualization*. A person will assume different roles in different situations. [...] [P]ower is regarded as *relational, dynamic and contestable* [...] constantly negotiated in and around relationships. [...] because *language and society are interconnected*, displays of power can reflect society. (Locher 2004: 37, emphasis in original)

Like the important collections by Drew and Heritage (1992) on talk-in-interaction and Duranti and Goodwin (1992) on context, the collection of chapters by Sarangi and Roberts (1999:15) broadens the discourse of medical encounters to include institution as well as interaction, and to distinguish institutional from professional discourse. The volume includes superb articles on medical practices and health care delivery, which the editors contrast with communication in training modeled on industry “in which skills are broken down into small sub-skills that [...] can be rapidly and unproblematically learnt” (Sarangi and Roberts 1999: 2).

By the millennium, Frankel (2000: 82) could identify a “(socio)linguistic turn” in PPI studies: he discusses emerging research on communication and interaction that incorporates and goes beyond the establishment of “communicator profiles” to emphasize the “moment-by-moment organization of interaction in face-to-face encounters,” which is what he calls a sociolinguistic turn. Frankel (2001) continues his emphasis on interaction analysis with another linguistics-oriented discussion demonstrating the usefulness of listening to patient self-diagnosis. One of his contributions to medical education, the ‘Four Habits instrument for coding medical encounters’, including PPI, is based on the model used in teaching clinicians at Kaiser Permanente, the largest managed health care organization in the U.S. The Four Habits are (1) ‘Invest in the Beginning’, (2) ‘Elicit the Patient’s Perspective’, (3) ‘Demonstrate Empathy’ and (4) ‘Invest in the End’.² The model combines evaluative as well as descriptive communication behaviors. PPI and patient-centered discourse is a growing part of the nursing literature as well, as suggested by the discussion in Shattell (2004), which draws on face-work theory by Goffman (1955, 1959), and the rejoinder by Watson (2004) on the need to tie such studies to established models in nursing communications. Studies such as Hamilton and Manias (2006) exemplify the inspiration of Foucault and the use of ethnographic and discourse analysis to look at standardized language, informal/everyday language, and the objectification of language. However, despite a new emphasis on social identities in talk, the nursing literature may not have incorporated many of

the newer insights or accommodated cross-over discussions from language specialists, such as Ness and Kiesling (2007), in their discussion of connectedness for *Patient Education and Counseling* (a key journal in medical education).

Identified early as a prominent theme in medical encounters is the delivery of bad news, which is often studied using CA techniques or their modification, as exemplified for the literature of discourse by Maynard (2003), and Grainger, Masterson and Jennings (2005), and for the praxis literature by Buckman (2005) and Back et al. (2007). Maynard's monograph has had a strong impact in reinforcing the use of CA methodologies and opening the door to other approaches for clinicians; for example, Grainger, Masterson and Jennings (2005) combine CA and politeness, drawing on Maynard, to explain why a therapist cannot be sure of the degree of awareness a post-stroke patient has that things have changed, and changed forever. In the praxis literature, Buckman (2005) focuses on echoing techniques; Back et al. (2007) use protocols to train medical fellows in how to deliver bad news and the need for palliative care; the two protocols they use, SPIKES and NURSE, are both responses to the emerging emphasis on patient-centered (as opposed to doctor-centered) care and communication. Interpersonal pragmatics would be a most useful theoretical approach from which to examine the design, delivery and impact of using these protocols, in explaining when and how news is negotiated, in expanding the construct of context, in investigating the range and the limits of politeness theory, and in examining how solidarity can be achieved and its potential impact. Some notion of this can be seen in Ragan et al. (2008) as they discuss palliative care.

The work of Heritage and Maynard to relate linguistic approaches to PPI and medical communication can be exemplified by three recent works. Maynard and Heritage (2005) appeared in a medical education journal, reviewing CA for medical educators. Heritage and Maynard (2006b) appeared in the *Annual Review of Sociology*, and explained to linguists (1) how patient-centered practice is taught (2006b: 357), and (2) how medical education has focused on quantifying elements of interaction, even though this approach has often been criticized by linguists for its lack of attention to context and its over-emphasis on outcomes. The collection of studies in *Communication in Medical Care* by Heritage and Maynard (2006a) is a crucial one, which includes a number of themes currently being investigated in both linguistic and medical fields: diagnosis, history-taking and bad news, narratives, and lifestyle discussions. While conversation analysis is the most frequent methodology embedded in the fourteen chapters, the book assumes a talk-in-interaction perspective which incorporates topics, themes and approaches equally familiar to pragmatics and to discourse analysis. The editors highlight the collection's emphasis on examining both patients and doctors, acting together, being co-constructors of interaction.

5. Examples from speakers with Alzheimer's disease

Alzheimer's disease is a global concern: it affects at least 35 million people worldwide and is projected to double in the next twenty years. Its impact on memory and language is progressive. Despite the progress of the disease, persons with a presumed diagnosis of Alzheimer's continue to want and need social contact and conversation. Analysis of disordered talk, particularly of those features of unimpaired talk that are retained, can provide insight into language interaction as well as into language loss. The study of Alzheimer's discourse can involve both social and cognitive aspects of interpersonal pragmatics, and can draw on the clinical, praxis and discourse literatures, since researchers in each area are beginning to investigate Alzheimer's disease and other impaired conditions. Current notions of direct and indirect speech acts, inference and implicature, conversational competence, and models for politeness, grounding, audience design or evaluation in narrative can be well tested by examining what these speakers retain.

As pragmatic research has moved to incorporate areas previously thought of primarily as clinical, the reverse is true as well. The study of Alzheimer's talk illustrates newly converging perspectives from interpersonal pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and communications disorders. These new perspectives begin in the 1990s with nuanced studies of cognitively impaired speakers having Alzheimer's disease by Hamilton (1994) and Ramanathan (1997); for aphasia, see Goodwin (2003). Ripich, Carpenter and Ziol (2000) explain how speakers with Alzheimer's disease (AD) increase compensatory pragmatic features as their disease progresses. Davis (2005) and Maclagan, Davis and Lunsford (2008) show how Alzheimer's disease speakers manipulate retained pragmatic skills to maintain both the reality and the simulation of communicative competence. Cross-collaboration between clinical, praxis, and discourse researchers is critical if Alzheimer's patients are to maintain their ability to communicate effectively. As Davis and Pope (2009) note by drawing on distinctions established earlier for therapeutic discourse by Ferrara (1994), characteristics of caregiver conversation too often silence the voice of the Alzheimer's disease speaker. Expanded analysis of pragmatic abilities of Alzheimer's disease speakers across the course of the patient's condition can lead to greater awareness of their retained abilities, which can in turn be used to facilitate their collaboration in conversation and their co-construction of narrative-in-interaction.

Brief selections from interactions with 'Glory Mason,' 'Robbie Walters' and 'Larry Wilcox' (all names are pseudonyms) illustrate some of the ways that Alzheimer's disease speakers use pragmatic devices in their talk to maintain their identities as competent conversational partners (Temple, Sabat and Kroger 1999; Rhys and Schmidt-Renfree 2000; Davis and Bernstein 2005), including markers such as *oh*, *um*, and other formulaic devices and extenders like *stuff like that* (Maclagan, Davis and Lunsford 2008).

According to Temple, Sabat and Kroger (1999:168), speakers with moderate to moderately severe Alzheimer's disease can continue to maintain some use of politeness markers, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987), including the appropriate use of formulaic phrases marking surface politeness (*How are you? Please, I'd like that*). Moreover, as they use their retained skills to sustain or simulate fluency, they also use formulaic utterances to compensate for deficits in other areas (Ripich, Carpenter and Ziol 2000; Davis and Maclagan 2009).

In an early review of studies of Alzheimer's language, Sabat (1994) calls attention to the "rich, social contexts" of conversational interaction as opposed to clinical testing. Indeed, conversation can continue to be held as the disease progresses, although its nature will change. Larry Wilcox, for example, was in the late stages of Alzheimer's disease when I began recording him. Despite his inability to handle or report any of his current activities, he could present himself as able to maintain social relations and simulate competence by the way he could manipulate extenders and similar fixed phrases. Extenders in this context are formulaic phrases such as *that sort of thing* or *things like that*, which are often used to extend and finish conversational turns. Their usage sustains the appearance of flow and cohesion (Davis and Bernstein 2005): they seem to appeal to shared knowledge and can keep the non-impaired conversational partner engaged in the effort to co-construct meaning. Examples (1) and (2) are cited from Maclagan, Davis and Lunsford (2008); in Example (1), BD stands for Boyd Davis and LW for Larry Wilcox:

- (1) BD: I will be back next week and we can talk again then?
 LW: Now I can't give you no dates or *nothin' like that* I don't know her schedule.

LW's roommate, Robbie Walters (RW), is not yet as impaired. He uses extenders in appropriate ways to suggest categories that his conversation partner could mentally complete, which sustained the conversation:

- (2) RW: Yeah, well, I don't have a good memory, I don't know, because I don't have a great memory I recall events of any size *and all that ...*

Alzheimer talk becomes heavily formulaic in the sense illustrated by Wray (2002; 2008) as the condition increases: interpersonal interaction in Alzheimer's disease is frequently enacted using repeated phrases and fragments. Pauses and fillers, for example, may act in ways similar to how unimpaired speakers use pragmatic markers (Norrick 2007). Pauses and hesitation markers are often used in social interaction as turn-, place- or floor-holders, and compensate for other (missing) pragmatic skills, as suggested below (Davis and Maclagan 2009).

The next example of conversation, between Glory Mason (GM), Linda Moore (LM) and Boyd Davis (BD), illustrates formulaicity; according to Wray (2002:9), we may consider a formulaic phrase to be "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is,

stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar.” In this selection, GM repeats her phrase about the hundred pounds of cotton she picked as a young child, a phrase she produced in other conversations to re-introduce the story. This particular reference is formulaic for this speaker; she uses this and similar expressions about farming to introduce stories or initiate conversation, and her non-impaired partners repeat formulaic phrases back to her as a way to offer reassurance and suggest alignment, thereby helping her to continue speaking or to extend a story. In this way, BD and LM can assist GM in co-constructing a story and help GM position herself as a still-competent person, proud of her rural background which has endowed her with a history of strength.

(3)

- 1 GM: I just lived in a regular farm home. Farmed cotton, corn, eh-everything
 2 you ... grow on a farm.
 3 BD: That's right.
 4 GM: I had a big ol' cotton bag tied around me, pickin' a hundred pounds of
 5 cotton ... Uhhmm Hmm.
 6 BD: A hundred pounds? An' you so tiny!
 7 GM: Huh?
 8 LM: You're a tiny person to be carrying that much cotton
 9 GM: I decided one day I'd pick a hundred pounds. Guess how much!
 10 LM: How much?
 11 GM: A hundred and three.
 12 BD: Wow.
 13 GM: I went over.
 14 BD: That's fantastic
 15 GM: A hundred and three – you've got to grab it to ... get a hundred and
 16 three pounds of cotton in one day. (Shenk et al. 2002: 409)

Example (3) is taken from a longer conversation in which GM repeats formulaic, multi-word phrases about farms and farm produce, often marking them as important by her own *uhmm hmms* (see line 5). BD and LM have repeated or paraphrased her phrases, adding additional commentary or confirmatory formulas such as *that's right* (line 3). In this collaborative context, GM's repetition of the cotton she picked (*a hundred, a hundred and three*; lines 4, 9, 11, 15) seems to appear as normal emphasis. In other conversations with GM, she often leaned forward to interject phrases such as “we lived on a farm” and “farmed all sorts of things” just as here, she repeats “a hundred pounds”.

Understanding social-interactional and pragmatic functions for features such as formulaic phrases and extenders responds to the current discussions of the social construction of dementia and can help professional and family caregivers to avoid what Sabat, Napolitano and Fath (2004) call the “malignant social positioning”

that limits the Alzheimer's disease speaker to "the embarrassing social identity of dysfunctional patient." LW and GM consistently interjected idiosyncratic formulaic phrases into their conversation. For example, GM would frequently shift topic to her husband by suddenly voicing a phrase which was, to her, formulaic, and a way for her to introduce a new topic. *He preached Hell hot and Heaven beautiful*. If this phrase elicited a response from her conversation partner, she typically would then stay with that topic for a few utterances, and offer further comments about her life with him and her views on religion.

Finally, as a part of looking at Alzheimer's talk, it is important to include caregiver-resident interaction, where the resident is a person with Alzheimer's disease living in a care facility. This discourse is as asymmetrical as any other provider-patient communication, and the interpersonal pragmatics can have a strong impact on the resident's well-being. Conversational interaction is one of the few social interactions available to residents of Alzheimer's facilities. Yet caregivers are stretched for time and, particularly if they are unlicensed assistive personnel (the majority of the positions in long-term care facilities and nursing homes), often have received little training about either dementia or communication. Out of a typical twenty-four hour period, a resident is indeed fortunate to have more than four minutes a day in conversational interaction (Burgio et al. 2001). And that interaction is seldom a true conversation: research shows most caregiver communication is task-directed. Iwasiw and Olson (1995) note that caregivers typically focus on daily activities ("It's time to get up"), something about the environment ("It's raining again"), comments about physical health ("You look like you feel better today"), or their own personal concerns. Reminiscences, hopes, or plans offered by the resident are often ignored (Hamilton 1994; Ramanathan 1997).

Parity, as a feature of conversation, can be explained as "the tacit agreement to share power and responsibility equally" (Ferrara 1994: 39), but it is a feature often ignored by caregivers in their interactions with patients. In the therapeutic discourse of psychotherapy, the patient and the therapist take on the roles of professional listener and speaker. A similar assignment of roles is effected in caregiver-resident interaction, but there is little possibility, once the interaction has ended, that the resident will regain any power to initiate conversation or to be responsible for shifting a topic in the interaction. That is because the resident's initiation of conversational topics are largely ignored; the caregiver possesses the symbolic capital, and a "discourse of efficiency" (Davis and Pope 2009:15) remains the norm. Indeed, since the resident identity is one of already having insufficient language skills and inappropriate social behaviors, it is not surprising that the caregiver also assumes regulatory responsibility and control.

A final example of pragmatic compensation in Alzheimer discourse is the use of pauses and filled pauses, which can coordinate interpersonal interaction and provide greater understanding of the functions of formulaic utterances. Indeed, pauses "may be used to sustain social interaction as part of a repertoire of compen-

satory language behaviors” (Davis and Maclagan 2009: 1–2). Pause length and frequency change their functions as dementia progresses. Instead of being used for word-finding alone, the pause can signal a search for larger components of a story. In this example, using a hyphen to represent a brief pause of less than a second, and angle brackets “< >” to indicate response from the other speaker, “JR” shows that she needs “content from her conversation partner (Margaret Maclagan, MM) to continue and to elaborate her stories”:

(4)

- 1 JR: – I’m not quite sure about that –
 2 JR: because likely as not they’ve got two or three houses built up close to
 3 them <yes yes> and the grounds don’t look the same and –
 4 MM: and the buildings you were in <yes> they’ve changed
 5 JR: yes <yeah> quite different <yes> mmm
 (Davis and Maclagan 2009: 9–10)

Here, JR recognizes that MM may need more information and, although she is unable to provide that information, she signals her awareness of MM’s need with her comment, “I’m not quite sure” (line 1). As noted above, pauses and hesitation markers are often used in social interaction as turn-, place- or floor-holders, and compensate for other (missing) pragmatic skills.

