The Logic of Politeness; or, Minding Your P's and q's

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We who come from the tradition of transformational grammar seem to have spent an inordinate amount of our youth tripping over the lumps in our rugs that contain the insoluble problems we have consigned to that location. Among the more vicious of those lumps is the difficulty of partial or hierarchial grammaticality: given the sort of syntactic theory proposed in Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, for instance, one had every right to expect that a sentence would be marked as either good or bad (*); there was no reason, if syntactic structure was the sole decisive factor, for uncertainties and judgments of 'maybe good, if you assume...' But linguists who tried to be honest found as they proceeded in their work that more and more of the sentences they dealt with did need special markings: 'Good if you assume...'; 'good if you want the other guy to think...'; 'good if you don't like...', and so on. That is, we needed to worry about the context in which utterances were uttered, both linguistic and non-linguistic; only by appeal to context could we account for the unacceptability under some conditions of sentences which under other conditions were unexceptionable.

We found fairly early on that assumptions speakers made about the real world figured in judgments as to whether a particular sentence could be used under particular circumstances; that most often, we could think in terms of culture-wide assumptions that most speakers could be assumed to be working under. This would include, very likely, both the philosophical notion of logical presupposition and the majority of what have been called pragmatic presuppositions. So, to recall one famous example, if I say (1) (a), my hearer will accept the sentence only in case (1) (b) is assumed by him to be the case.

(1) (a) The present king of France is bald.
(b) There exists at present a king of France.

And perhaps other cases are related, where although truth-values are not explicitly involved in the test, the assumption we are talking about (the pragmatic presupposition) will be held by virtually anyone. So we might say that sentence (2) (a) is acceptable only in case (2) (b) is pragmatically presupposed by the normal addressee:

(2) (a) John has lived in Paris.
(b) John is still alive.

(That is, assumption (2) (b) permits us to use the perfect tense in (2) (a).)

But as we ventured out into this new way of looking at sentences, we found more and more that a sentence which was perfectly acceptable under one specific set of conditions, might be bad under another, both quite conceivable in the real world. I have (1969) given examples such as those in (3): each of these sentences is good, within its particular set of contexts:

(3) (a) Who wants any beans?
    (b) Who wants some beans?

(The difference being, as has been pointed out, that in (a) the speaker either has no idea whether or not beans are wanted; or else, assumes they are not not wanted; but in (b) he must assume that there will be a positive response; he may, of course, prove to have been wrong, but this is the assumption he is working under as he utters (b).)

Still more complex cases are those in which the sentence reflects the speaker's attitude toward his social context: more specifically, his assumptions about (1) the people he is communicating with: their feelings about him, their rank relative to his; (2) the real-world situation in which he is communicating: how crucial is the information he seeks to convey? does he seek to convey information? how formal is the situation of the speech-act? and (3) his decisions, based on (1) and (2) as to the effect he wishes to achieve via his communicative act: does he want to reinforce the status distinctions between himself (Sp) and the addressee (A)? To obliterate them? Or doesn't it matter to him? Does he want to impress A as important? serious? witty? snobbish? Does he want to change the real-world situation, or not? No words he actually speaks may be directly applicable to these questions; all may be raised, and answered, in a discussion, say, about life on Mars; but the questions may nevertheless be answered unambiguously, and they will have been answered, we may see upon inspection of the dialog, by linguistic means as much as any other: words and their constructions are the medium of communication. So the communication of ideas (which some might consider sociological rather than linguistic) is effected by linguistic means. It is my contention in this paper that, if one causes something to happen by linguistic means, whether purposely or not, one is using a linguistic device; and it is within the domain of linguistics that these questions should be explored and answered, with help, one hopes, from anthropologists and sociologists who have been studying these questions for years, and whose studies, we hope to suggest, may be furthered by the use of linguistic techniques of analysis, as much as ours may by theirs.

