

Preface

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This is the second of a series of special issues devoted to linguistic politeness. The more descriptions we acquire about the phenomena of linguistic politeness, the more we realize how little we in fact know about the range of possible expressions of politeness in different cultures and languages. The aim of these collections is to present more data and perspectives on these data so that, at some future time, we will be able to develop a comprehensive theory of linguistic politeness that will cover this diversity and help us to understand the phenomenon itself.

The papers collected here represent the varieties of perspectives which broaden the limits of already established theories of linguistic politeness. The range of approaches extends from theoretical to empirical and descriptive studies. The languages dealt with here are English, Swiss German, French, Italian, Japanese, Ojibwa and Igbo. Some contributors describe and discuss language usage according to politeness in societies which could be described as egalitarian (Rhodes and Nwoye), while some discuss it in a complex developed society (Matsumoto and Ide). Some argue, with illustrations, that positive politeness is a major strategy in some languages (Held and Rhodes), while others concentrate on aspects of negative politeness (Ide and Nwoye).

Although most of the papers refer to such theories of linguistic politeness as those proposed by Brown and Levinson or Lakoff and Leech, the authors do not necessarily agree with them. Some question the reliability of applying these theories to their language data and propose new frameworks (Watts, Held, Matsumoto and Ide). Definitions of the concepts of 'polite', 'non-polite' and 'rude'/'impolite' are also discussed (Lakoff and Ide).

Lakoff examines politeness strategies in three discourse types: ordinary dyadic conversation, psychotherapeutic discourse and the discourse of the

American trial courtroom. Analyzing politeness strategies in these types of discourse in terms of power relations between participants, she argues that in the context of psychotherapeutic and courtroom discourse, non-polite behavior can be systematic and normal. Her insight into the basic concept of politeness as well as common phenomena found in different types of discourse has made it possible to clarify how the intertwined discourse phenomena are manipulated by the participants in terms of politeness. This explication of the interactional mechanism of discourse makes this paper one that will provide impetus to future research on politeness and discourse.

Watts examines the discourse data of ordinary conversation at family gatherings in two cultural settings. He introduces the notion of politic verbal behavior as the fundamental framework in which polite verbal behavior is embedded.

Held focuses on the phenomena of maximization in verbal politeness. The use of maximization strategies which are observed in compliments, expressions of thanks, apologies, and expressions of deference, is based on the presumption that they benefit the addressee. She presents a number of preliminary statements concerning their typical forms and distribution, and the rules according to which they can be used as polite speech.

Matsumoto casts doubts on the explanatory power of the Gricean maxim of conversation and the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson and she examines them in terms of the Japanese language. She claims that the social context plays a much larger role than is assumed in these theories.

Ide also examines the universality of politeness theories in the light of the Japanese language and questions the validity of these theories. She claims that the incorporation of aspects of formal forms and discernment into Brown and Levinson's framework would lead to an overall framework. She argues that Brown and Levinson put these aspects outside the scope of their theory, and justifies the claim that they be included in terms of sociological theories of action.

Two descriptive and analytical works of lesser known languages contribute to broaden our perspective. Rhodes examines politeness strategies in Ojibwa, a native American language of a society that could be termed egalitarian. In the light of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, he finds many examples of conventionalized politeness based on the presumption of cooperation. He claims that these examples of conventionalized politeness illustrate positive politeness, contrary to the assumptions of Brown and Levinson.

Nwoye discusses the concept of linguistic politeness and describes various strategies of verbal politeness adopted by the Igbo of South-Eastern Nigeria for the achievement of this politeness. He discusses how the indirectness achieved by the use of euphemisms and proverbs works as a politeness device in this egalitarian society.

While some points are covered in several articles, each one presents an addition to our understanding of what a theory of linguistic politeness must encompass. These articles therefore add to our collection of facts about this phenomenon, and a wide range of facts is the necessary precondition to the development of a comprehensive theory.

This special issue will have served its goal if it focuses the attention of the readers on all that still remains to be done and provides the necessary encouragement for it to be undertaken. Further special issues devoted to this topic are planned, so that this research can be disseminated, and contributions are welcome.

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