Viewed in this light, the pause that occurs at the end of line 3 can be seen as an attempt to hold the floor and to continue conversing, which can be interpreted as part of a larger goal of being seen as a person who can have a conversation and as a person who retains conventions for polite behaviors. The pause, however, while demonstrating JR’s knowledge of conversational structure, also creates a conversational gap which MM fills by co-constructing JR’s story, ultimately helping JR retain a discursal identity as a competent conversational partner. Reviewing JR’s pauses and fillers across several conversations (*mmm, yeah*) has potential to contribute to discussions of the application of relevance theory to phatic utterances (Padilla Cruz 2001). In such a study, we can speculate that an emphasis on pragmatics and interpersonal interaction can begin to meet the goal of differentiating interpersonal pragmatics from interactional discourse analysis.

6. Conclusions

This discussion has sketched an outline of interactions among clinical, medical, and linguistic research on interpersonal pragmatics and interpersonal communication in healthcare, particularly as it includes provider-patient interaction. Although the emphasis has been on linguistic studies, even there, disciplinary boundaries have been blurred, with much work co-mingling approaches from discourse or conversational analysis, applied linguistics, and sociolinguistics. In-

deed, the final set of empirical examples suggests that such integration can be useful. Co-construction of conversation and narrative with Glory or Larry can be accomplished by attention to discourse features as well as to pragmatic interaction. Looking at the pragmatic function of pauses to identify potential narrative fragments can signal how pauses and discourse are entwined in the speech production of cognitively impaired persons (Davis and Maclagan 2009). More recently, scholars working in one or another linguistic methodology have begun publishing in medical venues and collaborating across disciplines, just as those working for the most part in health communications and medical practice have begun publishing and collaborating with linguists. Pragmatically speaking, this would seem healthy.

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Notes

1. That time period has been chosen because it sees the rise of pragmatics: as Mey (2007: 1) wryly comments, over the last thirty-odd years, applied linguistics, and thus pragmatics, has “obtained new and honorable status.”
2. See Gulbrandsen et al. (2008) for adaptation of the instrument outside the US. Krupat et al. (2006: 38) report on the instrument’s use as a coding scheme to code 100 videotaped visits, with acceptable reliability.

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17. Interpersonal issues in political discourse

José Luis Blas Arroyo

Abstract

Despite the public and institutional nature of political discourse, few areas of human language are so heavily conditioned by factors associated with interpersonal relationships, like ties of power and involvement between interlocutors, the differences in status between them or persuasion strategies. The participants in the political scenario have to deal with several heterogeneous audiences every day in relations that are strongly conditioned by contextual, institutional and media factors. This chapter will examine the complexity of those interpersonal relationships in different instances of political discourse, both on the individual level as well as within the institutional structures that are at play.

1. Introduction

Unlike ordinary conversation, political discourse appears as a manifestation of public and institutional discourse in which the participants act essentially as social agents rather than as individuals (for a discussion on the main features of political discourse see Wilson 1990; Blommaert and Bulcaen 1997; Chilton and Schäffner 1997; van Dijk 1997; Beard 2000). Nevertheless, an initial distinction has to be drawn between political discourse in the strict sense of the term and other forms of public discourse with potential political implications. In this chapter we set out from the first perspective, according to which political discourse consists of: “[t]he real-world linguistic activities of practising politicians” (Wilson 1990: 179). Deep down, political language is not essentially different from other types of language, and so its specificity must therefore lie in the relations between the discourse structures and the historical, economic and social forces that make up the extra-linguistic context (van Dijk 1997: 24). Nevertheless, research on political language has shown that, in this context, many linguistic forms have a higher profile than they might in other contexts; in the same way the relation between the explicit and implicit meanings becomes particularly relevant. And with regard to our main point of interest here, few areas of human language are as strongly conditioned by factors associated with interpersonal relationships such as power, solidarity or forms of persuasion, which have verbal and non-verbal manifestations that are deployed over and over again in political discourse. Participants in the political arena must face a number of heterogeneous audiences every day, but at

the same time these relations are strongly conditioned by institutional and media factors.

This chapter will examine the complexity of interpersonal relationships in different manifestations of political discourse, both on the individual level as well as within the institutional structures that are at play. The chapter is structured as follows: in Section 2 I will analyse the main institutional restraints that are to be found in some genres of political discourse and the consequences they have on the interactional roles played by their main characters. A major part of contemporary political activity takes place in media contexts, and the factors determining their structure and how they are reflected in the relationships between the politician and the audience will be discussed in Sections 3 and 4. Section 5 is dedicated to examining the way that persuasion (such an essential component of interpersonal relationships in political discourse) is conditioned by the specificities of political speech, particularly in media contexts. Throughout this section I will outline the differences between concepts, such as argumentation, persuasion or manipulation, that are initially dissimilar but which are in fact intimately related and often have fuzzy borders in political discourse. Then, I will describe some of the most singular discourse strategies and rhetorical resources used in communication between politicians and the people they usually address. The last sections of this chapter will show how factors such as power, involvement or solidarity are shaped within political discourse (Section 6), as well as how interpersonal conflict is managed in different political scenarios (Section 7).

2. Interactional roles and institutional constraints in political discourse: The political interview

As in other manifestations of institutional discourse, those involved in political discourse often participate in asymmetrical interpersonal relationships, in which both power and the interactional roles are distributed unequally. One of the contexts in which this type of asymmetrical relationship becomes most apparent (as well as being one of the most popular in the specialized literature) is the genre of political interviews, which are often described as highly rule-governed discourse activities. The discursive patterns here are largely determined by the different roles that the interviewer and the interviewee are expected to play (for a detailed description of these patterns from a conversation analysis point of view see Heritage 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991). This division affects the rights and obligations of the participants, including how to ask questions, make statements, address the other speaker using certain forms of address and not others, interrupt, and so forth. In principle, and according to these norms, only interviewers are able to ask questions or take the initiative as far as the subject matter is concerned; the interviewee, on the other hand, is expected to cooperate in those interactional tasks

by answering the questions and complying with the interviewer's requirements. In practice, however, several factors give rise to notable variations in the communicative schemas as the interviews unfold. In other words, politicians are not merely at the mercy of the contextual circumstances that regulate this speech activity, but instead, and at the same time, they are able to influence or even create the context of their interpersonal relations in interviews (on the variability of the concept of *contextualization* as developed by several fields in discourse analysis and its implications for studying political discourse, see van Dijk 2004).

The above-mentioned factors range from informal and friendly cooperation between journalists and politicians, to the most explicit and direct antagonism of other interviews in which verbal duels prevail, through a series of intermediate types in which the interviewer and interviewee confront one another to varying degrees on the scale of interactional cooperation (Blum-Kulka 1983; Tannen 1998; Clayman and Heritage 2002). Sometimes, these contextual factors may be of a historical nature and, hence, deep changes in the political and ideological makeup of a country also account for changes in preferences for certain types of interviews over others. Thus, Zbenovich (2007) has described the transformations that have taken place in the political interview genre since the fall of the Soviet Union, and has underlined the existence of a considerable degree of polarization between two countertypes of interview styles. In her opinion, these antagonist political discourse styles (the "talk" and "attack" interviews as she names them) dramatically illustrate the broad political changes taking place in modern Russia: from the wake up to democracy in the late 1990s to the moving towards a more authoritative Soviet past these days. On other occasions, the preference for one type or another is conditioned by cultural factors, so that the same genre can present considerable differences from one speech community to another (Weizman 2006). This can be confirmed by comparing political interviews commonly published in the British and Spanish media. As highlighted by Piirainen-Marsh (2005), British television viewers not only fail to react negatively when faced with the openly aggressive behaviour of interviewers, but in fact they expect that such behaviour will prevent the interviewees from manipulating the planned schedule of topics to suit their own interests. This is far less common in the Spanish context, where the interviewer is expected to and normally does treat the interviewee sportingly, only posing questions and speaking when the other has finished. Behaving otherwise, that is, accompanying the asking of questions with hints about the speaker's hidden intentions or questioning his/her truthfulness or coherence, is mostly considered impolite behaviour in Spanish journalism (Fuentes 2006).

On the other hand, stating that in this genre the speakers set out from an unequal, asymmetrical situation offers a rather limited view of the real manoeuvrability skills they deploy in their interpersonal relationships. Thus, while canonically only the interviewer asks the questions and the politician has to answer them, in practice the latter often deploys evasive tactics when faced with certain questions.

Not surprisingly, evasion and other forms of equivocation strategies become especially relevant in political discourse. As noted by Bavelas et al. (1990: 28) equivocation is “non-straightforward communication; it appears ambiguous, contradictory, tangential, obscure or even evasive”. Perhaps the most common situation in which people equivocate is when they find themselves in an avoidance conflict. This occurs, for example, when they are expected to answer a question although all the possible replies will have negative consequences. As Clayman and Heritage (2002: 241) remind us, in democracies citizens have the right to remain silent in certain institutional contexts, such as when questioned and prosecuted in police stations and courts of law, but politicians cannot resort to that protection when they come face to face with public opinion. Pressures of different kinds and from different sources (interviewers, potential audiences, subsequent media exposure) “force” the politician to give a reply – it does not matter what, as long as it can be interpreted as such. Now, under specific (and indeed frequent) circumstances the politician can explicitly state his/her intention to leave certain topics beyond the scope of the conversation (Lauerbach 2007), but in no case whatsoever can they benefit from the institutional right to remain silent. Acting otherwise could have negative consequences and, as a result, the politicians could be accused of uncooperative behaviour and of not fulfilling the obligations expected of a public figure before the people that voted for them (Fetzer 2006).

In this context, then, some conversation analysis research carried out in recent years has proved that equivocation is a characteristic figure in the language used by politicians to deal with interviewers who can squeeze them into a tight spot with hints, awkward questions, and so forth. Hence, in a study on several political interviews held during the British election campaign in 1987, Bull and Mayer (1993) found that both the Conservative candidate (Margaret Thatcher) and the Labour leader (Neil Kinnock) gave direct answers to fewer than 40 percent of the questions asked by their interviewers. There may be several reasons explaining this interactional behaviour, which is so different from what occurs in other contexts, and these may range from the most innocent, such as not having enough time to answer the question in depth or not knowing about certain political topics, to others that are more important (and therefore have a greater repercussion on the politician’s future), like controversial topics that may divide voters (Bavelas et al. 1990) or fear of losing face, both personally and with regard to the political party the politician represents (Bull et al. 1996).

On the other hand, although the journalist exercises the interactional power they are granted by their prerogative of directing the interview and choosing the questions, the politician can also show off the power that derives from his/her institutional role as a political leader. And this may have interesting consequences both in interpersonal relationships and in the way the interviews are structured, as seen, for example, in a recent conversation analysis by Rendle-Short (2007) conducted to study variations in the way forms of address are used by Australian

politicians and news interviewers. Thus, journalists tend to use pre-positioned address terms when addressing politicians either by their institutional role (e.g., “Prime Minister”), or by a title plus last name (“Mr. Howard”) at the beginning of the interview (“Prime Minister, good morning”), or to prelude many of the interviewer’s questions in order to indicate that a shift in topic is under way (“Prime Minister, moving on to the energy ...”). Politicians, on the other hand, always address journalists by their first name (“Catherine”) and have more flexibility in terms of where they position the address term within the turn, either before the turn construction unit (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974) (“Tony, I don’t dispute that”), within it (“Well look Catherine, I’m not ...”), or in a final position (“OK, thanks, Laurie”). This is because, whereas journalists tend to use address terms mainly as a technique for managing the organizational aspects of the political news interview, politicians use address terms within adversarial environments for several purposes: i.e., as a resource for taking the turn, for resolving overlapping talk, or for delaying a dispreferred response.

Unlike the case of interviews, those taking part in other emblematic genres of political discourse set out with symmetrical relationships in their verbal interactions, even though their communicative behaviour has to comply with a strict series of norms that are regulated by the corresponding communities of practice. Political debates, both in parliament and in the electoral context, stand out above the rest of these genres. The interactional behaviour in such debates is strongly polarized between defending the speaker’s own political agenda and challenging that of his/her rivals, which gives rise to discursive processes that are highly adversarial and confrontational. While performing these communicative events, politicians act as representatives of their respective political parties and, therefore, of different sectors of society (Harris 2001). Their practices are marked by a high level of formality (fossilized forms of address, strict time-sharing, scarce interactivity, and so forth), as well as by the use of a deliberate (and even expected) face-threatening language aimed at the speaker’s opponent. All this is geared towards swaying public opinion and thus securing more votes and, consequently, power (for a more detailed discussion of these and other aspects of (im)politeness and verbal violence in the genre of political debate, see Section 7 below).

Today, political debate is strongly conditioned by the powerful influence of the mass media. We will now go on to consider the repercussions of this situation on the development of interpersonal relationships.

3. The influence of media constraints in political discourse

In contrast to the rights and obligations of the co-participants in ordinary conversation, one of the leading players in political discourse, the audience (or more properly, the audiences; see Section 4 below) is not in a position to participate di-

rectly in the negotiation of meaning. Instead, in the best of cases, it can do so indirectly by discussing political activity *a posteriori* with other members of that same audience. This is why it has been claimed that political discourse is, to a large extent, a mediated discourse which allows for mediated responses only (Fairclough 1998a; Fetzer and Weizman 2006). And in recent decades this process of mediation has taken place mainly through the decisive participation of the mass media, especially television.

Despite the ambiguity that continues to surround the concept of mediatized politics, it has come to the fore in the debate about the way political activity is carried out in present-day democracies. The media play a decisive role as an instrument of persuasion (further details can be seen in Section 5) and this is why, in practice, political strategy needs to incorporate media strategies. Discourse genres that have traditionally been seen as belonging to political discourse are increasingly more frequently conceived of as mediatized events and their being broadcast by the media is considered to be a necessary condition for their mere existence nowadays. This is what happens, for instance, with election debates. Since the groundbreaking confrontations between Kennedy and Nixon during the 1960 presidential campaign, debates between the candidates from each of the leading political parties have become one of the main events in the election campaigns in a number of countries. While they are taking place, the audience can evaluate not only the contents of the different political proposals, but also (and often more relevantly) the politicians' skill and composure when it comes to coping with complicated situations, such as awkward questions from those on the panel or their adversaries' statements. At the same time, broadcasting these events on television has notably increased the confrontational character of the political process, which is already by nature openly adversarial.

On the other hand, the verbal and non-verbal strategies used by politicians to portray themselves as acting genuinely, as being sincere and spontaneous (summarized in popular slogans like "Look me straight in the eye", "Read my lips"), account for the success of a new political populism rooted in the media, which is always watching intently to see the audience's reactions and the pressure exerted by the election campaigns (Liebes 2001). These strategies, however, can be included within a more general movement that has powerfully transformed some genres of political discourse in recent years to make them more informal and draw them closer to the communicative practices used in ordinary conversation. This "conversationalization" of political discourse (Fairclough 1995) allows the different agents of political discourse to be seen as inhabiting the everyday world of the common experiences of their audiences, by using a "public-colloquial" communicative style (see also Montgomery 1991). And this is true of both the politicians themselves in different genres, such as the political interview or talk show, and also other crucial figures in these events. This is the case of the presenters and hosts, who have traditionally possessed values such as formality or neutrality, and who in

recent times also present themselves as media personalities in a new example of globalization that has ended up affecting many countries and cultural traditions. As Patrona (2006) has stressed in relation to these communicative practices in several different politics-oriented talk shows in Greece, far from sustaining a formally neutral stance, the presenters engage in overt alignment-building in support of experts or, conversely, issue direct challenges towards them. In this framework, politicians are positioned (Davies and Harré 1990; cf. also De Fina, this volume) like defendants in a courtroom hearing.