What I am saying, then, is that the pragmatic content of a speech act should be taken into account in determining its acceptability just as its syntactic material generally has been, and its semantic material recently has been. We can say that, e.g., (4) (a)

(4) (a) John threw out the garbage.

is a grammatical utterance, and (4) (b)

(4) (b) *John threw out it

is not, on syntactic grounds alone: the conditions on the rule of particle movement have been violated in (4) (b), where they are met in (4) (a). Or we might say that semantically (5) (a) is a better sentence than (5) (b), which is unacceptable on the grounds that it violates certain semantic principles.

(5) (a) The crowd dispersed.
(b) *The aardvark dispersed.

And so we might want to say that a sentence like (6) (a) is a good sentence on pragmatic (and, of course, other) grounds: it violates no assumptions about real-world interaction; but (6) (b) is a very odd sentence, and purely for pragmatic reasons.

(6) (a) You can take your methodology and shove it.
(b) *Can you take your methodology and shove it?

Very briefly, and glossing over exactly what is going on here, we can say that the question-form (as in (b)) is polite, and the declarative form of this sentence (as in (a)) impolite; but the communicative content of this utterance is unalterably impolite. So if we match a polite construction with an impolite meaning, either irony or out-and-out aberrancy will occur, on pragmatic grounds alone. A sentence like (6) (b) is perfectly constructed syntactically and violates no imaginable semantic constraints (as would a sentence like (7), which is bad in a very different way from (6) (b):

(7) *That rock can take its methodology and shove it.)

Another test of syntactic rules that has proved very useful is that of ambiguity. Syntactic ambiguity is enthroned in the literature, proving the need for underlying structures and transformational rules to disambiguate utterances like (8) on purely syntactic grounds:

(8) They don't know how good meat tastes.

Semantically there is no confusion. I have discussed cases of semantic ambiguity, where only recourse to the relationship between semantic concepts in the sentence could indicate whether <u>and</u> in (9) was to be thought of as symmetric or asymmetric.

> (9) The police came into the room and everyone swallowed his cigaret.

But we might also speak of ambiguities resolvable only by recourse to an examination of the relationship between the participants in a dialog and their situation in the real world; this we might call pragmatic ambiguity, and its occurrence, in a sentence like (10), would indicate to us that we needed to incorporate pragmatically sensitive rules into our grammar:

> (10) Please shut the window.

That is, (10) might be a truly subservient utterance in case its speaker was really subordinate to the addressee, or equal to him and not a close acquaintance. In this case <u>please</u> might mean, 'I'm asking you to do this as a favor to me, since I can't constrain you to do it.' But suppose Sp is superior to A. In this case, the use of <u>please</u> is conventional. The speaker really means something like, 'I'm asking you to do this, but I really have the power to force you, I'm just acting like a nice guy.' The difference is clear to the addressee: in the first case, he can refuse; in the second, he'd better not, without good reason. So a response like (11) is valid as a refusal in case (1) but not in case (2):

> (11) Oh, it's so hot in here!

There is one more possibility for an ambiguous reading of (10): suppose Sp and A have been intimate friends for years, are on nickname terms, and have therefore not used polite forms with each other for some time. Then the potential speaker of (10) discovers that the addressee has been up to some dastardly games (it need not concern us which) behind his back and becomes furious; as far as he's concerned, the friendship is over. Now he and his former companion (who is, perhaps, still unaware of the situation) find themselves together, and the speaker utters (10), with or without icy intonation, depending on his subtlety. In this case, if A is at all acute, he will note from the use of <u>please</u> alone that Sp is not kindly disposed toward him; that there has been a change for the worse in the relationship. And he may reply, 'Hey, what's the matter?', referring not to the semantic content of (10), but to its pragmatic implications. So the use of (10) may signal any of at least three different kinds of relationships between Sp and A, and A will respond quite differently in each case. I would call this true ambiguity, of a pragmatic kind, and I would say that this is another indication that the pragmatic component is as much a part of the linguist's responsibility as is any other part of grammar. As examples like (6) indicate, too, pragmatics interacts with syntax and semantics and cannot be considered apart: we need to know when the syntactic rule of question-formation is applicable, and pragmatic considerations are among those we must take into consideration. So we must somehow extend our concept of global rules to cover cases like these - where the conditions for the applicability of a syntactic rule include pragmatic factors like the effect the speaker wishes his utterance to have on the addressee.

