138. Linguistic Politeness/Sprachliche Höflichkeit

1.   Politeness phenomena

The essence of politeness is communicating attention to others' feelings and expectations about how they should be interactionally treated. This includes behaving in a way that displays appropriate concern for the inter-actors' social status and their social relationship. In this very broad sense of speech oriented to an interactor's public persona or 'face', politeness permeates social interaction. Generally, taking account of people's feelings requires saying and doing things in a more elaborate manner than when one is not considering their feelings; ways of being polite therefore are a pervasive source of indirectness in how people frame their utterances, a major reason for saying something different from exactly what one means.

Two kinds of feelings are relevant, giving rise to two distinct kinds of politeness. One kind arises whenever what is about to be said may be an unwelcome imposition, prompting expressions of respect, restraint, avoidance ('distance' or *negative politeness*'). A second kind comes from the fact that long-term relationships with people are an important consideration when assessing how to take their feelings into account, prompting expressions of social closeness, caring, approval ('solidarity' or *positive politeness*'). While cultural differences in when and how to be polite in these distinct ways are often salient to outsiders, across widely diverse societies there are detailed parallels in the ways people formulate polite utterances and in the patterns with which they distribute them across contexts.

2.   Politeness theory

Politeness phenomena have commanded attention from theorists in all the social sciences that have an interest in social interaction. Cross-cutting disciplinary divisions, there are distinct classes of theoretical approach to the analysis of politeness in language.

2.1.   Politeness as rules of social conduct

For the layman, politeness is a matter of 'proper' talk and behavior, following rules for etiquette whose origin is usually to be found in high-status groups. These 'emic' (culturally-specific) notions include polite formulae like *please, thank you*, polite forms of address and of greetings and farewells, and more elaborate protocols for formal events. Politeness, according to this view, conventionally attaches to particular linguistic forms and formulaic expressions, which are consciously adhered to, explicitly taught to children, and which may be very different in different languages and cultures. Several analytical approaches to politeness are formulated in terms of the same sorts of culture-specific rules for doing what is socially acceptable. For example, in the work by Ide and others on Japanese politeness as social indexing or 'discernment' (Ide 1989; Watts/Ide/Ehlich 1992), politeness is a matter of social norms, and inheres in particular linguistic forms when used appropriately as markers of pre-given social categories. This perspective is most appropriate for fixed aspects of language use, the more or less obligatory social marking of relatively unchangeable social categories.

2.2.   Politeness as Gricean conversation maxims

Another rule-based approach derives politeness as a set of social conventions co-ordinate with Grice's Cooperative Principle for maximally efficient information transmission ("Make your contribution such as is required by the purposes of the conversation at the moment"), with its four 'Maxims' of Quality, Quantity, Relevance, and Manner (Grice 1975). R. Lakoff (1973) suggested that three 'rules of rapport' underly choice of linguistic expression, rules which can account for how speakers deviate from directly expressing meanings. Choice among these three pragmatic rules ("Don't impose", "Give options" "Be friendly") gives rise to distinct communicative styles. Leech (1983) expanded on Lakoff's proposal, arguing that complementary to Grice's Cooperative Principle is a Politeness Principle, "Minimize the expression of impolite beliefs", with six Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Ap-

probation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy; deviations from what is expected give rise to particular conversational inferences. Cross-cultural differences derive from the different importance attached to particular maxims. This approach shares with the social norm approach the emphasis on codified social rules for minimizing the potential for interactional friction, and the view that deviations from expected levels or forms of politeness carry a message.

2.3. Politeness as face management

A third perspective puts 'face work' at the core of politeness. Goffman (1971) considered politeness as an aspect of the interpersonal rituals which are central to public order. He defined face as an individual's publicly manifest self-esteem, and claimed that social members have two kinds of face requirements: positive face (the desire for approval from others), and negative face (the desire not to offend others). Attention to these face requirements is a matter of orientation to Goffman's 'diplomatic fiction of the virtual offense, or worst possible reading' (Goffman 1971, 138ff), the working assumption that face is always potentially at risk, so that any interactional act with a social-relational dimension is inherently face-threatening and needs to be modified by appropriate forms of politeness.