At the same time, the media represent an important filter that screens political information before it is made public. Although they do not give the public direct indications as to what it must think about a particular topic, their intervention as mediator agents does play a decisive role in determining the way the issue reaches its target audience. One strategic aspect of this media “intervention” can be seen, for example, in the genre of news stories, where political interviews between journalist and politician are presented in a fragmented form by the use of decontextualization and recontextualization strategies. As it has been shown by Ekstrom (2001) in a critical analysis of interviews to Swedish politics inside broadcast news, techniques like reformulating questions, describing the politician’s thoughts and feelings or, in the extreme case, editing his/her answers under new imaginary formats are just some of the resources that are increasingly more frequently utilized by the mass media when reporting politicians’ replies. In other contexts, these journalistic “packaging devices” can help in the construction of the debate while also encouraging confrontation by forcing the politician to deal with voices from different sources and with outcomes that are often bothersome. Thus, the journalistic technique of juxtaposing political statements while following up election campaigns means that the politician has to answer to provocative voices quoted by the interviewer that the interviewees would not otherwise show in public. In her study on the deployment of this technique on election night of the British general elections of 1997, Lauerbach (2006) draws attention to the way the TV journalists’ practices differed with respect to the politicians of the two major British parties. Thus, the losing Conservatives were presented with critical and controversial voices from within their own party so that an inner-party debate was constructed, thereby portraying the party as deeply divided. In contrast, in the absence of dissent within the winning Labour Party, Labour politicians were confronted with ventriloquisms about what they themselves might think about sensitive policy issues in order to trigger doubts as to whether Labour was really so united. For instance, interviewers sometimes ventriloquize Old Labour supporters with critical comments about the political stand of the winning New Labour (Jonathan Dimpleby interviews John Prescott, 1 May 1997: “did we need the quite so new Labour as we are in order to get it, couldn’t we’ve been a little/a touch more old Labour and still got here?” [Lauerbach 2006: 208]) in order to confront the two factions with their old disputes, even in these moments of victory. But unlike voicing, ventriloquizing does

not recycle or sum up what was actually said but rather what might have been thought or suggested, but which is not explicitly admitted. In any event, both these practices of voicing and ventriloquizing also had the effect of dramatizing political discourse and implicitly constructing identities and relations.

Mention should also be made of the studies – increasing in number and able to open up new lines of research in political discourse – on the different manifestations of the so-called “new media”. This term covers the increasingly more frequent channels of political communication such as chats, websites, online fora or blogs where politicians answer questions posed by their audiences, offer their opinions or argue with their adversaries about specific topics (Diekmannshenke 2001; Robinson 2005; Christen and Ziegler 2006). At the same time, these media also enable the members of their audience, who traditionally had no access to political communication, to voice their opinions in an active manner.

4. The complexities of the relations with audiences

The participation framework in political discourse becomes necessarily more complex in media contexts, as has been shown in a number of discursive genres. Thus, Fetzer (2007) says that political interviews are included within a dual frame of reference in which participants negotiate validity claims with regard to the first-frame interaction of interviewer and interviewee, and with regard to the second- or media-frame interaction consisting of the first-frame (interviewer, interviewee) interacting with the media frame. In this genre, argumentation is not employed primarily as a source of gaining knowledge or as a means of finding or proving the validity of an argument, but rather as a means of persuading a potential electorate, represented by the second-frame audience, to support a political position or to cast their votes for a political party. This dual frame can be seen, for instance, in the fact that the co-participants often present themselves and their standpoints as rational and reasonable, although this presentation is not primarily directed towards their first-frame co-participants, but rather towards their second-frame audience. On the other hand, the degree of (in)sincerity of the politicians’ communicative intentions may be sanctioned by the first-frame co-participants, but not necessarily by the second-frame audience, and vice versa (Fetzer 2007: 1348). (See Hess-Lüttich [2007] for an analysis of the way talk shows and other pseudo-political debate genres are constructed on a set of concentric circles according to different participation frameworks).

The audience therefore becomes a decisive element in political discourse, that is, the participant to whom the messages are ultimately addressed. Although to be more precise, in this process of adaptation it would be more correct to speak of audiences (in the plural) and not of just one audience, because they are never homogeneous. Together with differences related to the medium of processed in-

formation (television, radio, new media, etc.), audiences can also differ in terms of the participation design; we can therefore draw a distinction between ratified and non-ratified audiences, side participants or bystanders (Goffman 1983). The political orientation of those recipients is also particularly relevant, and restrains both the politician's performance and how it is received by the audience, depending on whether its members are followers of the same party, supporters of rival parties or (perhaps more important for their interests) an unbiased audience whose votes may turn out to be crucial in the race to power. To achieve this, the politician must establish some kind of alliance with the audience being addressed by giving the impression that he or she represents their backgrounds, concerns and desires. And s/he must do so, as far as possible, with the largest possible number. In this regard, the most successful politicians are those who are capable of deploying a wide range of social skills in interpersonal communication in order to influence others. Those skills have been reported in such charismatic politicians as Margaret Thatcher, Nelson Mandela or, more recently, Tony Blair, whose rhetoric of modernization not only served to identify the New Labour Party but also to attract people who would never have voted for the old party, while at the same time avoiding the risk of alienating Labour's traditional support (Bull 2000).

Moreover, the type of audience also conditions other equally important aspects of interpersonal relationships in political discourse. From a cognitive point of view, for instance, some interpersonal communication studies have shown that the level of linguistic abstraction that politicians use with their audience largely depends on the degree of homogeneity and affinity they assume they have with their members. Taking the data from several experimental tests as their starting point, Rubini and Sigall (2002) have seen, for example, that when a person is discussing his/her political opinion with an audience whose favour is being sought, the level of linguistic abstraction employed is expected to depend on the views of the audience. Thus, when the audience is perceived to be homogeneous and similar to the presenter, the latter will use language that is highly abstract, as it is in the presenter's interest to communicate that his/her positions, which are like those of the audience, are enduring and general. Yet, when the audience is perceived to be mixed, in other words made up of similar and dissimilar members, the presenter is expected to use concrete language. In these authors' opinion, this latter case can be explained by the fact that in such situations presenters can hope that their positions will satisfy those who agree with them, while they offer a contextualized disagreement with those who disagree.

An important aspect of the relations between politicians and their audiences lies in the affiliative responses that the former expect to obtain from the audience and the feedback signals, such as clapping, cheering, laughter, and so forth, given in response to the discourse. From different theoretical and methodological perspectives (Conversation analysis, Rhetoric, Communication Studies ...) research on political discourse has essentially concentrated on the analysis of the first of

these types of signals (Atkinson 1984; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986; Bull 2000) because it has been shown that the type and intensity of the audience's applause can be an important measure of the politician's popularity. On the other hand, applause is usually broken down into several dimensions, such as its rhetoricality or its invitationality (Wells and Bull 2007). The former includes all the resources used by the politician to get the audience's applause (lists of three, parallelism, antithesis, headline-punch line devices, etc.). As a complement to this, in an act of applauding we can also distinguish between two different processes, depending on the degree of invitationality on the part of the speaker: a) the "invited applause", fundamentally as a response to the use of rhetorical devices, and b) "uninvited applause", which initially would not be related with such formal resources and would be initiated by the audience itself. Sometimes combining these factors gives rise to changes in these affiliative responses, which may reflect the difficulties that the politician faces during the delivery of his/her speech, especially when the requested applause is not attained. Lastly, in this section we should also include those cases in which there is some kind of mismatch (isolated applause, delayed applause, interruptive applause, etc.) between the speaker's intentions and the audience's response – something that occurs far more often than would be expected and whose presence in the discourse may entail diverse consequences for the co-participants. Thus, for instance, attention has been drawn to the embarrassment that a member of the audience may feel on becoming an isolated applauder during the course of a political event (Clayman 1993), whereas at the other extreme we have the charisma of those politicians who dare to interrupt their audience's applause and go on with their speech. Nonetheless, and despite the relevance of the above-mentioned factors, the audience's responses can vary depending on several contextual factors that are linked either to the particular idiosyncrasy of the co-participants or to others of a cultural nature.

Obtaining this type of affiliative responses from the audience, on the one hand, serves to feed the politicians' ego and to demonstrate their oratory qualities and their charisma. On the other hand, however, the politician can also use these reactions as a guide to reconstruct the speech as he/she goes along, and thus adapt it to the needs that arise from addressing different audiences. This happens, for example, in the course of election campaigns, where the politician has to deliver speeches on an almost day-to-day basis in different scenarios and before different audiences. In an ethnographic discourse analysis on the speeches given by the candidate on the same day to four different audiences during the governor's elections in California, Duranti (2001) found that the contextual variation that the candidate's different resources and interactional strategies underwent was largely due to the responses obtained from different audiences. Thus, for instance, little stories that are not meant to sound like jokes are seen as such by a particular audience, and this leads to the speaker's eventually considering them to be a humoristic resource in successive interventions in other scenarios (see Schnurr, this volume, for more

information about humour and laughter as interpersonal tools). In the same way, the speaker is forced to change the degree of aggressiveness with which he/she refers to rivals according to the reactions of the audience. And on some occasions, this even goes against the politician's own wishes, such as when they declare their respect for and their wish not to be excessively mean towards the adversary and these intentions are not shared by their supporters in the audience.

5. The function and form of persuasion in political discourse

The special relationships that politicians have with their audience and the resources they use to win over their backing and support are facts that have to do with the intrinsically persuasive nature of political discourse. Since argumentation and persuasion are two fundamental and intimately related components of political discourse, it is not always easy to set the limits of each of them. One solution would be to set out from the fact that, while argumentation may not have the stated intention of convincing the other person, this intentional element does play a decisive role in discovering persuasion strategies. Moreover, in politics, interpreting argumentation as a source of knowledge (in other words, as an instrument for uncovering the relevance and truthfulness of the judgements and reasoning used by the participants) is some way down the list of priorities of political agents, who more often than not guide themselves by the intentions of seducing and attracting audiences. In any case, among the different ways of influencing others that speakers have available to them, and which can range from threats to suggestion, persuasion could be characterized as an instance of non-coercive communication, in which, at least initially, (in its most ideal formulation) the capacity of conviction does not go against the interlocutors' freedom of choice (Poggi 2005).

To achieve their goals, politicians must make use of several modes of persuasion that have been recognized since ancient times in the Aristotelian tradition: the *logos*, which is the force and relevance of the arguments wielded by the persuader; the *ethos*, which is the persuader's credibility; and the *pathos*, which appeals to the emotions. Although all these elements are usually present in persuasive discourse, in politics the emotive component becomes especially important and it is often used by the most charismatic orators, with hypnotic effects over the audience and, possibly, tragic consequences, as history has shown us. To this regard, let us recall the main objective of Hitler's rhetoric, which was aimed at achieving an emotional and psychological control over his audiences and which Hitler himself included in his *Mein Kampf* ([My Struggle] 1926: 477): "... one must never judge the speech of a statesman to his people by the impression which it leaves on the mind of a university professor but by the effect it produces on the people".

In practice, and without going to these extremes, all too often persuasion strategies are used to conceal far less readily admitted aspects and intentions than the

classical tradition would have us believe. We then find ourselves dealing with matters such as the repetition of clichés (Ilie 2000), the biased and prejudiced consideration of arguments (Kienpointner and Kindt 1997), the utilization of fallacies in debates (Rudanko 2005) and so forth, with which some politicians attempt to limit and undermine the critical discussion on issues that are of public interest. And in the most extreme of cases, we are dealing with manipulation.

The concept of manipulation is a significant issue in some recent developments of discourse analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis. As stated by one of its most conspicuous representatives, for example: “linguistic manipulation is the conscious use of language in a devious way to control others” (Fairclough 1998b: 537). van Dijk (2006: 360) also adds several other relevant features and defines political manipulation as “a communicative and interactional practice, in which a manipulator exercises control over other people, usually against their will or against their best interests”. Therefore, it “not only involves power, but especially *abuse* of power” (van Dijk 2006: 360, emphasis in original), and this last trait would be the one that allows us to distinguish analytically between manipulation and mere persuasion. On the other hand, van Dijk (2006) underlines the fact that, as a form of social power abuse, manipulation entails diverse consequences both in the cognitive sphere (attempts at mind control through the formation of biased mental models and social representations such as knowledge and ideologies) and the social (manipulation aimed at confirming social equality) and discursive spheres. With regard to this latter case, manipulation involves, for example, putting certain forms of ideological discourse into practice, such as emphasizing positive things about us, emphasizing negative things about them, de-emphasizing negative things about us and de-emphasizing positive things about them. At the same time, these global strategies are implemented in political discourse with the help of a number of formal devices, which are widely studied and well known for their persuasive function. Such devices include parallelisms, antithesis, inversions, groupings of threes, rhetorical questions, repetitions, and reported speech (see Atkinson 1984; Tannen 1989; Wilson 1990; Cockcroft and Cockcroft 1992; Bazzanella 1996; Flowerdew 2002).

Another particularly interesting point within this field is the figures of speech that are aimed at reinforcing the argumentation of the speaker and enhancing the interest of the audience. One of the most notable is the metaphor, which is probably the most relevant of the figures of speech used in political discourse. Together with other strategic functions associated with its use (to make issues more intelligible, to trigger emotions, etc.), the remarkable persuasive power of the metaphor in the political arena has also been stressed. On the one hand, metaphors have the capacity to remain in the collective consciousness for a long time after they have been coined. On the other hand, researchers have also observed a link between the use of metaphors and the type of audiences they are aimed at. In an evaluation of public speeches, Mio (1990) found that speeches addressing the general public contained twice as many metaphors as those addressing more specific audiences. For this

author, the reason for this is to be found in the fact that when politicians addressed a broad audience they needed to be more inclusive. And, more specifically for our purposes, they needed to have more broad-root metaphors and resonate to these root metaphors more in order to convince the audience of the correctness of the thesis of the speech. This is why in a political campaign politicians turn to pervasive metaphors like those related to “family” (Lakoff 1996) in order to encourage unity around the political project itself (Obama’s “The American Family” in his nomination speech was hardly accidental). Or, at the opposite end of the scale, the “germ” or the “disease” metaphors, used to conjure up the idea of fear and social menace in historical moments, like those of social and economic crisis, in which political problems are projected as afflictions affecting the body of citizens. In contrast, speeches delivered to a more limited audience have the advantage of building upon values that are shared between the speaker and the audience, so resonance for persuasive purposes did not need to be so frequent.

Laughter and irony are two other interpersonal weapons that are commonly used in relations with different types of interlocutors, especially among the more skilful and charismatic politicians. The first is often a deliberate rhetorical resource used by the politician to cope skilfully in different scenarios, whether they are the audience at election campaigns or the journalists during the course of (not always smooth and cosy) political interviews. Despite its frequent artificiality, humour provides the politician with an image of being spontaneous and comradely that is sure to seduce interlocutors and audiences alike (O’Connell and Kowal 2005).

On the other hand, irony is particularly effective in openly conflictual discursive genres, such as parliamentary or election debates. From the perspective of argumentation, irony is a mechanism intended to harm the image of the addressee through the parody of his/her opinions and previous discourses, in which weakness of thought and lack of coherence are highlighted. One of the most common techniques consists in the speaker’s assuming a certain degree of homology with the opponent, to the extent of creating a parody of his/her position and possible discourse or echoing the latter in an antithetical context (Alcaide 2004). Moreover, a speaker who uses irony conveys a less irritable image before the audience, while at the same time making it quite clear to their supporters how skilful they are when it comes to criticizing or even making fun of their opponents.