Just as we invoke syntactic rules to determine whether a sentence is to be considered syntactically well- or ill-formed, and in what way it is ill-formed if it is, and to what extent, so we should like to have some kind of pragmatic rules, dictating whether an utterance is pragmatically well-formed or not, and the extent to which it deviates if it does. And just as there are many syntactic rules that are used to generate a sentence in its entirety, and its ill-formedness becomes progressively greater the more rules are violated, the same can be said in the pragmatic sphere: we can identify several types of rules, and the possible violations thereof. And just as the applicability of a rule to a given syntactic structure may differ dialectally, so may the applicability of pragmatic rules. I should like to look at some cases, rather informally stated, but there is no reason why such rules couldn't, in the future, be made as rigorous as the syntactic rules in the transformational literature (and hopefully, a lot less _ad hoc_).

First, we can return to the three areas of pragmatic behavior we referred to earlier: the speaker's assumptions about his relations with his addressee, his real-world situation as he speaks, and the extent to which he wishes to change either or both, or to reinforce them. We will find that two basic rules are involved, sometimes coinciding in their effects and reinforcing each other, more often in apparent conflict, in which case one or the other, depending on circumstances, will supersede. Let me call these the Rules of Pragmatic Competence:

RULES OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

1. Be clear.
2. Be polite.

That is, if one seeks to communicate a message directly, if one's principal aim in speaking is communication, one will attempt to be clear, so that there is no mistaking one's intention. If the speaker's principal aim is to navigate somehow or other among the respective statuses of the participants in the discourse indicating where each stands in the speaker's estimate, his aim will be less the achievement of clarity than an expression of politeness, as its opposite.

Sometimes, as we shall see, clarity is politeness; but often, one must choose between Scylla and Charybdis.

We are lucky in our work in that the rules of clarity have been formulated; not fully satisfactorily, perhaps, but certainly in a valuable outline, in Grice's (1967) work on the rules of conversation. It is evident that they function as rules to the speaker to divulge the denotative content of his speech-act as clearly and with as little confusion as possible.

RULES OF CONVERSATION

1. Quantity: Be as informative as required
   Be no more informative than required
2. Quality: Say only what you believe to be true
3. Relevance: Be relevant
4. Manner: Be perspicuous
   Don't be ambiguous
   Don't be obscure
   Be succinct

I overlook here the problem (which is a problem for Grice, or anyone) of how these qualities are determined: how much is too much? what is relevant? when is a statement obscure? These, after all, are the issues that divide us: I make a conversational contribution that I judge to be necessary, true, relevant, and perspicuous; you hear it and judge it unnecessary, untrue, irrelevant, and obscure; and I will be puzzled if you abruptly terminate the conversation. So these notions must be defined more rigorously in terms of the separate worlds of speaker and addressee.

But a more serious difficulty is this: the rules of conversation are apparently more honored in the breach than in the observance. It should be clear to anyone looking at these rules that a normal, interesting conversation violates these rules at every turn: it is the insipid or stiffly formal conversation that hews to them. Very often the violations are signalled in our conversation: by expressions like By the way (= 'I'm violating manner, for a reason'); As you know (= 'I'm violating quantity, for a reason'); and even without signals, we notice that violations of the rules of conversation are not perceived as non-conversations, as violations of syntactic rules are perceived as non-sentences. Rather, speakers seem to conspire, using a kind of principle of sanity: 'I assume you're sane, unless proven otherwise, and will therefore assume that everything you do in a conversation is done for a reason: a violation of one rule will be seen as giving precedence to another rule, or system of rules.' It seems to be the case that, when Clarity conflicts with Politeness, in most cases (but not, as we shall see, all) Politeness supersedes: it is considered more important in a conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity. This makes sense, since in most informal conversations, actual communication of important ideas is secondary to merely reaffirming and strengthening relationships. It is, in fact, in precisely those conversations where the content communicated is more important than the actual act of talking that the rules of conversation are strictly enforced. So devices like irony, exaggeration, joking, ambiguity, and other devious conversational ploys are normal for an informal conversational style, but not in business conversations, or academic lectures, where the Rules of Conversation tend to be in effect.