Brown and Levinson ([1978]1987) built on Goffman's perspective to argue that universal principles underly the construction of polite utterances, as evidenced by detailed parallels in the formulation of polite utterances across widely differing languages and cultures. These parallels are of two sorts: how the polite expression of utterances is adapted to social characteristics of the interlocutors and the situation, and how polite utterances are linguistically formed. At least three social factors are involved in deciding how to be polite: as Brown and Gilman (1960) first noted with regard to choice of T/V pronouns of 'power' or 'solidarity', one tends to be more polite to social superiors; one also tends to be more polite to people one doesn't know. In the first case politeness tends to go one way upwards (the superior is less polite to an inferior); in the second, politeness tends to be symmetrically exchanged. A third social factor is that in any culture there are norms and values affecting the degree of imposition or unwelcomeness of an utterance, and one tends to be more polite

for more serious impositions. These three social variables influence choice of politeness level analogously across societies; in addition, the linguistic structures for realizing particular kinds of politeness show remarkable similarities across languages. The politeness of solidarity is characterized, for example, by use of in-group identity markers and address forms, intensifiers, exaggerated intonation, forms for stressing agreement and avoiding disagreement. Avoidance-based politeness is characterized by formality, restraint, deference, self-effacement, with the use of honorifics, hedges, indirect speech acts and impersonalizing forms like pluralization of pronouns, nominalization, and passive.

What could explain these detailed parallels across languages and cultures in the minutiae of linguistic expression in socially-analogous contexts? Explanations in terms of social norms or rules can account for styles of politeness in a particular social group, but not for the cross-cultural patterns, which seem to require a strategic account in terms of what people generally are trying to do when they are being polite. Brown and Levinson proposed an abstract model of politeness wherein human actors are endowed with two essential attributes: *face* and *rationality*. Face consists of two specific kinds of wants: positive face (i.e., the desire to be approved of, admired, liked, validated), and negative face (the desire to be unimposed upon, unimpeded in one's actions). Rationality provides for the ability to reason from communicative goals to linguistic means that would achieve those goals. From these two assumptions that speakers are assumed to presume about one another, the model predicts how speakers construct polite utterances in different contexts on the basis of assessments of three social factors: the relative power (P) of speaker and addressee, their social distance (D), and the intrinsic ranking (R) of the face-threateningness of an imposition. P, D, and R are seen as abstract social dimensions indexing kinds of social relationship (P and D) and cultural values and definitions of impositions or threats to face (R).

The model distinguishes five general types of politeness strategies, ranging from avoiding a face-threatening act (FTA) altogether, through doing it but with positive redress (using strategies addressed to the hearer's positive face wants by emphasizing

closeness and solidarity), or with negative redress (strategies addressing negative face wants for distance, deference, freedom from unexpectable impositions), to carrying out the FTA 'off record' (indirectly). For low levels of FTA-threat, bald on record or positive politeness is most appropriate and cost effective, for higher levels negative politeness is required, for the highest threats, indirectness is the safe option. Brown and Levinson claimed further that their model of politeness universals could be applied in particular cultural settings as an ethnographic tool for analyzing the quality of social relationships, since stable social relationships are characterized in part by stable patterns of language use, which may distinguish particular societies or social groups at a given time.

3. Challenges to politeness theory

Brown and Levinson's ambitious attempt to formulate an 'etic' set of concepts in terms of which politeness can be analyzed in 'emic' terms for any particular society has been subject to many critiques, which reveal different disciplinary assumptions about what is the essential nature of social interaction, as well as major points of contention about how a theory of politeness should be formulated.

3.1. Universal face wants?

Many critics have challenged Brown and Levinson's formulation (via Goffman and Radcliffe-Brown) of positive and negative face wants as a valid way of conceptualizing the universal underpinnings of politeness. Negative face, in particular, considered as desires for freedom from imposition, seems too embedded in Western individualism to be compatible with conceptions of face in some other (for example, Asian) cultures. This is partly due to a misconstrual: the Brown and Levinson face wants are abstract, they do not necessarily correspond clearly to anyone's conscious emic notions. What was claimed is that *underlying* very diverse folk notions of face is a core of two interactionally relevant wants (for ratification, and freedom from imposition) which seem to be cross-culturally applicable as *assumptions oriented to in interaction*. Other theorists have argued for notions of positive vs. negative face that are even more abstract, in terms of merging vs. individuation (O'Driscoll 1996) or close-

ness vs. separation (Arundale 1999), as the universal core of politeness.

3.2. A universal hierarchy of strategies?

Challenges to the universality of the model also extend to the proposed hierarchy of increasing politeness (from bald-on-record to positive to negative to indirectness). Assessments of the P, D, R factors are situationally and culturally very variable, so context and discourse domain affect the interpretation of FTA level. It is possible to accumulate different strategies in one utterance and to balance elements of negative politeness with positive politeness in one act, and indirectness is not always seen as the most polite option. These sorts of observations have led some researchers to argue against the possibility of identifying any kind of universal basis for polite behavior; politeness is simply incommensurate across societies. Those who take this extreme relativistic position can have no explanation for the observable cross-cultural parallels in patterns of language use, for how people manage (sometimes) to understand others from culturally different backgrounds, or for cross-linguistic parallels in the diachronic sources of honorifics from politeness strategies.