6. The codification of power and solidarity in political discourse

In political discourse the co-construction of identities and social roles, as well as the definition of the participants’ interpersonal relationships, are intimately related to some axes, like the level of intimacy, power or social hierarchy. This relational work can be carried out by strategies of different kinds, from pragmatic implicatures to interactional styles (Koike and Graham 2006), as well as deictic forms like

terms of address, one of the linguistic paradigms that best codifies this type of interpersonal information. In this regard, and together with other strategic functions, such as accepting or rejecting responsibility for certain acts or expressing ideological bases, studies on political discourse in different parts of the world have highlighted their particular significance in the development of interpersonal relationships (Blas Arroyo 2000; Kuo 2003; Íñigo-Mora 2004; Rendle-Short 2007). The choice of these forms of address provides significant information about the relations and attitudes between the participants in a political scenario, as well as the perceptions that each of them has about the institutional role of the interlocutor. For instance, in adversarial contexts such as the electoral debates the use of 2nd person pronouns can be used to exercise control and power over the opponent. In fact, the reference of these second person pronouns can change depending on some contextual constraints or the interest of the politicians. Kuo (2003), for example, found that the realization of the pronoun *ni* (you) in two election debates between Taiwanese politicians differed considerably in the two debates that were analysed. Thus, in the first debate over 60 percent of the occurrences of *ni* served to establish bonds of unity with potential voters, whereas in the second and final debate (just four days before the elections), the pronoun was not only used four times more often but also, and more importantly, a very high percentage were employed with the intention of attacking the adversary.

Despite the fact that second person forms may also serve to express alignment and solidarity among participants in the political discourse, such relations are more often the domain of the *we* forms. By using these forms, speakers can display different kinds of participation and commitment. In some cases, the significantly high use of *we* can serve to express affective polarization or the speaker's particular identification and solidarity with the audience he/she is addressing (De Fina 1995). On the other hand, by using these pronouns the politician can form coalitions with the audience, from which the adversary is deliberately omitted (Blas Arroyo 1998a, 2000; Koike and Graham 2006). Thus, in the face-to-face electoral debates between the Spanish candidates to the General elections in 1993, both Felipe González and José María Aznar frequently resorted to this strategy in order to form an alliance with their audience and at the same time to exclude their rival (Blas Arroyo 2000).¹ On other occasions, however, the same pronoun can be used strategically to reflect the distance between the politician and the contents of his/her messages by means of a change of footing (Goffman 1983), either by avoiding awkward choices, or by downplaying his/her own personal roles in carrying out certain activities. These possibilities are exemplified by Bull and Fetzer (2006) in a recent analysis of British political interviews with several politicians who strategically use the *we* pronoun to take some distance with respect to certain annoying matters, like common European currency. This was the case for both Labour (Tony Blair) and Conservative (William Hague) representatives. Thus, when Hague is asked whether he agrees with Margaret Thatcher or John Major with regard to the

common European currency, he answers with an evasive response (“Well, clearly they are both able to support the policy *we* are putting forward in this election”), which is dismissed by the interviewer as irrelevant (“I’m asking you whether you agree with her or whether you agree with him”).

Moreover, the sphere of reference of these pronouns may include several degrees of inclusion or exclusion. Limiting ourselves for the time being to the first personal plural forms, *we* forms may designate the whole consisting of speaker and interlocutor in the course of different political events (e.g., interviews, debates). Nevertheless, on other occasions it can also include an audience, whose boundaries may vary depending on the politician’s interests (for example: the audience in the television studio, the audience consisting of the viewers in their homes, potential voters, and so forth). In contrast, at other times the pronoun involves an exclusive reference, which excludes the interlocutor, and has a variable content that alternatively designates party members and supporters, members of the government or the opposition, and so on. In this regard, cases in which the politician makes only superficially inclusive use of pronominal forms are particularly revealing. Here, such forms appear to include the whole audience, although in practice the politician is only addressing his/her fellow party members and deliberately omitting the opponents’ supporters (for a study of these uses of pronominal deixis in television addresses by the Venezuelan president, Hugo Chávez, see Nieto 2004).

7. The management of conflict in political discourse

As I have stated earlier, together with the expression of alignment and solidarity with the audiences and the strategies to persuade them, political discourse is also frequently the realm of conflict and aggression among participants. From a socio-pragmatic point of view, some authors have drawn attention to the relevance of a certain expected impoliteness in certain genres of discourse, such as debates (see Chapters 2–5 in this volume for more details about the theoretical implications of (im)politeness). Thus, in an openly conflicting scenario, such as a face-to-face political election debate, unmarked behaviour is impolite and this inspires most of the participants’ interactional activity (Blas Arroyo 2001). Furthermore, other authors remind us that in some Western parliamentary traditions, political debate is presented as a clearly adversarial discourse where the aim is to damage the public image of the adversary and the party he/she represents, while at the same time scoring points for one’s own faction; hence, the behaviour seen in debates is quite expected (Martín Rojo 2000; van Dijk 2000; Harris 2001). In recent times broadcasting political encounters on television has reinforced the present state: the debate is presented as a true battleground and even, at times, as a boxing ring, where the ability to dialectically “knock out” an adversary is far more important than logical argumentation. They want to win, and they want to do so like great fighters before a

multimillionaire audience so that the opponent's defeat is even more visible and overwhelming and, therefore, more beneficial for their own interests.

These manifestations of conversational violence (Luginbühl 2007) entail combining the strategies of dominating and attacking the opponent, with the ensuing loss to his/her personal and social image (Goffman 1983; Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987). In my study on election debates among candidates to the 1993 Spanish presidential elections (Blas Arroyo 2001), I showed how the contenders continually levelled claims of incompetence, incoherence, dishonesty, lying and holding back information as a way of damaging the opponent's image. Now, at the same time I also found that the use of such strategies differed notably depending on a number of contextual factors. Thus, both the conversational style (more or less aggressive) and the institutional role played by the contenders in the debate helped to account for the considerably more aggressive practices employed by the opposition politician and conservative candidate (José María Aznar), as compared to those of the then-president of the government (Felipe González). Nonetheless, another important finding was that the latter used twice as many impoliteness moves in the second and decisive debate (113 versus only 55 in the first). This reflected the urgency the socialist candidate felt (just a few days before the elections) to dialectically "crush" an opponent who had shown himself to be a highly skilled and aggressive fighter in the first round.

If we admit, however, that such shows of verbal conflict towards the interlocutor are part of the norms that regulate interactional behaviour in these communities of practice,² perhaps we should ask whether we can really go on talking in terms of conversational violence and impoliteness or, better still, whether participants interpret it as such. Some authors, like Luginbühl (2007: 1386), describe these acts of conversational violence as being staged for the audience, and add: "From this point of view, we can understand this kind of discussion as a conversational game. The exertion of conversational violence is part of it". As I see it, however, there are a number of arguments that favour a more qualified answer. On the one hand, there is the fact that, in the most extreme cases, politicians can end up resorting to insults during the hottest phases of parliamentary sessions or electoral confrontations. And sometimes this is even the prelude to physical violence, as Bolivar (2001) saw in her studies on political debates in Venezuela following the coming to power of the president, Hugo Chávez. Furthermore, and without reaching such a state of affairs, accusations and attempts at defamation can (and often are) interpreted by politicians as onslaughts against their personal sphere of action, their private image, and all attempts to make them understand that the attacks are only aimed at their professional role are quite often doomed to failure. This happens above all among less experienced politicians, who are less skilled when it comes to drawing a distinction between their public and private roles; eventually this may seriously affect their interpersonal relationships with their opponents, which, probably, will be made public at some later date by the mass media.

Moreover, acts of conversational violence are not only carried out by employing semantic strategies like those described above. Sometimes, the participants in the political event resort to interactional manoeuvres aimed at invading the interlocutor's discursive space, such as repetitions or interruptions, for instance. It has been said that, apart from its basic persuasive and interactional functions, repetition can also be used to carry out aggressive acts like challenging, contradicting, mocking, ridiculing or trivializing the interlocutor through, for example, ironically repeating his/her words (Tannen 1989; Bazzanella 1996). Nonetheless, interruption stands out above the rest of the intrusive interactional tactics. Unlike other values (which may be collaborative, etc.), in other contexts (ordinary conversation, interviews, etc.), interruption often appears in political discourse as a clearly intrusive practice that aims to put the opponent in a tight spot. The functions of interruption can thus be manifold, such as attempting to control the interaction, requesting further information or explanations about what the interlocutor said earlier, denial of that information, making ironic comments or the "interrupting the interruption" tactic (Hutchby 1992). Nevertheless, interrupted speakers also have access to certain manoeuvres that they can use to get out of the troubles they have been caught up in by the interference of their interlocutor; this gives them the chance to try and save as far as possible their damaged image and keep the floor. Alongside the practice of not interrupting the speech, which shows that the speaker is capable of directing the speech in spite of the rival's illegitimate manoeuvres, there are also others, such as raising the intensity of the voice and repeating sequences that have been "covered up" by the adversary's outbursts, like José María Aznar (JMA) in Excerpt (1) after having been interrupted by Felipe González (FG) during their second face-to-face debate in the 1993 Spanish General Elections (Blas Arroyo 1998b):

- (1) JMA: ¿Me quiere usted decir señor González, si es posible, cuánto se ingresa cuando una empresa no tiene beneficios y tiene un tipo impositivo del 35 %?, ¿Cuánto ingresa?
 FG: nada
 JMA: a bien [claro!
 FG: [pero bueno si esto es elemental
 JMA: elemental tan elemental tan elemental tan elemental que contradice exactamente lo que usted ha dicho antes, señor González
 [JMA: Could you please tell me Mr González, if possible, how much income does an enterprise have when it is not making a profit and has to pay tax at a rate of 35 %? How much income does it have?
 FG: Nothing
 JMA: Oh, right [of course!
 FG: [but, well, that's obvious
 JMA: obvious so obvious so, so obvious that it contradicts precisely what you said earlier Mr González]

On other occasions, the politician can interrupt his/her own talk until he/she considers that he/she can now go on speaking without any further interference, at the same time directly confronting the interrupter (“JMA: ... perdón, me quiere usted dejar hablar si es tan amable, le pido que sea tan amable de dejarme hablar”; ‘... sorry, would you be so kind as to let me speak, please, I’m asking you to kindly allow me to go on speaking’); or asking for the moderator to mediate in the dialectic quarrel and to re-establish the principle of conversational justice (“JMA: ... yo le rogaría señor moderador si es posible, que le sugiriese al señor González que se tranquilizase”; ‘... Mr Moderator, if possible, I would ask you to please suggest to Mr González that he calm down a little’).

Moreover, some interruptions are realized as reactions to previous interruptions. And in these new interruptions, the previous ones are commented on in an act of metacommunication. The negative evaluation of the opponent’s conversational behaviour is mostly successful and, additionally, the politicians regain the right to speak. The success of these evaluative tactics as a way of discrediting the interrupter is usually high, which explains why some politicians react against any interruptive behaviour from their rivals, albeit in nothing more than small objections, comments or simultaneous starts. As highlighted by Luginbühl (2007) in his conversation analysis of a popular Swiss political talk show, this fiction of “doing being interrupted” (Hutchby 1992) offers the advantage of seeing politicians present themselves before their audience as victims of their rival’s dirty tricks.³

Nonetheless, excessive aggressiveness on the politician’s part may turn out to have a boomerang effect on his/her interests,⁴ and hence the importance in political debates of indirection techniques (hints, euphemisms, metaphors, etc.), which keep the conflict within what can be considered to be ‘civilized’ limits. One of the most subversive strategies in this section is the use of innuendos, especially in their most venomous variety. From a socio-pragmatic point of view, Bell (1997: 36) defines this “as a non-overt intentional negative ascription, whether true or false, usually in the form of an implicature, which is understood as a charge against what is, for the most part, a non-present party”. Hence, innuendo possesses a perlocutionary effect that is generally quite a lot more devastating than direct accusation, since even when reality has shown its content to be false, its author has sown the seeds of doubt within the addressee, with effects that will be disastrous for the target. Bell (1997: 54) recalls a story about an American congressman who, up for re-election, got his press secretary to put out a tricky story about his opponent’s sexual behaviour. When the press secretary questioned the congressman as to what proof he had for the story, the congressman replied: “Don’t bother me with proof. Just get him to deny it.”

Paradoxically, similar manipulative intentions may be behind politicians’ use of politic behaviour (Watts 2003), that is, appropriate language suited to the social and institutional norms that regulate a particular discursive activity (unlike politeness or impoliteness, which are marked from the interactional point of view; see

Locher 2004). In political debates, for instance, the contenders' adapting of their verbal or non-verbal behaviour to the norms of politic/appropriate behaviour allows them to show themselves as emotionally cool and skilful speakers who are able to control the dialectic war within restrained and civilized parameters in such a way that the speaker's face will acquire an enhanced sheen. In practice, one of the main functions of face-to-face debates is to show the public, and in particular one's followers, one's strategic and dialectic skills, which can defeat the adversary or weaken his or her argumentative armour. All this must be attained in a cold-blooded fashion since the leader's political chances would be jeopardized if he/she were to act otherwise. As pointed out by Harris (2001) on debates in the British Parliament:

for the Prime Minister to allow himself to become overtly angry during the course of the debate would be seen by both the Opposition and by his own party as a significant loss of face, and his most effective course of action is not to engage in an exchange of insults at all, which tends to heighten the sense of the debate as a political game in which he has more to lose than to gain. (Harris 2001: 467)

Thus, the use of all kinds of mitigation and strategies of indirectness, which are conventionally associated with socially appropriate behaviour, could be interpreted as compensatory politeness strategies in order to prevent disruption of the social order in contexts where aggressiveness and impoliteness represent the norm.

As I see it, however, in political debates these devices can also be used as iconic resources that allow for a reading of the message that is different from the literal one and which can even be ironic at times. As I have pointed out elsewhere (Blas Arroyo 2003), the speech acts denoting asking for permission, requests, apologies, and other speech acts and pragmatic devices that are conventionally associated with politeness, or alternatively with politic behaviour, are not in fact what they seem, as they do not comply with the rules of idiosyncratic usage. In other words, they are petitions, apologies and requests for permission which are clearly insincere. This manifest insincerity and the sharp semantic contrast with the more aggressive statements that they are used with (i.e., in the sense of 'I have to say that it just seems ludicrous and, having said that, I must also say that I'm not trying to offend you in any way whatsoever') make these recourses particularly useful for reinforcing the content of the aggression and the insult to the adversary. And at the same time, it helps to understand how the more aggressive politicians can also be the greatest users of this type of misleadingly politic language (e.g., the case of the Spanish conservative candidate, José María Aznar).

Whatever the case, we have to acknowledge that in strongly mediatized contexts such as those of modern-day politics, following these socially appropriate norms becomes almost an obligation for politicians, who thus see their image enhanced in public opinion. This "politics of nice" (Lakoff 2005) means that in Western democracies, above all, political correctness became the most explicit manifes-

tation of language sensitivity at practically all levels. And some empirical research has proved, for example, the incidence of this positive discourse in the course of election campaigns. Thus, Brazeal (2003) has noted how in the commercials aired by candidates to the US House of Representatives and Senate over the period from 1980 to 2000, positive strategies were much more frequent (67 %) than attacking (32 %) or defending strategies (0.5 %).

Similarly, studies conducted to analyse the way different classes of participants react to the aggressiveness of others show notably different behaviours between politicians and other types of speakers. This is what happens, for instance, in the course of talk shows and other pseudo-debate genres on television in which, together with the political representatives, other people who have nothing to do with politics are also taking part. While such participants usually react to different types of allegations or accusations in an explicit, direct fashion (“this is a lie”), professionals from the world of politics utilize other far more subtle techniques such as making statements concerning the standard of knowledge of an opponent (“And you know as well as I do ...”), or naming unfulfilled conditions about the honesty of the opponent (“If you were honest, then ...”) (Luginbühl 2007). Likewise, in political interviews it is common for the politician who is being harassed by awkward questions from the interviewer to tackle them calmly, refraining from formulating his/her objections in highly personalized terms or justifying not answering certain awkward questions (Dickerson 2001).