(Of course, this is an overgeneralization: even in the most formal situations, informal uses crop up: it's rare to find an unmixed style, purely formal or purely informal. There are many reasons for this, chief among them the fact that very seldom indeed is a speech act designed purely to impart factual information: one often seeks at the same time to impart a favorable feeling about the factual information, best achieved by making one's addressee think well of one, notably through the use of the Rules of Politeness. And similarly, even in informal conversation we sometimes want to get down to brass tacks, however informally or apologetically; and then we will resort to the Rules of Conversation to expedite this.)

Then what are the rules of politeness, and how are they related to the Rules of Conversation? I shall list these rules informally below, and give some examples.

RULES OF POLITENESS

1. Don't impose
2. Give options
3. Make A feel good - be friendly

Now sometimes two or more of these rules may be in effect together, reinforcing each other; just as often, we must make a choice - are we in a R1 or a R3 situation? - and one will cancel the other out. One, that is, may supersede the other. But how do we tell which of the rules we are enforcing at a given time? Let us give some examples of how these rules operate:

1. Rule 1: Don't impose. This can also be taken as meaning, Remain aloof, don't intrude into 'other people's business.' If something, linguistically or otherwise, is nonfree goods, in Goffman's sense, this rule cautions us to steer clear of it, or in any event to ask permission before indulging in it. So we request permission to examine someone else's possessions; and similarly, if we are about to ask a question that is personal, we must normally ask permission before we do it:

(12) May I ask how much you paid for that vase, Mr. Hoving?

But not, in a case where the reply is not construable as nonfree goods:

(13) *May I ask how much is 1 + 1?

(Unless something deeper is implicit in the questioning.) (Of course, the request for permission is more or less conventional, since you are asking the question at the very moment you are asking permission to ask it; but it's the thought that counts. You appear to give the addressee an out (see Rule 2), even though actually your don't.)

Also governed by Rule 1 are certain linguistic devices: passives and impersonal expressions, for instance, tend to create a sense of distance between speaker and utterance, or speaker and addressee. Hence sentences containing these forms tend to be interpreted as polite, like the other forms of Rule 1-governed behavior. The proper butler says (14) (a), not (14) (b).

(14) (a) Dinner is served.
     (b) Would you like to eat?

And academic authors, as is well known and often bemoaned, tend toward passive and impersonal sentences in their work, as well as the authorial _we_, which, like the polite _vous_ in French (and analogous cases in many other languages) creates a distance between himself (in the _vous_ case, the addressee) and the other people involved in the communication. (The authorial _we_ is thus parallel to the _vous_ of egalitarian non-solidarity, as discussed by Brown and Gilman (1960); but the imperial _we_ is parallel to the _vous_ of superior status.)

Related to the prohibition on nonfree goods under R1 conditions, we find the use of technical terms to avoid mentioning unmentionables, like sex, elimination, or economic difficulties (in our culture; other cultures may have, of course, different unmentionables). This is the practice of bureaucratese, medical and legal terminology, and general stuffiness. It is to be distinguished from euphemism, which is a R2-related use. Technical terminology seeks to divorce the subject from its emotional impact: 'We're talking about IT all right, but it doesn't have its usual connotations because we're divorcing it from all emotional content.' So you say _copulation_, or _defecation_, or _disadvantaged_, if you have to say any of them.