3.3. Politeness as communicated or taken for granted

In contrast with rule-based approaches, Brown and Levinson insist that politeness inheres not in words or in sentences per se, but in utterances uttered in a context, by virtue of the successful communication of a polite attitude or intention. Polite utterances are not necessarily communicating 'real' feelings about anothers' social persona, but expressing concern for face expected in the context. This concern is an 'implicature', an inference of polite intentions. Politeness is ascribed to an interactional move, not to a strategy or its linguistic realization per se (Brown/Levinson 1987; Brown 1995). In contrast, Fraser's (1990) 'conversational contract' and Watts' (1999; 2003) 'politic behavior' take politeness to be the expected *background* to interaction; politeness in this view is normally not communicated but consists in following expectations about appropriate behavior.

3.4. The scope of politeness theory

Another focus of disagreement is the scope of phenomena that politeness theory should

cover. A narrower view takes politeness to be strategic orientation to potential face threats; there are many situations (e. g., task-oriented ones) where politeness may be subsumed to other goals and essentially irrelevant in the context. A more inclusive view sees politeness as orientation to the social-relationship dimension of *every* interaction, with attention to face taken to be an an omnipresent necessity. The whole continuum from extreme politeness through a quite neutral level of politeness (maintaining the status quo, 'discernment') to *rudeness* (outright intentional face threat) then needs to be brought into the theory.

3.5. Psychologism vs. interactionalism

A major goal of Brown and Levinson was to insist on the centrality of social interaction as a significant level of social life, intermediate between the individual and society, where socio-cultural facts (status, role, values, norms, rights and obligations) are integrated with individual ones (goals, plans, strategies). Yet the Gricean foundation of the model and the speech-act based formulation of the strategies has encouraged some to view the model as purely psychological (how a speaker calculates how to frame an utterance). Arundale (1999), for example, argues strongly for a theory of how face is *jointly constituted* in ongoing interaction. New theories of linguistic meaning as co-constructed in interaction (e. g., Hanks 1996) provide a promising starting point for such a theory.

4. Empirical Research

Politeness has attracted an enormous amount of research attention in the past 30 years. Empirical studies of politeness have greatly increased the amount of information we have about social interactional styles in different contexts and different societies. Many edited books and special issues of journals are devoted to politeness (e. g., Coulmas 1981; 1991, Walters 1981, Watts 1989, Watts/ Ide/Ehlich 1992, three special issues of *Multilingua:* Vol. 7 (4) 1988, Vol. 8 (2/3) 1989, and Vol. 12(1) 1993; three of the *Journal of Pragmatics:* Vol. 14 1990, Vol. 21 1994, Vol. 28 1997); and a large bibliography of politeness work in linguistic pragmatics can be found in Dufon/Kaspar/Takahashi/ Yoshinaga (1994). There are, to be sure, unevennesses and some glaring gaps in the data – a very large literature on politeness

in Japan but no research at all from certain parts of the world (New Guinea, Aboriginal Australia) and very little from Oceania (exceptions are Duranti 1992; Keating 1998), from Africa (exceptions are Irvine 1974; 1985; Nwoye 1992), from South America (except for Wolfowitz 1991), or from North American Amerindia (except for Scollon and Scollon 1983; 1995; Rhodes 1988). Another limitation derives from the fact that researchers from the different disciplines studying politeness phenomena (sociolinguists, social psychologists, linguistic pragmaticists, linguistic anthropologists) are often quite unaware of each other's work.

4.1. Research topics in politeness

Here it is possible just to sketch the range of phenomena and cite some exemplary studies. Topics investigated include:

(1) How particular kinds of potentially threatening speech acts – requests, offers, compliments, thanks, apologies, disagreements, criticisms, complaints, etc. – are formulated in different societies and how strategies are shifted in relation to contextual variables (e. g. Fukushima 2000; see also Kaspar 1998, 3208 for references)

(2) Views of face and politeness in different cultures and contexts (Katriel 1986; Ervin-Tripp/Nakamura/Guo 1995; Chen 1990–91; Gu 1990; Mao 1994; Matsumoto 1988; 1989; Nwoye 1992; Strecker 1993)