Less frequent in face-to-face discourse, but also possible in political genres, is the communicative act of apology, which may be requested (“*Exigimos una disculpa pública, señor Aznar*”; ‘We demand a public apology, Mr Aznar’)⁵ or given (“*Siento mucho que mis palabras hayan ocasionado malestar en Chile y Perú ...*”; ‘I am very sorry that my words have caused some upset in Chile and Peru ...’).⁶ Judging by what some claim, we appear to be living in an “age of the apology”, in which requests for apologies for different reasons abound. The motives behind such calls for an apology range from correcting a “blunder” to attempts at lessening the severity of collective events from the past (the slave trade, the Holocaust, wiping out indigenous peoples, and so forth), albeit only symbolically. Far more important for politicians “in active service” are the requests for apologies for contemporary events in which they have shared a large part of the responsibility, as shown in recent cases like the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, and which have set some political classes against majority sectors of the public opinion. Moreover, in political discourse apologies are communicative acts that have several pragmatic traits that distinguish them from the same acts in other types of social interaction. First, and as stressed by Harris, Grainger and Mullany (2006), they are in the public domain and highly mediated, which explains why they are generated by (and generate) conflict and controversy. Furthermore, this mediated nature makes it necessary for political apologies to contain both an illocutionary force indicating device (“I’m sorry ...”) and an explicit expression of the acceptance of responsi-

bility/blame for the “offence” in order to be clearly perceived as valid apologies. But unlike apologies in ordinary conversation, they rarely, if ever, involve an expression of absolution.⁷

8. Conclusions

Despite the public and institutional nature of political discourse, few areas of human language are so heavily conditioned by factors associated with interpersonal relationships, like ties of power and involvement between interlocutors, the differences in status between them, or their persuasion strategies. Participants in the political scenario have to deal with several heterogeneous audiences every day in relations that are strongly conditioned by contextual, institutional and media factors.

In this chapter we have examined the complexity of those interpersonal relationships in different genres of political discourse, both on the individual level as well as within the institutional structures that are at play. As in other types of institutional discourse, the interlocutors involved in political discourse often participate in interpersonal relationships with differing degrees of (a)symmetry between the participants, in which both power and the interactional roles are distributed unequally. These relationships may vary considerably depending on institutional, historical or cultural factors, but even in cases in which the politicians are strongly restrained by their roles, they make use of a variety of strategies in order to renegotiate them during verbal interactions. At the same time, diverse strategies of evasion and other forms of equivocation enable the politician to cope with potential threats to their face, both from the personal point of view and from that of the political groups they represent.

A large part of politicians’ communicative activity takes place today in media contexts. The effect such contexts have on the relationships between politicians and other participants is crucial, to the point where broadcasting in the media (especially television) is nowadays considered a necessary (and even sufficient) condition for the mere existence of the *profession of politician*. Besides being an important way of filtering (and manipulating) political information before it is made public, the strongly mediatized nature of these genres also accounts for the recent spread of certain traits of political discourse that are steadily growing. One such trait that stands out above the rest is the tendency towards the conversationalization of communicative styles and other markedly populist features, which are used to define a discourse that is obsessively focussed on the audience’s reactions and the constant pressure exerted by election campaigns. Indeed, the audience is the preferred interlocutor of politicians, the ultimate target for all their messages and on whom their very future depends, as well as the complex frame of reference into which political discourse is converted within those media contexts. On the

other hand, the heterogeneous nature of that audience forces the politician to use adaptation strategies depending on factors such as the medium of processed information, the (un)ratified nature of the audience and, above all, the political orientation and the degree of affinity with its members.

Obtaining the desired affiliative responses from the audience in answer to their leaders' speeches thus becomes an important index of politicians' charisma. In this context, the oratory qualities of the latter are related with the intrinsically persuasive nature of political discourse and the formal resources aimed at convincing the interlocutors. As a matter of fact, from the Greek tradition in ancient times to nowadays, the persuasive strategies of *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos* argumentation have always been considered a central component of interpersonal communication in public discourse, where leaders try to persuade their followers and potential voters of the goodness of their actions. However, in practice, political discourse often turns to the domain of covert intentions by these same actors, with biased and partial consideration of arguments, the use of clichés and fallacies in debates and so on, which are all used in an attempt to undermine critical discussion. In these cases, persuasion becomes manipulation as the main form of communicative and interactional practice in numerous instances of political discourse, which, unfortunately, are not exclusive to dictatorial governments.

Both in their persuasive and manipulative objectives, several kinds of discourse strategies are systematically employed by politicians in order to create self and other images for their own sake. Furthermore, there are the global strategies planned to legitimize the candidates' own actions and at the same time delegitimize and derogate the opponent, thus creating an artificial us-them dichotomy, or the formation of alignments and coalitions with the audience, through the manipulative use of personal deixis and other forms of address. On the other hand, charismatic political leaders are closely associated with the skilful use of some figures of speech, such as metaphors, irony, humour, and emotional discourse, as well as linguistic devices aimed at emphasizing the rhetorical effect in their audiences, like groupings of threes, parallels, inversions, repetitions, and so on.

In addition to providing a terrain for persuasive/manipulative processes, political discourse is also the domain of power and confrontation with adversaries. Modern socio-pragmatic approaches to human communication have recently seen political discourse as one of the main loci for impoliteness and aggressive behaviour by participants, mainly in particularly confrontational genres such as debates. In these, much of the discourse of politics is composed of intentional face-threatening acts, that is, of systematic verbal violence that is not only sanctioned but even rewarded in accordance with the rules and expectations of the corresponding political institutions. Nonetheless, in these communities of practice, attacks on the hearer's face by the speaker must coexist with the performance of socially appropriate behaviour because flagrant violation of the rules to personally attack an opponent can have negative consequences for the politician. At the same time, these

devices can also be used as iconic resources that allow for a reading of this politic verbal behaviour that is different – and more malicious – to the literal one.

Notes

1. Felipe González: “... la derecha, que no ha confiado en las posibilidades *de nuestro país* y esto es lo que ha hecho que *tengamos* un retraso de décadas respecto de los países europeos, que *estamos* recuperando ahora con un enorme esfuerzo ...” [... the right, which has not trusted in *our country's* possibilities and this has been the reason that *we are* decades behind other European countries, lost ground *we now are reclaiming* with great effort ...].
 José María Aznar: “... yo creo que los españoles ya *sabemos* ee ... que nuestro país vive una crisis muy profunda, extraordinariamente profunda, los españoles *sabemos* también en este momento que *tenemos* tres millones trescientos mil parados ... [I believe that *we* Spaniards now realize er ... that our country is in a deep recession, *we* Spaniards also *know* that right now *we* have three million three hundred thousand unemployed ...]. (Excerpts taken from Blas Arroyo 2000).
2. In addition to those we have just mentioned, we must also take into account the increasingly frequent appearances politicians make in talk shows, television panels, pseudo-debates, etc.
3. The same tactic can be transferred to the analysis of insults, which we looked at earlier. In the current political scenario, politicians' accusations of having been insulted by their adversaries in the government or in the opposition are becoming increasingly more common every day. Yet, an objective analysis of those “insults” often shows that they are not really insults *stricto sensu*. Moreover, neither is it rare to see that those who insult most frequently are, at the same time, the ones who most commonly accuse others of carrying out such practices. The reason for this is not so different to the one we sketched out above for the case of interruptions: somebody who appears to have been insulted can also present him or herself (and more justifiably in this case) as a victim of the illegitimate behaviours of the opponent, and thus attain added legitimacy.
4. Both the mass media and discourse analysts have underlined different episodes in recent history in which that loss of one's own *face* due to excess aggressiveness may have turned out to be decisive for an electoral defeat. This is the case, for example, of Lech Walesa in the Polish presidential elections in 1995. For many analysts his violation of politic behaviour by personally attacking his opponent (Kwasniewski) during an electoral debate may have caused his eventual defeat in the subsequent elections (Jaworski and Galsinski 2000).
5. This quotation is from a Letter to the Editor from a citizen who was angry about ex-President Aznar's statement in 2007, in which he had scoffed at the measures introduced by the Spanish government to cut the number of deaths in road accidents in Spain.
6. The words of apology from the General-in-Chief of the Peruvian army, Edwin Donayre, following some disparaging statements referring to Chilean citizens in 2006 (“... he dado la consigna acá de que chileno que entra ya no sale. O sale en cajón”; ‘... [I have given orders here that any Chilean who enters the country is not to leave it. Or will do so in a box’]).

7. The cultural variations that may occur when initiators and receivers of the apology belong to very different communities are especially interesting. As Murata (1998) recalls, repercussions of this type can have quite an important effect on international relationships, as occurred, for instance, with the letter that the then Japanese Prime Minister, Tomiichi Murayama, sent to his colleague John Major following his victory in the general elections. In that letter, the British press deduced that the allusion to the atrocities committed by the Japanese armed forces on the British prisoners in the Far East during World War II could be interpreted as an apology – something that was immediately denied by the Japanese authorities.

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18. Interpersonal issues in the discourse of dating ads

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Abstract

This chapter highlights some of the interpersonal issues that shape the discourse of courtship and dating, and explores linguistic strategies used to negotiate them, as evidenced in British written dating ads. The chapter focusses on the linguistic evidence of the interpersonal discursive strategies: It discusses the generic norms of appropriateness, shows how some ad writers adopt conversationalising strategies to mimic the interactional roles of speech and achieve increased interpersonal engagement, and how they exploit the Gricean maxims of quality, relation and manner in their use of intertextual identity metaphors and membership categorisation devices. The chapter makes links to the topics of identity construction, gender and humour, previously discussed in this volume.

1. Introduction

This chapter highlights some of the interpersonal issues in relationship and identity construction that shape the discourse of courtship and dating, by presenting a case study of linguistic strategies used in a British dating ads column. The arena of dating is perhaps one of the clearest contexts in which the negotiation of identities (see De Fina, this volume) and norms of appropriateness are crucial to the forging of new relationships. However, questions of ethics and privacy mean that direct evidence of the language actually used (and thus of the pragmatics involved) in dating and courtship is in understandably short supply. Written dating ads act as a substitute for the more usual face-to-face and ephemeral initial encounter with a potential partner, in what Coupland (1996) has dubbed the “dating marketplace”. An initial encounter in writing, however, is deprived of the visual and aural channels that play such a central role in projecting and negotiating identities during the early conversational exchanges of face-to-face interaction. So in addition to substituting for speech, written ads have to rely solely on language as a tool for painting an attractive identity for their target audience.

While these factors might initially seem to be limitations, dating ads’ public presence in the marketplace in fact provides us with a relatively permanent record of the kinds of identities dating advertisers paint linguistically for themselves. Advertisers are both ‘selling’ themselves and also ‘buying’ the right (kind of) respondent, giving rise to a potential conflict in their handling of face, and the concomi-

tant need to negotiate the competing demands of positive self-presentation and modesty. This data therefore also provides a picture of how ad writers approach the problem of advertising themselves attractively, while avoiding an off-putting impression of boastfulness in the crucial early stages of a hoped-for interpersonal relationship.

A substantial amount of work has been done on identity construction in speech, especially in conversation (see De Fina's review and also Mullany's discussion of gendered identities, both this volume). My aim here will be to show how interpersonal strategies in writing can parallel speech by providing an interactional means for forging relationships and for negotiating and co-constructing identities. In Section 2, I give an outline sketch of the general norms of appropriateness in the culturally variable genre of dating ads, and introduce the British data that provides the focus for the subsequent case study of a specific corpus of dating ads. In Section 3 attention turns to examination of conversational strategies of exclaiming, directing and using questions as ways of engaging interpersonally with a reader and potential partner. Section 4 considers intertextuality, the projection of metaphorical identities and the subversion of generic norms of positivity as alternative ways of interacting and co-constructing negotiated identities. The final section concludes by reviewing the common thread of performativity and appeal to solidarity that underlies the range of interpersonal strategies considered in the course of discussion.

2. Norms of the dating ad genre

If, as Coupland (1996: 190) suggests, the social practices of dating and courtship are themselves normative, then print medium dating ads are arguably even more so, since they are a highly conventionalised and spatially constrained genre. The data I will be drawing on in the course of this chapter are a three month sample of a single British newspaper's weekly dating ad column, *The Guardian's* "Soul-Mates", collected in 1995. The corpus consists of 584 ads in total, published in two columns, headed "Women" and "Men" reflecting the sex of the advertiser; 223 of the ads, or just over 38 percent of the entire sample, were placed by women, while men placed a total of 361.

Unlike many other publications, *The Guardian* does not charge for the written ad itself. Each ad is accompanied by a voicemail message recorded by the ad writer, which interested readers can access by telephone, using the "Message Line" details printed at the end of the ad. *The Guardian's* charges apply to calls made by readers to access the message line, and by advertisers to pick up the messages left for them in return by interested readers. So financial considerations do not affect orthography or length of composition, but the ads nevertheless adhere to the norms of brevity and the very abbreviated code that typifies dating ads across publi-

cations, while the form the code itself takes is variable by culture. For example, some of the abbreviations found in the SoulMates corpus, such as WLTM (would like to meet), n/s (non-smoking) and (G)SOH ([good] sense of humour) are considered commonly understood, but American codings – such as WSF (white single female), GF (girlfriend) or DBM (divorced black male) – remain unfamiliar to British readers (Shalom 1997: 192). Similarly, W stands for “white” in American ads, but when this word (or others such as “fair”) occurs in Indian columns it refers to “actual colouring or complexion of the advertiser” (Nair 1992: 246).

In addition to this ‘coded’ use of dating ad-specific abbreviations, SoulMates advertisers also use typically British and more personal, idiosyncratic abbreviations. Shortened forms of geographical areas in the UK (such as *Beds.* for Bedfordshire) or common British English abbreviations, such as *hols* for holidays, are likely to appear alien, perhaps impenetrable, to non-British readers. The preservation of such shortened forms in the data, in spite of financial constraints not applying in this instance, can be seen as a signal of belonging to the dating advertisers’ community of practice (see Mullany, this volume). As Shalom (1997) observes, the coding

provides a kind of language for the community of ‘singles’ or advertisers, to mark and maintain solidarity as well as providing a form of expression, a way of ‘doing’ the genre. (Shalom 1997: 193)

For this reason, I have preserved the original abbreviations and spellings of my examples (including apparent errors and oddities of punctuation), in reflection of their function of indexing and creating in-group belonging. On the other hand, for reasons of space, I have not preserved original line-breaks; and for ease of reading, I have used italics to draw attention to specific elements under discussion. I have also provided glosses of abbreviations on their first occurrence and explanations of many of the culture-specific terms. In some ads, further culture-specific elements may initially remain opaque to readers who lack the relevant background knowledge. These unexplained elements also seem designed to generate a sense of solidarity, but function somewhat differently from the standard dating ad codings. Full explanation of them is thus reserved until Section 4, where they are discussed in detail.

As the first link in a genre chain (Shalom 1997: 189), designed ultimately to result in a personal relationship of some sort (whether sexual or platonic, serious or frivolous), print medium dating ads have to primarily make a personal connection. They aim to attract, in the dual sense of first attracting attention and then stimulating sufficient interest to prompt a respondent to reply. Effectively the ad has to provide a written description, or “discursive ‘snapshot’” (Thorne and Coupland 1998: 234) of information that would normally be available to a potential partner through the visual channel. The ad thus acts as substitute for an immediate visual impression not only of appearance (which indeed may not be overtly articulated at all),

but also potentially of other social and relational aspects of self. Shyness, seriousness, light-heartedness or volubility, for example, are all characteristics likely to be observable or inferable in a face-to-face interaction, whether one is participating in it or merely viewing it from a distance.