Rule 2 operates sometimes along with R1, sometimes in cases where R1 would be inappropriate. R2 says, 'Let A make his own decisions - leave his options open for him.' This may seem the same as remaining aloof, but actually it only seomtimes is. So certain particles may be used to give the addressee an option about how he is to react: some of these particles (hedges) have been discussed by G. Lakoff (1972). Some hedges also have the effect of suggesting that the speaker feels only a weak emotional commitment toward what he's discussing: that is, they reflect the speaker's feelings about the sentence. So the use of such hedges violates R1:

they are not in place in truly formal discourse.

(15) Nixon is sort of conservative.

A sentence like (15) could not be used, say in a New York Times editorial, a format which invokes R1 almost exclusively. But it might be used in the interests of politeness: under some circumstances a speaker whose true opinion is representable as (16) may utter (15) to avoid social unpleasantness.

(16) Nixon is an arch-conservative.

We might mention other types of sentences that allow the addressee as much freedom as possible in making up his mind: for instance, sentences like those of (17):

(17) (a) I guess it's time to leave.
(b) It's time to leave, isn't it?

That is, quite apart from their basic functions, such sentences may also function as politeness devices in accordance with R2. Obviously, both (17) (a) and (17) (b) can be used when the speaker genuinely is uncertain of what he is asserting. But often, too, they are used where the speaker speaks with full confidence: he knows what he's talking about, but does not wish to assert himself at the risk of offending the addressee. Such sentences, under these conditions, mean something roughly equivalent to, 'I say this to you, but you're under no compunction to believe it: I'm not trying to buffalo you.' Whether for the sake of politeness or because the speaker really doesn't know the answer himself, such sentences leave the final decision as to the truth if the sentence up to the addressee.

Just as technical terms for unmentionables are R1 devices, euphemisms are in the realm of R2: they retain the presumption that the topic under discussion is forbidden, but they seek to dispel the unpleasant effect by suggesting that A need not interpret what is being said as THAT. (Of course, he obviously does, so this is again conventional; but he is at least apparently being given the chance of opting out, pretending that the unmentionable topic has not been broached, and this is what makes euphemism a R2 device.) So we talk, under R2 conditions, about making it, or doing number 2, or being hard up (in the economic sense). People holding professional discussions, where R1 holds sway generally, will resort to technical terms rather than euphemisms, while at polite cocktail parties, if one must talk about the thing, one uses euphemisms, as one also uses other R2 devices in these situations; contrast the sentences of (18), the R1 cases with those (19), and imagine, first, an anthropologist at an anthropological meeting using each of (18) and then a society matron at an elegant party saying (19).

(18) (a) When the natives of Whango-whango want to {copulate / *do it} they...

(b) {Defecation / *Making number 2} is generally expedited by the use of large banana leaves, or old copies of the New York Daily News.

(c) Many of the residents of the ghetto are {underprivileged. / *hard up.}

(19) (a) I hear that the butler found Freddy and Marion {making it / ?copulating} in the pantry.

(b) Excuse me, I have to {go to the little girls' room / *defecate}

(c) Harry sold his daughter into white slavery because he was so {hard up. / *underprivileged.}

The point is that we respond differently emotionally to R1 and R2 devices, and hence the careful speaker will tailor his device to his purpose.