(3) Politeness strategies as underlying the stylistic coherence of particular types of interaction; how speakers convey affiliation with social categories such as gender, age, ethnicity (e. g. Brown 1990; Rundquist 1992; Tannen 1981)

(4) The sequential development of politeness in conversational interaction (e. g. Lerner 1996; Bayraktaroglu 1991; Okamoto 1999; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997) as well as in interactions in special contexts (e. g. doctor-patient interaction (Aronsson 1992), business negotiations (Wijst/Ulijn 1995)

(5) Cross-cultural pragmatics and misunderstandings (Blum-Kulka/House/Kaspar 1989; Kaspar/Blum-Kulka 1993)

(6) Politeness in child language, how children are inducted into appropriate speech styles (Ervin-Tripp/Mitchell-Kernan 1977; Ervin-Tripp 1992; Snow/Gleason/ Hooshyar 1990; Blum-Kulka 1990)

(7) Politeness as a functional motivation for linguistic structure, the structure of politeness formulae and honorific systems

(e. g., Ferguson 1976; Bickel/Bisang/Yadava 2000; Agha 1996)

(8) The social psychology of face management, interpersonal perception, selfhood (Holtgraves 1992; Ting-Toomey 1994; Tracy 1990; Wetzel 1994)

(9) Politeness theory applied to the analysis of formal ritual and to a view of culture as 'rhetoric' (Strecker 1988; Tyler; Strecker in prep.).

(10) Testing politeness theory with speech in written dramas (Brown/Gilman 1989).

In addition, the study of politeness is often used as an entry point for teaching students the basics of sociolinguistics (e. g. Huls 2001; Watts 2003).

4.2. Limitations of politeness research

A major weakness of much research on politeness has been the kinds of data used in analyses. A large proportion of studies take as their data people's conscious evaluations of politeness expressed in sentences, judgements which tend to be both prescriptive and stereotypical. Far fewer studies use as data recordings of situated conversational exchanges to explore how politeness is achieved sequentially in naturally-occurring discourse. And only a handful provide the crucial kinds of evidence necessary to test the universality of any theory of politeness: for a particular society, an 'ethnography of speaking' providing evidence across a whole range of different contexts to show how politeness is modulated in relation to social factors in that society.

One reason for the paucity of studies on politeness in natural interaction is that there are serious difficulties in moving between the Big Picture (universal politeness theory) and the Little Picture (analyzing whether and how people are being polite in a particular naturally-occurring context). The basic problem is one at the heart of all studies of language as it is actually used: the indeterminacy of speakers' intentions makes it hard to code politeness in any concrete piece of discourse. This is a problem with any theory in terms of actors' intentions when applied to empirical data; as both interactors and conversation analysts know, it is not always possible to be certain what interlocutors' intentions are at a particular point in natural interaction.

Yet the capacity to attribute intentions to others is perhaps the most significant at-

tributute of humans, making language and higher forms of thinking possible (Carrithers 1992, Tomasello 2000). This is one of the biggest challenges to research on politeness, as to all work analyzing actual (as opposed to prescriptive) language use.

5. Conclusion

The research emphasis in work on politeness has been very largely on cross-cultural *differences* in politeness, with scant attention addressed to the cross-linguistic/cross-cultural parallels which tend to be taken for granted whenever they are not disputed. But the significance of politeness lies far beyond culture-specific rules of appropriate behavior and speech. This wider significance lies in the fact that by regular patterns of language choice we interactively construct our social relationships. Any work in this area must be based in a theory of social interaction that takes into account both our common human nature and ability to communicate cross-culturally, and the cultural differences which sometimes lead us to misunderstand one another.

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139. Ethnomethodologie / Ethnomethodology

1.   Allgemeines

Die Ethnomethodologie (vgl. auch Art. 91) ist ein Forschungsprogramm, das sich mit den Methoden der Konstitution intersubjektiver Wirklichkeit und sozialer Organisation im Alltagshandeln der Gesellschaftsmitglieder befaßt. Begründet von Aaron Cicourel (1964) und Harold Garfinkel (1967), ist die Ethnomethodologie in den 60er Jahren in der amerikanischen Soziologie entstanden. Ihre ersten, aufsehenerregenden Arbeiten waren methodenkritische Fallstudien, die die unhinterfragten alltagsweltlichen (Common sense-)Voraussetzungen sozialwissenschaftlichen Forschungshandelns aufdeckten. Die durch diese Untersuchungen ausgelöste Erschütterung des wissenschaftstheoretischen Selbstbildes der Soziologie brachte die Eth-