Coupland's (1996) comprehensive description of dating ads identifies the highly conventionalised rhetorical structure that has developed in British print medium dating ad columns in order to meet this purpose. She identifies the textual generic framework, within which advertisers and readers of a column must negotiate the earliest stages of their incipient relationship(s), as most frequently consisting of the following sequential elements:

Example 1:

1. ADVERTISER Gay guy, re-modeled life,
2. *seeks* seeks
3. TARGET guy
4. GOALS to share it.
5. (COMMENT) Please be young, affectionate & committed. Ldn.
6. REFERENCE ML – 24605

[Ldn = London; ML = Message Line, an editorial addition to all ads appearing in this column]

The Advertiser and Target slots in this framework consist respectively of descriptions of the ad writer and their desired other, the person the ad writer wishes to meet. The Seeks slot textually links the Advertiser and their Target, and takes the form of a limited set of copula verbs, most commonly *WLTM* or the eponymous *seeks*. The Reference slot can be seen as metatextual in that it merely provides the reader with the means, initially, of accessing further details of the ad writer in question and then potentially of making contact if these additional details appeal. The Comment slot is bracketed in reflection of the fact that it is optional, "a fleeting opportunity in the written mode to deconventionalize the advert" (Coupland 1996: 194). The Goals slot, finally, specifies any "non-inferable goal/purpose for placing the advert" (Coupland 1996: 194). Although Coupland's outline appears to indicate that this is an obligatory slot, it is frequently omitted in the SoulMates data, suggesting that it would be better seen as similar to her optional Comment slot, as Example 2 shows:

Example 2:

- | | |
|------------|--|
| ADVERTISER | Kind, loving, E. Mids male, 6', slim, fit, cultural, sporting interests, 52, fin. secure |
| Seeks | WLTM |
| TARGET | slim, attract. n/s lady, 35–42. |
| REFERENCE | – ML 21266 |

In addition to this example showing that the Goals slot can be absent without marked deviation from the familiar generic pattern, what it perhaps even more pointedly illustrates is the sheer informational burden carried by the Advertiser and Target slots: this ad consists of little else. In addition to basic gender categorisations, an indication is given of physical appearance for both self and other (*6'*, *slim*, *fit* and *slim*, *attract[ive]* respectively), along with age details in each case. The geographical location of the Advertiser is also given (*E[ast]*, *Mid[land]s*) and the Target element specifies that any respondent should be a non-smoker (*n/s*). For the advertiser in particular, though, socio-emotional elements predominate in the description, with *kind*, *loving*, *cultural*, *sporting interests* and *fin[ancially] secure* all providing the kind of information that might be expected to emerge implicitly in the course of a conversation, rather than as part of an overt introductory statement. The first three of these characteristics, especially, specify the sort of positively valued social qualities that may be displayed for your interlocutor to notice; but cultural norms of modesty in social interaction militate against laying explicit claim to them. Ultimately, judgement of such attributes belongs to the perceiver rather than the possessor of the quality.

The very act of describing oneself to a potential partner, in fact, is interpersonally fraught and redolent with face threat; and the act of describing one's desired other in such circumstances is perhaps even more so. While the need to attract a potential partner's attention and interest provides a clear impetus to positivity, overtly and baldly articulating such positivity amounts to a relationally tabooed social affirmation of self (cf. Coupland 1996; Penman 1990). Such self-positive face enhancement, then, entails a clear potential threat to one's own face; equally, specifying extremely positive attributes in one's description of the desired other, requires a reader to respond on the basis of meeting such demanding criteria, and poses the equivalent threat to the Target's face. Descriptors of extremely positive evaluation, such as *lovely* and *beauty*, highlighted in bold in Examples 3 and 4 below, are thus relatively rare in British dating ads, occurring in only around 5 per cent ($n=35$) of the ads in the SoulMates corpus:

Example 3:

*Lonely, lively, **lovely** lass, young mid-20's seeks equal or opposite gender for fun & relationship.*

Example 4:

*Bright bloke with brawn, 36, 6', & fit. Enjoys sport, pubs & the arts. Seeks *slim beauty* with brains. Lancs.*

[Lancs. = Lancashire]

Moreover, as the italicised elements in these examples also illustrate, when such positives do occur, they are often offset by more playful elements, such as alliteration or wordplay. This playfulness can be seen as licensing the face threat in-

volved by providing a reason (at least partial) other than pure positive evaluation for the choice of the particular lexical item concerned. The degree of face threat such an item might otherwise entail is thus mitigated, since it is offset or defused by the compositional motivation for the choice.

In an apparent contrast here to British columns, Nair (1992) shows in her comparative analysis of Western (British and American) and Indian ads that Indian men are likely to be described in very positive and unmitigated terms as “handsome”. Similarly, Indian women are regularly described as “beautiful”, while neither sex is likely to be merely “attractive”. However, the contrast is perhaps more apparent than real: the Indian ads Nair analyses are written not by the advertiser him/herself, but by the family of the person offered for “matrimonial alliance”. Thus,

[f]ulsome though the praise is for the advertising party in an Indian column, an impression of modest decorum is retained through the overarching presence of the family, which lends its weight to any assessment of the individual’s merits. (Nair 1992: 241)

More frequently in British columns, though, ad writers choose their self and other descriptors from a limited pool of more “moderate” and potentially ambiguous lexis. Shalom (1997), for example, finds that men advertising for women use the item *attractive* with the highest frequency, followed by *intelligent*, *slim*, *warm* and *pretty*; while women advertising for men favour the items *professional*, *intelligent*, *tall(ish)*, *educated*, *handsome*, *witty*, *kind* and *honest* at the equivalent rates of frequency. This prototypical dating ad lexis admits of a wide range of interpretations, leading her to characterise such items as being functionally vague, and maximally open to interpretation. *Attractive*, for instance, seen in Example 2 above, is a more “all-embracing concept” (Shalom 1997: 199) that may apply to personality as well as looks and is considerably less demanding, and hence less face threatening, than items such as “beautiful”, “lovely” or “gorgeous” would be.

Coupland (1996) analyses the spoken recordings that accompany her written ads (the equivalents of the Message Line voicemails left by SoulMates advertisers, which I described earlier). She identifies several ways of providing “strategic mitigation of the positive threat to own face” (Coupland 1996: 199) entailed in positive self-evaluation. These include: hedging; repositioning of positive judgements in order to attribute them to others; discourse markers; hesitation; and laughter. The same or closely equivalent ways of mitigating positivity in writing are also found in SoulMates:

Example 5:

Wanted, Dennis Potter type. *I am considered pretty*, an artist. I am interested in a mature man who thinks. B’ham. (repositioning of judgement)

[B’ham. = Birmingham]

Example 6:

Gay grad., 21, funny, thoughtful, non-camp, inexperienced, *kinda cute-lookin'*, seeks Mr. Right. Ldn. (hedging)

[grad. = graduate]

Example 7:

OK looking man, 37, relaxed lifestyle, sensitive, warm & loving seeks woman to be with. Phone for info. London. (good-looking downgraded to *OK looking*)

Example 8:

Arr, the same old thing. 30 y.o. man needs woman of same age with brains & big hips! Cardiff/Bristol. (*Arr* as a dialectal discourse marker)¹

[y.o. = year old]

In each of these examples the ad writer chooses to formulate his/her self-assessment in a way that is reminiscent of Nair's (1992: 241) observation about the "modest decorum" of Indian ads. In Example 5, this is achieved through use of the passive voice that more extensively characterises Nair's Indian data (1992: 237). The formula *I am considered pretty* locates the evaluation in other people's judgement and allows the ad writer to avoid making a self-assessment that might be perceived as immodest. Examples 6 and 7 reduce the face threat of positive self-evaluation, by hedging (*kinda cute-lookin'*) and down-grading to *OK looking* in a way that has a similar semantic effect to that of using a down-toner such as "quite" or "fairly". Similarly, the use of *same old thing* in Example 8 ostensibly denies any claim to remarkability or unusualness with its implication of belonging to a category that is regular and predictable in its occurrence. These British written ads, then, also strategically mitigate potential face threats to project decorously modest self-evaluations.

Coupland (1996: 192) notes that negativity can function similarly as a marker of modesty and hence of realism or likeability, another feature also found in *Soul-Mates*:

Example 9:

Plain, boring woman, optimistic, seeks hunk, pref. rich, for meaningful sex. Also into outdoor, arts, SOH, n/s. Yorks.

[pref. = preferably; Yorks. = Yorkshire]

Example 10:

Fat & ugly. Would any young lady like to meet a lonely coach driver? 40 & young at heart. London.

All of these mitigated and negative examples illustrate a rather more complex negotiation of meaning and hence a more involved engagement with the reader and potential respondent than previous examples have done.

In addition to the features already discussed, the examples quoted also illustrate further interpersonal linguistic strategies. Example 5 includes what Shalom calls an “extratextual reference” to Dennis Potter, a British TV playwright. Such references function to “emphasis[e] the connections between writer and reader” (Shalom 1997: 191), by drawing on a common pool of knowledge about the identity of the person so invoked, to which the writer and some readers will both have access (but, as hinted earlier, other readers may not). Section 4 below develops a discussion of such intertextuality as part of a broader interpersonal, pragmatic strategy, which is based partly on an appeal to shared knowledge, but which can also be seen more generally as a way of sharing responsibility for negotiating “truthfulness”.

Example 6 not only uses the hedge *kind of*, but also renders it as part of a phrase orthographically reminiscent of speech (*kinda cute-lookin'*), in order to lend a more conversational flavour to the ad, another feature noted by Shalom (1997: 191) as “further reinforc[ing] the interactivity of the text”. Similarly, Example 7 directly addresses the reader with the exhortation *Phone for info*, while Examples 8 and 10 also introduce elements more suggestive of spoken dialogue than of written monologue, with *Arr; the same old thing* and *Would any young lady like to meet a lonely coach driver?* respectively.

Between them, then, these examples encompass a range of the interpersonal linguistic strategies used by SoulMates ad writers to achieve increased engagement. These strategies fall into two main groupings, intertextuality and conversationalisation, or simulation of dialogue. These strategic groupings will provide the foci of the case study in the next two sections, beginning with the adoption of a spoken, conversational mode to forge a more intimate unfolding relationship with the reader and potential partner.

3. Conversationalising the written dating ad²

Dating ads have been likened to small ads or classified adverts for selling or buying second hand cars and other goods (Coupland 1996, 2000; Shalom 1997; Hogben and Coupland 2000). While most classified ads either offer such goods for sale or seek to buy them, one notable difference in dating ads is that the advertiser is simultaneously both offering her/himself and seeking a partner. From the specific perspective developed here, moreover, the advertiser is not so much seeking a material product such as a used car, as s/he is looking to open a sustainable spoken dialogue with a suitable partner for longer term interaction. The ad itself can therefore be seen as a written medium initiation of a spoken exchange – the opening of a conversation. It is thus not surprising that many ad writers choose to depart from the most typical realisations of the genre reflected in Coupland’s template for written ads. The remainder of this section will review in turn the various ways in which

SoulMates ad writers incorporate in their ads elements more usually associated with speech structures than with writing, in order to open an exchange of the talk that may lead to and sustain the desired relationship.

3.1. Exclamations

One of the most pervasive features of spoken mode adopted by SoulMates writers is the use of orthographic exclamations, which require the reader to reconstruct the auditory experience of face-to-face interaction. Often these exclamations signal a joke or a humorous incongruity, as in Example 11:

Example 11:

Male, 35, separated, hates pseuds, likes TV, pubs, films, music, sex – *reverse order!* Slim, not too ugly. N. Yorks.

[N.Yorks. = North Yorkshire]

More frequently they occur at the start of the ad as attention grabbers, sometimes explicitly so with phrases such as *Attention please!* or *SOS!*, and sometimes implicitly so, by foregrounding the advertiser's self-description, for example, *Hunk-U-Like!* and *Not a boring accountant!*

Most frequently of all, however, they initially appear to do nothing more than provide a textual indication of emphatic intonation, giving "auditory" remarkability to utterances that may otherwise be entirely unremarkable:

Example 12:

Gay male, 32. Art lover, music lover. *Seeks similar for fun, friendship, maybe more!* Derbys.

[Derbys. = Derbyshire]

Example 13:

Dry witted, cynical, 26, *needs softening with affection & romance!* *Into jazz & house conversions!*

However unremarkable the content of these exclamations may seem, they all invite the reader to hear them intonationally as culminating in high key (Brazil 1985), a choice which in face-to-face interaction exerts a pressure on the hearer to provide a response to the initiation of an exchange (Coulthard 1985: 141). In other words, using an exclamation mark appears to be a favourite strategy used by SoulMates advertisers not just to engage their reader-interlocutors in hearing exclamatory intonation, but actually to encourage an overt response from them.

3.2. Directives and invitations

As Thompson and Thetela (1995: 112) point out, though, strictly speaking, initiations that merely give information require no more by way of response than an acknowledgement – which itself may be no more than continued attention. The exclamations just considered, however auditorily remarkable and however encouraging of a response, nevertheless remain mere statements of information. A more overt way of prompting a response to the conversational opening provided by a dating ad is for the writer to incorporate an imperative form, directing the reader to a physical response of some sort. However, the scope for commands is limited since the assumed action performed by the reader must be restricted to the here-and-now of the text. Example 7 (repeated here for convenience), and Example 14 below, illustrate the most frequent use of imperatives in the SoulMates corpus, namely that of lexicalising the action that constitutes the next move in the assumed exchange, and directing the reader to *call*, *ring* or *phone*:

Example 7:

OK looking man, 37, relaxed lifestyle, sensitive, warm & loving seeks woman to be with. *Phone for info*. London.

Example 14:

Opera singer, 40. Varied interests from climbing mountains to enjoying John Dunn. *If you want to know more then call me*. S. East.
[S. East = South East]

In view of the social distance between the writer and his/her unknown reader, even the relatively small imposition of directing the reader to such an action might be considered a potential threat to negative face, on the one hand. On the other hand, it might equally be argued that this sort of imperative is so widely familiar in so many advertising contexts that it is merely routine behaviour and carries no such threat (see, for example, O'Driscoll 2007: 470, on situational variability of threats to face).

While the command, *Phone for info*, in Example 7 performs its potential face threatening act of imposing an action bald and on record (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987), other advertisers do indeed include facework³ of the kind apparent in the conditional clause (*If you want to know more*) of Example 14. This provides motivation for those readers who are interested in finding out more and allows them to perform the action on their own terms, addressing their own needs, rather than those of the writer. Locher (2006: 97–98) found a similar use of *if*-clauses in an online advice column, where the applicability of the condition they express was used to establish the relevance of the ensuing advice for individual readers. In the present instance, the *if*-clause not only establishes relevance for a sub-set of interested readers, it also allows those who are not interested to exclude themselves from membership of the group of bona fide addressees and hence also from any

pressure to respond. Whether the conditional clause is regarded as redressing a potential threat or rather as being a “move toward” (O’Driscoll 2007: 476) the reader for its own sake, ads which include such facework seem to construe a more personalised relationship with the reader than those which do not. Rather than merely baldly exhorting all her readers equally, in a manner associated with the hard sell of the commercial world, this writer uses the *if*-clause to allow her readers to opt in of their own accord, as members of a selected group of addressees. In this way such facework can make a more considerate impression, by appearing to respect the reader’s needs; and the feeling of personal engagement for the reader is likely to be increased by the sense of specific selection and voluntary inclusion it generates.

Similarly, the choice of imperative itself may perform personalising facework by referring only indirectly to the present exchange, and thus seeming to urge rather than baldly command:

Example 15:

29, profess. man into outdoors/indoors, doing/thinking. WLTM F, 21–30. *Go on!* I’d like to meet you.

[profess. = professional; F = female]

The indirectness of formulae such as *Go on!* or *Do it!* has to be decoded as meaning *call me* or its equivalent, and using this inexplicit formulation casts the reader in the role of someone already considering replying to the initiation and just needing a little encouragement to pick up the phone. In other words, this strategy seems designed to extend the initial exchange and thus the relationship, by prompting the reader to open another exchange of his/her own. It enacts a reader-in-the-text (Thompson and Thetela 1995) who is caught semi-frozen in the act of deciding whether to respond to the ad, and thus presupposes a relationship already intimate enough for this bit of friendly encouragement.