Rules 1 and 2 may be applicable together, as we have seen: avoidance of nonfree goods may be interpreted both as a means of not imposing, and as a way of letting the addressee have his freedom. But Rule 1 and Rule 3 seem to be mutually contradictory: if they coexist in the same conversation, we must assume that, for any of various extralinguistic reasons, the participants are, really or conventionally, shifting their relationships with each other. Rule 3 is the rule of politeness that seems the least 'hypocritical,' although it, too, is very often used conventionally when there is no real friendship felt. This is the rule producing a sense of camaraderie between speaker and addressee. The ultimate effect is to make the addressee feel good: that is, it produces a sense of equality between Sp and A, and (providing Sp is actually equal to or better than A) this makes A feel good, (But of course, if Sp really is of lower rank than A, his invoking R3 will be seen as 'taking liberties,' and will result in the termination of the conversation on an unsatisfactory basis.) Now it is true that R1 and R2 also are designed to 'make A feel good.' In fact, one might try to generalize and say that this was the purpose of all the rules of politeness. But they all do it in different ways, and R3 does it by making A feel wanted, feel like a friend. Rule 3 is the rule that produces _tu_ in appropriate situations, in those languages that use _tu_, when it is used to express solidarity. Here too, rather than the last name +title used in true R1 situations, we find nicknames, or at least first names (cf. Brown and Ford, 1964); we find the sorts of particles that express how Sp feels about what he's talking about: this makes A a more active participant: expressions like _like_, _y'know_, _I mean_. When rhetoricians warn against these words they do it because their denotative information function is nil: they are out of place in a R1 situation. But utterances, as we have said already, are not uttered merely to get information across; and we must acknowledge that these meaningless particles have, in truth, a deep meaning: they say, 'R3 is in effect.' Here, too, in R3 we find the giving of compliments, out of place in R1 situations as impositions; and we find the use of simple forms of unmentionable words. (Brown and Ford (1964) point out that, the more nicknames one has for a person, the more likely it is that you have discussed intimate things with him: that is, both are parts of the R3 situation, and one follows from the other.) It has been noted that R1 and R3 are incompatible; R1 and R2 are sometimes incompatible, sometimes coexistent; and similarly with R2 and R3; sometimes, as with the particles, they also serve to provide leeway for the addressee: since the speaker says like, y'know, and so on, he means that what he's saying is just his own feeling; so the use of such expressions may also be construed as giving options. But the use of nicknames cuts off options; and the use of tabooed words does too.

In a situation where we would expect R3 and get R1, the effect is a breach of politeness, rather than a free choice between that and a (polite) refusal to impose. So to refer back to an earlier example, if I say (10) where I have previously been saying (20),

(20) Shut the window.

the addressee's assumption will be that we are no longer in a state of camaraderie; he will have been made to feel bad, a violation of the rules of politeness, rather than merely feeling he's been left his options or has not been imposed on.

Both interpretations should theoretically be possible; the fact that only one is, at least in our culture, shows that R3 takes precedence over the other rules when it is applicable. When it is not, of course, one must resort to the others. But it seems that in middle-class American society, R3 is gaining ground continually at the expense of R1, while in more stratified societies, R1 seems to be given more play.

Similarly a conversational implicature (cf. Gordon and Lakoff (1971)) like (21), used to mean (20), may or may not be a polite way of saying (20), depending on the situation:

(21) It's cold in here.

It may be construed as polite under R2: the addressee is, at least conventionally, given the option as to how he shall interpret the sentence - as a way of making conversation, or as an order - and may choose to respond appropriately in either direction. But suppose the speaker of

(21) is in a superior position to the addressee. Now, if he uses (21), since he is not in a R3 situation and not therefore merely 'making small talk' about the weather, (21) must necessarily be construed as an order, equivalent to (20). But the fact that Sp has phrased it as a statement seems to suggest, 'You must interpret my every wish as your command, you are so far beneath me,' and thus violates several of the rules of politeness at a blow.

One thing I would like to note briefly in passing: the rules of politeness function for speech and actions alike. A polite action is such because it is in accord with the dictates of one or more of Rules 1, 2, 3, as is a polite utterance. So covering my mouth when I cough is polite because it prevents me from imposing my own personal excreta on someone else (quite apart from germs); and standing aside as someone enters a door I am in front of is polite because it leaves him his options, that is, his freedom of movement. This suggests that the rules of language and the rules for other types of cooperative human transactions are all parts of the same system; it is futile to set linguistic behavior apart from other forms of human behavior.

Now let us return to the question of the relationship between the rules of politeness and the rules of conversation. We have noted that the rules of conversation are in effect in non-R3 situations: that is, R1 situations, cases of formality.