An alternative kind of directive used in the SoulMates corpus is less limited by the action being performed in the here-and-now of the exchange, since it exploits the less imposing and interpersonally closer capacity of the “let’s imperative” to propose joint future actions:

Example 16:

Judge Dredd seeks Tank Girl. 35, into computer art, cycling & films. You wild, warm, friendly & sexy. *Let’s surf into the summer!* Ldn.

Perhaps the most intimately involving of all the uses of commands, though, appears in the following ad, which manages to find a mental action of markedly low imposition for the reader to perform in the very process of reading the ad:

Example 17:

Untangle the following anagram: lal nme rea satabd, then contact one who isn’t. Ldn.

It is hard to imagine the reader who does not swallow the interpersonal and intellectual bait here and make the appropriate response by untangling the very easy anagram *all men are bastards* (albeit mis-spelt in the original ad, exactly as reproduced here). Once the reader is thus duly hooked, the ad writer then immediately follows up with the more predictable exhortation to make contact. Notably, too, the use of the proform *one* in the second imperative of the ad further involves the reader in untangling not only the anagram, but also the reference to a man who is not a bastard.

What all of these imperatives have in common is that they more effectively extend the exchange initiated by the writer than do stand-alone exclamations. They project the existence of an already conversational footing between writer and reader, by overtly handing over to the reader to make a response and thus to take responsibility for the next move in the interaction.

3.3. Questions

The imperatives used to issue commands and invitations exemplified above may be more effectively engaging than exclamations, but they are, as already noted, somewhat limited in scope, because of their anchorage to the written context of the interaction. The conversational strategy of asking questions, while still anchored in the same setting, is more interactionally flexible by comparison, since it more usually invites not so much an action as a verbal or mental answer by way of response.

As with imperatives, using a question to end the ad can function as an invitation to speculate on the future, and to evoke an even more engaging effect:

Example 18:

Romantic liasonette sought by semi-attached, slim, yng 50 male. Likes VU, Foucault, Europe. *Hols Sept?*

[yng = young; VU = Velvet Underground (a band); Hols Sept? = Holidays (in) September?]

Example 19:

Jewish masseur, 37, with 1 & a half ears^[4] & plenty contradictions WLTM sexy, intell. woman. *Walks, talks ...?*

[intell. = intelligent]

While a *let's* imperative presents a complete proposal for acceptance or rejection, the questions here present possibilities for negotiation rather than definitive *yes/no* propositions. They invite the reader to speculate on a point beyond an immediate response to what the advertiser offers. So while the imperatives may seem designed to elicit immediate acquiescence to (or indeed rejection of) a proposed course of action, these questions work more readily as an initial starting point for discussion of

the writer's proposed activities, or perhaps of alternative or additional pursuits the reader may wish to propose. The interpersonally engaging effect of this invitation to negotiate future activities is further augmented too by the association of completed questions, addressed to someone else, with conversational turn change (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974). The effect is to leave the reader to pick up the conversational baton, and at least mentally evaluate the appeal of the proposal.

A text-final question can also be used to focus interaction on the immediate present, again to create a rather different effect from the commands and invitations of imperative forms:

Example 20:

Attract., exuberant, vivacious, adventurous, females, seeking handsome, hedonous males, for evening of intrepid fun, stimulating convers., friendship & laughter.
Have you got what it takes?
[convers. = conversation]

Example 21:

Camomile seeks Earl Grey. I am NW, 30's, prof. woman. UR caring, intell. prof.
RU my cup of tea?
[NW = North West; prof. = professional; UR = you are; RU = are you]

The response required of the reader by this type of question, which this time functions as a Comment rather than as a statement of a future Goal, is less speculative than with the first type. Here the question is directed not just at someone other than the writer, but explicitly to the reader; and again, responsibility for completing the interaction is handed over to the reader as a result of the questions' text-final positioning. The appropriate response they strongly prospect, moreover, is rather more demanding than that of mere speculation on the future. The reader is effectively challenged to match him-/herself against the qualities sought by the writer and, if the match is positive, then to make the next move in the genre-chain (Shalom 1997) by actually replying to the ad itself. (The additional interpersonal effect of using metaphorical identities, such as *Camomile* and *Earl Grey* in Example 21, will be taken up in Section 4.1.)

While both these types of text-final question leave the reader to conclude the interaction, other writers choose to open both ad and interaction with a question:

Example 22:

Like music and dance? Gay male, mid 30's, 5'11". Seeking someone same age fun.
Beds.
[Beds. = Bedfordshire]

Example 23:

Are you open minded, warm, mature, 25-40. Attentive, loving man, 29, WLTM you. No ravers.^[5] Ldn.

Again these questions cast the reader in the role of answerer, and the ensuing text shows that they are assumed to have provided the minimal response of agreement; but the questions themselves represent a further step up in involvement. Their occurrence in the Target slot means the reader is directly drawn into checking their own suitability against the criteria the advertiser provides, as opposed to being able to preserve a distance and read more conventional third person partner-descriptions as applying to some hypothetical other person. Being able to meet the criteria in these cases effectively becomes a pre-requisite for taking further legitimate part in the interaction. That is, responding with an affirmative “preferred second” (Levinson 1983: 332–336) rules the answerer in for further exchange as an addressee of the kind the advertiser seeks. (A negative reply, by the same token, rules the respondent out of such fully legitimate participation, but the impulse of the question is towards eligibility rather than exclusion. Few of us would want to consider ourselves narrow minded, cold and immature, since these are clearly socially undesirable qualities stigmatised in British culture at large, and the more so in a relational context such as this.)

3.4. Serial exchanges

Example 24 illustrates the most obvious strategy for sustaining an interaction across several exchanges within a single ad, that of combining questions and directives:

Example 24:

Do you like Jazz, cinema, going out to breakfast? I do, I’m 29, black, female graduate. Call me. London.

After opening with a question which assumes a three-part response (not necessarily positive) from the reader, this writer exploits expectations that conversational openings are reciprocal (Levinson 1983: 309). That is, by providing an apparent response of her own, she seems to assume not only that the reader provides information in reply, but also that s/he politely takes his/her own turn to initiate by returning the question:

Advertiser: Do you like Jazz, cinema, going out to breakfast?

Reader: [I do (not)
What about you?]

Advertiser: I do

There are thus effectively four conversational moves in this ad, across two exchanges, before the writer initiates a third exchange with a statement, *I’m 29* etc., that the reader need only attend to by way of a response. Immediately on the heels of this, though, she then enacts another set of interactional roles for herself and her reader, from whom she now requires another overt response with the final com-

mand, *Call me*. She thus steers a varied interactional path through several exchanges before handing over to a reader who by now is effectively a co-conversationalist.

Although I have concentrated so far on the interactional technique most exploited, that of selecting initiating roles that require an overt response from the reader, the last example also introduced an alternative strategy of assuming a responding role, which I turn to in the next section.

3.5. Responses

The strategy of assuming a responding role is used in a very small number of the ads in the SoulMates corpus considered here (all three further examples being reproduced below). However, it is also present in the same or similar forms in the data analysed by Coupland (1996: 196 and 199), Shalom (1997: 191) and Thorne and Coupland (1998: 248), suggesting that although not frequently adopted, it is nevertheless a recognised resource for constructing a conversational relationship with the reader.

Example 25:

Gay guy, 32, WLTM someone 30–45 for interesting life. *Me?* I'm an undiscovered little gem. London.

As in earlier examples, the highly elliptical form of this question contributes to its conversational flavour. But there is also another way in which this usage belongs to a spoken, rather than written mode, since it is the kind of turn-initial echo question familiar in face-to-face interaction. An echo question such as this not only presupposes that someone – in this case, the reader – has asked the question it echoes, it also then enacts a further responding role for the reader, since confirmation – even if silent rather than verbalised – is required for the interaction to proceed. In effect, then, a high degree of reader interest and involvement in the interaction is projected by the implication that s/he has asked about the writer in the first place. And this is then additionally boosted by the echo question's effect of seeking the reader's confirmation of interest before extending further into a third exchange with the answer to his/her original implied enquiry.

By contrast, other advertisers (including the writer of Example 8, repeated here) omit any textualisation of the reader's question, but nevertheless supply information that presupposes someone has asked them for it:

Example 26:

Yes they do exist! Tall, fit, prof. male, low mileage, good cond., no baggage, WLTM sim. female, 28–35. NW.

[cond. = condition; sim. = similar; NW = North West]

Example 8:

Arr, the same old thing. 30 y.o. man needs woman of same age with brains and hips! Cardiff/Bristol.

Both of these examples subversively acknowledge the dating ad genre (and in the case of Example 26, of small ads trading in second hand cars, too), inviting readers to draw on their own awareness of generic norms in reconstructing the reader-questions they presuppose. For Example 26, this reader question must be construed as something along the lines of “Do males who are desirable and unattached exist?”. Although Example 8 is perhaps more ambiguous, it may be read as answering a question such as “Why are you advertising?”; alternatively it might also be understood in response to (or perhaps even as posing) a question such as “These dating ads all sound alike, don’t they?”. In either case, in order to reach a coherent interpretation, the reader is required to supply a conversational contribution of his/her own. And not only are we plunged straight into the middle of this conversation with the ad writer, we are also assumed to have “made the first move” and initiated the whole interaction.

Throughout this section I have concentrated on the interactional resources of spoken exchange structure as a way for writers of dating ads to construe a more interpersonally charged conversational footing for their relationship with their readers. The interactional benefits of asking many of the questions I have considered, though, derive precisely from the written medium and the physical and temporal separation it entails. In a real face-to-face conversation with a prospective partner one could indeed enquire about their affective likes and dislikes and explicitly ask “do you like music?” However, one would expect only indirectly to glean other information as to their personality (“are you warm?” would probably be interpreted as a question about the heating) and would also expect to form one’s own opinion of their attractiveness, intelligence, suitability, etc. Asked in writing of a reader who is neither known nor visible to the writer, a question such as “are you intelligent and witty?” clearly serves to establish a sense of connection between the two parties with its direct address and invitation to provide an affirmative response. Transposed to face-to-face interaction, however, evaluations of this sort are judgements that normally fall to the speaker and his/her appraisal of the person s/he is speaking to. In a real conversational interaction, then, the very asking of the question “are you intelligent and witty?” could pose just as much of a threat – if not more – to one’s partner’s positive face as using the lexical items discussed in Section 2 in a more conventional dating ad description.

4. Intertextuality and the writer-reader relationship⁶

In addition to the call to involvement, and the sense of direct personal address exerted by the conversationalising strategies employed by writers of the ads discussed in the previous section, it seems likely that most readers of this chapter will have felt an additional interpersonal appeal in many of the examples introduced. Around a quarter of the ads used as illustrations so far have included intertextual references of varying kinds.

In Section 2, I briefly noted the use of extratextual references as an alternative way of forging a more personal relationship with the reader, drawing as they do on a common pool of shared knowledge. In addition to Example 5's reference to playwright *Dennis Potter*, we have now also seen *John Dunn*, a BBC Radio 2 presenter (Example 14), cited amongst ad writers' likes. Readers who are familiar with these British cultural figures will recognise the reference and its initial impulse to connection with the writer. For those who share an appreciation of their work, that sense of connection will be redoubled, while those who are not familiar with the subject of the reference will be deprived of any such sense of having something in common with the writer. Thorne and Coupland (1998: 241) also consider "interdiscursive references" as "points where socio-sexual values represented in other texts (from fiction, film or [...] literature) are invoked as a means of self-advertising". Literary and other intertextual references have also appeared in some of my earlier examples: aficionados of comic strips and graphic novels will probably have wondered why I did not comment on Example 16's references to *Judge Dredd* and *Tank Girl*, while other readers may have felt a sense at least of puzzlement, if not of positive exclusion, on encountering these characters. Many readers will similarly have recognised the framework of estate agent's jargon (*liaisonette*, *semi-attached*) and second hand car sales (*low mileage*, *good cond.*) behind the choice of lexis in Examples 18 and 26. Coupland also notes that advertisers occasionally "metaphorize themselves" by framing their ads around "references suggestive of small ads for cars, houses and wines" (Coupland 2000: 23).

Even this brief overview makes it clear that intertextuality can take a range of forms, all of which heighten the interpersonal connection between writer and reader. What I now turn to is a more detailed exploration of the pragmatic, interpretative mechanisms involved and how they work to link – or indeed distance – the advertiser and his/her potential partner.

4.1. Metaphorical identities

Many metaphorical uses of intertextual references enable the writer to use a ready-made identity from a familiar intertextual narrative source, as an economical means of projecting identities for self and desired other. (See, for example, De Fina's discussion, this volume, of the ways in which narrative forms, and cultural

stereotypes and storylines are used in constructing identity positions). The specifically interpersonal payoff of such projected identities in dating ads lies in the fact that they require the writer and reader effectively to collaborate in negotiating a jointly constructed reading of the metaphor, with the writer using co-textual signals to amplify the metaphor and guide the reader. Nevertheless, as I have just suggested, successful decoding remains fundamentally dependent on the reader's background knowledge and their recognition not only of the non-literal nature of the label, but also of the intertextual source of the reference.

The trigger for the start of the decoding process is that the identities projected cannot be taken as literally true, but must be taken as metaphorical. In pragmatic terms, they are in flagrant contravention of Grice's (1975, 1978) conversational maxim of quality, and thus trigger an implicature. Working out what the writer intended to communicate by the implicature involves the reader in "look[ing] for [their] salient, well-known and distinctive feature(s)" (Searle 1979: 115) and incorporating them in the interpretation of the metaphor. The range of potentially transferable salient characteristics triggered by the metaphorical references, however, is further conditioned by another of Grice's maxims, this time that of relevance. The characteristics chosen for transfer will be restricted to those that are co-relevant, both to each other and to the general schema foregrounded by the framing genre, in this case that of dating ads and relationships. Thus the decoding of the metaphorical identity in question is "related to the kinds of social situations and discursive practices in which people are involved" (De Fina, this volume, p. 212) and the reader's understanding of the metaphor is the outcome of interactional processes. Examination of Example 27 will serve to illustrate these processes and pinpoint their interpersonal effects:

Example 27:

Tall red riding hood wants *big bad brainy wolf* for battle of wits. 45+. No Peter Pans pls. Midlands.
[pls. = please]

Few readers of a British dating ads column are likely to be unfamiliar with the story of Red Riding Hood, given its deeply embedded cultural status as a childhood classic, revised and rewritten for successive generations of children. The version constructed by Example 27, however, is clearly adult in nature. The ostensible innocence, in the children's tale, of the young girl visiting her sick grandmother and tricked by a hungry, duplicitous wolf into revealing her destination, thus unwittingly endangering both herself and her grandmother, is here markedly subverted by the co-text. If the usual premodifier, "little" signifies the youth and innocence, perhaps even gullibility, of the female protagonist in traditional versions of this story, its replacement with the antonymic *tall* in this instance suggests the opposite. This female is implicated as being an adult who knowingly desires (*wants*) an encounter with a wolf who is explicitly *big*, *bad* and *brainy*. That the encounter is po-

tentially dangerous, or perhaps sexual, is underlined by the retention of the colour red as a symbolic element of the protagonist's name. This becomes clearer if we consider for a moment the significantly different effect of "Little Green Riding Hood". In this case, the symbolism of the colour green either emphasises the youth and innocence of the traditional character, via its association in British culture with naivety, or perhaps makes a different, but still diametrically opposed, collocational connection with ecological concerns and environmental welfare issues.