We can look at the rules of conversation as subcases of Rule 1: their purpose is to get the message communicated in the shortest time with the least difficulty: that is, to avoid imposition on the addressee (by wasting his time with meandering or trivia, or confusing him and making him look bad). The fact that the rules of politeness are in conflict with the rules of conversation precisely in R3 situations suggests that this is so, and in fact if we do interpret the rules of conversation as one kind of rule of politeness, specifically a R1 type, we will have achieved an interesting generalization about the way in which the rules of politeness take precedence over one another, and the circumstances under which each is applicable. And this will help us answer our original question: how it is that violations of the rules of conversation save the rules of politeness: actually, they save only R2 and R3 politeness, and now we understand how and why this is so.

Now one objection to this formulation of the rules of politeness is that what is polite for me may be rude for you. I am claiming here that these rules are universal. But clearly customs vary. Are these statements contradictory? I think not. What I think happens, in case two cultures differ in their interpretation of the politeness of an action or an utterance, is that they have the same three rules, but different orders of precedence for these rules.

An example: It is said that it is polite in Chinese society to belch after a meal (if you are not the one responsible for the cooking). But this is not polite in our society. In our society, R1 takes precedence: one must not impose one's internal workings on someone else. But in Chinese society R3 takes precedence: show appreciation, make the other guy feel good.

Another example: I was brought up to believe that financial questions, like those involving sex or habits of elimination, were nonfree goods. So one didn't ask an acquaintance (until a very late stage in the relationship) how much money he made, what his father did, how much any of his possessions cost. But other people apparently are perfectly free to bound into one's house and ask the cost of everything, how deeply in debt you are, etc. One interpretation of this behavior is that it is plain boorish: they know the rules but don't care to apply them. But there is another, more generous way. (Generosity is in accord with Rules 2 and 3.) Suppose we interpret what I was taught as an affirmation of R1. But asking about people's possessions, showing interest in their welfare, may be interpreted as R3 behavior - making the other guy feel important to you, making him feel like a friend. So we may have here another case where the order of precedence of two rules differs dialectally. Just as someone who uses a syntactically aberrant sentence may not know the rules of English, or may have a somewhat different set of rules from you, so someone who seems to be violating the rules of politeness may, indeed, not know the rules or be ignoring them; but may just as well have the same rules as you, differently ordered.

One final set of cases: I have mentioned the various ways of hedging performative utterances (the sentences of (17)), ways of weakening the declarative force of verbs of saying, and I have suggested that sometimes this is done in the interest of politeness; the opposite also occurs: we find outright insistence on the force of the speech-act as in the sentences of (22): why do these exist?

(22) (a) I'm telling you that Fred is a ratfink.
(b) Young man, I'm asking you where I can find the Chairman.
(c) For the last time, I'm telling you to take the chewing gum out of your mouth.

Now these are incontrovertibly rude, in that they impose on the addressee and destroy his options (he must recognize the speech act for what it is, and must respond appropriately). Also, since they insist on the addressee's appropriate response, they treat him not as a friend, but as an express unequal. So they violate Rules 2 and 3. But they are unambiguously clear, too: they make it very plain what the speaker intends. So in this case, the R1-R3, or clarity-politeness conflict, is resolved in favor or R1, where ordinarily it is resolved in favor of R3. Is this an exception? We must first ask when these sentences may be used. Generally they are used in desperation - when an ordinary speech-act has previously been ignored. Now in this situation, politeness may be waived - the addressee, by ignoring the speaker in the first place, has forfeited his rights. And further, the speaker has to get his message across, and by now has good reason to believe only the most forceful speech act will accomplish this. So these sentences are not true exceptions, but rather show that our rules are in general correct: they enable us to cope with apparent exceptions, and to show why they exist.

In conclusion, then, I hope to have shown the following:

1. That we follow pragmatic rules in speaking, just as we follow semantic and syntactic rules, and all must be a part of our linguistic rules.
2. That there are rules of politeness and rules of clarity (conversation), the latter a subcase of the former: rules of conversation are a subtype of R1.
3. That the rules of politeness may differ dialectally in applicability, but their basic form remains the same universally.
4. That these are not merely linguistic, but applicable to all cooperative human transactions.

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