Thus the reader is immediately drawn into decoding the writer's apparent intention in adopting these metaphorical identities with the support of co-textual selections that can be seen as motivatedly coherent with each other, via their relevance to the kinds of relationships accommodated within the general dating ad schema. The further collocation with *battle of wits* then intensifies the salient elements of threat and danger from the fictional source plot, whilst adding a further note of fully cognisant engagement to the subversion of the original story line. In doing so, it also provides a further resonance with the overarching schema that provides a filtering frame of reference for the reader's decoding, by pointing to a seduction scenario and the stereotypically associated enjoyment of being pursued by a suitor. This simultaneous coherence with both original fairy tale plot and the discourse of dating ads allows the reader to negotiate a connection between the two; and the interlinkage is further supported by additional co-selected items, which also draw simultaneously on both spheres. Thus, in addition to the fictional world interpretations just suggested for *tall* and *brainy*, each of these items can also be seen as making a literal contribution, by virtue of the frequency with which height and intelligence details are found in the self and partner descriptions produced by more conformist ad writers.

Finally, the collaborative conversion of a children's story into adult relational values is further aided by the explicit exclusion of *Peter Pans*, as being unsuitable respondents. The selection of another fictional archetype from a children's narrative, this time a little boy who refuses to grow up, provides an antonymous match for Red Riding Hood as the female protagonist in a story about entering adulthood. This clearly deliberate and skilful choice thus activates the possibility that the writer might be appealing to readers who enjoy childish pursuits whilst simultaneously rejecting both such an interpretation and such reader-respondents, in a further indication of the adult nature of this particular storyline.

The co-selections found in this ad, then, support the reader's pragmatic work to decode the metaphor by performing two related functions. On the one hand, the youth and pre-sexual innocence of the intertextual sources are cancelled out by the negating co-presence of items such as *tall*, *wits* and *No Peter Pans pls*. On the other hand, selected aspects are presented as centrally applicable by the confirmatory focus on particular plot events and character traits (especially the wolf's clever entrapment of his quarry) that are consonant with an adult relationship founded in seduction.

4.2. Recognition, uptake and felicity

The writer's careful selection of co-text, then, guides the reader quite precisely as to which particular combination of salient and distinctive characteristics to focus on in arriving at a satisfactory understanding of the metaphor. From this angle, such co-textual signalling can be seen as a more or less conscious attempt on the part of the writer to ensure, or at least enable, what – in a parallel with speech act theory – might be called “illocutionary uptake” (Levinson 1983). This is the recognition of a speech act's intended meaning, which is crucial to its success – or its felicity (Austin 1962), to extend the parallel. As with the previous example, the co-textual guiding of a metaphor's uptake and the culminating effect of felicity for the reader is best illustrated by investigating them in practice.

Example 28:

Attract. *mature student* 30's easy going enjoys art, film, history & travel seeks his *Mrs Robinson*. Staffs.

[Staffs. = Staffordshire]

This ad again draws on a relationship, this time overtly sexual, which is at the heart of another culturally resonant fictional narrative, the famous film *The Graduate* (Nichols 1967). The name of *Mrs Robinson* has become a kind of cultural shorthand, standing for a scenario in which an older woman initiates an inexperienced youth into the pleasures of mature sexuality. Example 28 is thus similar to Example 27, and most other metaphorical identities assumed in the SoulMates ads, in using a markedly familiar intertextual reference as its point of departure in an effective guarantee of the reader's initial recognition of the character thus invoked. References to less widely familiar characters, on the other hand, might be seen as a riskier strategy for an ad writer to use. Such identities are less deeply culturally embedded and thus likely to be less readily recognisable to many readers – as indeed was the case for me with the following example:

Example 29:

Younger Diana Trent is bored. Needs diversion stop. Must be intell. non-judgmental & daft. Cambs/Lincs.

[Cambs. = Cambridgeshire; Lincs. = Lincolnshire]

It was only when additional research on the character of Diana Trent revealed her to be a feisty and mischievous inhabitant of a fictional old people's home in a British TV series that I was able to make the appropriate co-textual connections between the fictional character, and the ad writer's projected boredom and need for a *diversion stop*. It was these connections that enabled me to reach a satisfying (as opposed to merely coherent) interpretation of the ad writer's intended meaning.

However, Example 28 differs from the general pattern of plentiful co-textual guidance in that the only modification or specification to be found is in the ad

writer's self description. Here the "graduate" of the film's title is replaced with the closely related (*mature*) *student* as the label that represents the writer of the ad, in a markedly less plentiful use of co-text to support the intertextual connection. This is perhaps the more surprising since the relationship between Mrs Robinson and the recently graduated student she seduces ends in painful failure. Yet there is no contextual evidence that the interpretation of the metaphor in this instance should include a more positive outcome for this *Mrs Robinson* than for the original, nor that the relationship would be longer-lived or more deeply committed in the interim. It seems, then, that the relatively superficial "institutionalised" decoding of the frozen metaphor is indeed the one intended and the reader's uptake of the metaphor is this time guided by the absence rather than presence of co-relevant signals.

It is worth bearing in mind here that ads offering and seeking purely sexual relationships are not uncommon in dating ad columns. However, such an explanation neglects an additional, potentially more widely attractive and motivating aspect of the ad, which becomes clearer on exploring the impact of the metaphor more closely. If we were intended to attend to nothing more than the "institutional" meaning of "Mrs Robinson", the ad could in principle be rewritten in literal terms, prioritising denotational meaning and eradicating the metaphor, as follows:

Example 28a:

Attract. mature student 30's easy going enjoys art, film, history & travel seeks *older woman for sexual relationship*. Staffs.

Alternatively, a different rewriting might also be designed to probe the effect of the paired labels and their connotative meaning. In this case, the frozen metaphor might be preserved and the secondary connection with the fictional world of *The Graduate* eradicated instead:

Example 28b:

Attract. *male* 30's easy going enjoys art, film, history & travel seeks his Mrs Robinson. Staffs.

In practice, what either rewritten version highlights is the clear – indeed, probably fatal – damage to the spirit of the ad, which has now lost any sense of the play on words that provides a veneer of humour, or at least lightness of tone, in the original. Along with this loss of even such a superficially ludic element to the text, so the feeling of satisfaction at getting the point that accompanies the interpretation of a successful metaphor is also eliminated.

In sum at this point, the interpersonal pay-off for the writer of a dating ad who projects intertextual metaphorical identities and succeeds in guiding a reader's decoding of them can be divided into two strands. The first is the effective guarantee of like-mindedness between the writer who selects a reference from a genre or discourse with which they are familiar and the reader who is likewise familiar enough with the intertextual source to use it effectively in a coherent decoding of the label.

The second is that the more intricate and productive the inferential work required of the reader, the more satisfying the effect of decoding will be and, concomitantly, the more thoroughly and specifically the like-mindedness will be established. If a reader's inferencing effort is rewarded with a satisfying decoding, ad writer and reader will jointly have achieved a 'click effect' of understanding, which marks a moment of connect (Montgomery 2000; Mills 1992) not only with the text but also with a potential partner.

The function of reader selection just described, however, neglects an important possibility, in that it presupposes an equivalence between the reader's familiarity with a source genre or discourse and their solidary appreciation of it. However, any text may meet with resistant readers. They may refuse to engage with the ideologically "given" meanings and/or substitute oppositional ones instead (Mills 1992). The success of an intertextually based metaphor, then, ultimately rests on ideological appeal to the reader, who must not only recognise the reference but also accept its ideological basis as legitimate enough to warrant the investment of further decoding effort. A reader encountering a reference they recognise as encoding an ideology alien to their own is unlikely to read beyond it. No matter how intricately or skilfully the writer has constructed their metaphor, there will be no click effect for the reader and instead of forging a moment of identification between writer and reader, the intertextual reference will have served to weed out an unsuitable respondent.

4.3. Playing interpersonal "truth games"

Unlike the ads considered so far, there is nothing either in the identity labels used in Example 30, or in the supporting co-text that apparently cannot be literally true and thus there is no obvious flouting of the maxim of quality to trigger a metaphorical interpretation of the ad. And yet, the ad surely resists a straightforwardly literal reading:

Example 30:

Trainspotter seeks female timetable reader with view to producing little engines.
N/s pref. S.Yorks.

[N/s pref. = Non-smoker preferred; S. Yorks. = South Yorkshire]

The key feature here is the apparent negativity of the self-categorisation, *Train-spotter*. This identity category casts the writer as a member of a hobby-based social group, which brings with it expectations of distinct category-bound activities (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998; De Fina, this volume). These include standing in solitude and in all weather at the end of train station platforms for long periods; keeping meticulous records of passing trains and their serial numbers; and reading timetables to find possible occasions for sighting previously unseen trains. These activities are widely considered in British culture to be so mundane and trivial as to be boring, and the pursuit of them obsessional. Nor are they notably sociable ac-

tivities, an additional factor in the common perception of trainspotters as being socially inept.

As hinted earlier, Coupland (1996: 192) warns that the “need to communicate positivity” in dating ads should not be oversimplified; yet she also observes that “the very few negative characteristics that are referenced relate to the appearance and solvency dimensions and not to personality” (1996: 195). Precisely relating to personality, *trainspotter* operates intertextually here as a culturally stereotyped term synonymous with “social misfit” or the mildly abusive “nerd”. Such a negative categorisation of self in terms of personal/behavioural qualities is thus a clear breach of the dominant orientation to positivity within the genre and, given the evidence of generic familiarity elsewhere within the ad, the breach is equally clearly deliberate. The negative labelling in this context, therefore, amounts to flouting another of Grice’s maxims, that of manner, and requires the reader to work out why such apparently inappropriate labels have been selected and what they are intended to mean.

In fact, a high degree of co-textual coherence is once more provided to support the reader’s search for implicated meaning, and to provide a key to this writer’s apparent intentions in embracing negativity. A first possible indication of positivity and playfulness is seen in the choice of *female timetable reader* as the label for the *trainspotter*’s desired other. “Timetable reader” is not a collocation regularly used in British English to refer to another person, much less a specifically female person: a search of internet news sources (using Webcorp 2009) yielded only one occurrence of “timetable reader”, which was not gender-specific. [*F*]emale timetable reader is thus a novel coinage that cleverly creates a one-off, reciprocal relational pairing and complementary activity for a potential partner (see, for example, Silverman 1991, and Ten Have 2002, on “Standardised Relational Pairs”). The next element of the ad then confirms the playfulness. Although on one level it merely meets the norms of the genre by specifying the advertiser’s goal, more subtly, *with view to producing little engines* also operates to provide a punchline. Strictly speaking, there is no reason why this element could not be interpreted literally as indicating that the main social activity the ad writer hopes for is that of ‘making model trains’. However the specific lexical choices of *producing*, *little* and [*toy*] *engines* all have associations with children, creating a marked ambiguity. The unusual formulation thus becomes clearly recognisable as a re-coding of a more predictable motive for placing a dating ad and the alternative meaning of ‘with a view to having children’ is opened up to significantly humorous effect.

The high degree of artifice in this example’s controlled exploitation of lexical and dating ad norms might be seen as hinting at the categorisation as a *trainspotter* being completely assumed for comedic purposes – sufficiently so at least to hang a mental question mark over whether it can be taken as a literally true description of the ad writer. In the absence of anything else in the ad that necessarily denies or negates the self- and other-categorisations, this question remains fundamentally unresolvable in principle and in practice is in fact displaced from attention by the per-

formance of humour. As Pratt (1977: 97) puts it in her characterisation of jokes: “[t]he question of veracity simply does not seem to matter when the point of the utterance is understood to be pleasure”.

5. Conclusions: Conversationalisation and intertextuality as performance

This chapter has examined the interactional work done in the forging of new relationships in a British dating ad column, showing how ad writers use interpersonal strategies in writing to stand in for some of the visual and aural elements of a face-to-face encounter. Advertisers include various kinds of facework in their ads, strategically mitigating positive claims in the interests of modesty, and using speech-like elements to invite the reader to become involved in a conversation. I have also shown how ad writers use intertextuality as an alternative means of achieving heightened interpersonal involvement with readers. Metaphorical identity projections chosen by the writer establish common ground with like-minded prospective partners; and strategic use of co-text guides the joint negotiation of meaning in the co-construction of the identities thus projected. There is thus a relationship-forging appeal to solidarity involved in the success of both conversationalising devices and intertextual references, whether (1) in the form of eliciting the reader’s assent to the directives, questions and turn-taking responsibilities of the conversational ads, or (2) in the sense of in-group belonging generated by recognition and appreciation of the characters and personalities invoked in the intertextual ads.

Both strategies can in fact also be seen to rest ultimately on performativity (see Mullany, this volume). Wit, intelligence and humour are ubiquitous attributes in dating ads; and they are like beauty or intelligence in being amongst the positively valued social qualities that in British culture are normally displayed for notice, whilst making an overt claim to them is likely to threaten self-positive face. A common feature in the examples throughout Sections 3 and 4 has been the intelligent and often painstaking crafting of ads that exploit the turn-taking and other norms of face-to-face spoken interaction, or the pragmatic norms of dating ads as a social practice. From this point of view, the compositional work that goes into these ads, with their engaging and frequently humorous effect, amounts to a form of interpersonal display. They are carefully and deliberately constructed to exploit expectations and to display the linguistic skills of the ad writer in a way that actually performs wit or humour (cf. Montgomery 2000; Bruthiaux 2004). These ads, in short, delicately negotiate interpersonal and relational norms of modesty, intelligence and wit in order not only to paint an attractive picture of the writer, but also to establish a moment of performative affiliation with the reader.

At the start of this chapter, I observed that many of the typical features of dating ads contribute to the construction of dating identities in this particular community

of practice, but also that even the most typical and indexical of features are subject to cultural variation. In her syntactically focussed comparison of Indian and American ads, Nair (1992: 238) comments in passing on the presence of elements at the end of American ads which seem “designed to initiate a conversation”. The conversationalisation I have explored here in British ads thus seems to have its counterpart in at least one other culture, without necessarily being widespread. The degree to which such conversationalisation might encroach on generic norms in non-British dating ads, and the forms it might take, remain questions for further research. Likewise, if relational norms of modesty provide an underlying motive for performing positive attributes (rather than overtly laying potentially face-threatening claim to them), this seems likely to be an aspect particularly susceptible to cultural variation and a prime area for future investigation.

Notes

1. *Arr* has become a stereotypical folklinguistic marker of a West Country dialect (a region of the UK that includes Bristol, one of the ad writer’s chosen geographical indicators). It is used as a preface to a response in stereotypical evocations of Bristolian and other rural West Country accents.
2. This section draws heavily on more detailed discussion of conversational strategies discussed in Marley (2000) and Marley (2002), both of which take Thompson and Thetela’s (1995) systemic functional model of interaction management in writing as their point of departure.
3. I follow O’Driscoll (2007), Locher and Watts (2005), Watts (1992) and others here in viewing facework as a broader phenomenon of relational work than its frequent (limited) association with politeness would suggest, and as something that may be done for reasons other than threat to face. I thus do not wish to imply that performing such work necessarily depends on perception of threat.
4. The striking inclusion of *with I & a half ears* in the self-description of this ad does not, to the best of my knowledge, draw on any established idiom, British or Jewish cultural knowledge, or fictional characters. It appears rather to be a deliberately idiosyncratic foreshadowing of the subsequent *plenty contradictions* (where the lack of an “of” following *plenty* does indeed seem designed to evoke a stereotypically Jewish speech style).
5. “Raver” was originally a term for someone who regularly attended all-night dance parties with electronic music, known as “raves”. Both terms derive from the late 1980s, when the parties were illegal in the UK and were frequently associated with use of the drug ecstasy. The 1995 edition of the COBUILD dictionary provides the following definition: “In informal British English, a **raver** is a young person who has a busy social life and goes to a lot of parties, raves, or nightclubs.”
6. This section draws extensively on my previous discussions of intertextual phenomena in dating ads (Marley 2007, 2008), in articles which focus in more sustained fashion on a pragmatic framework for interpreting metaphor and on truth values and truth commitment, respectively.

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