

Book Review

Eva Ogiermann and Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (eds.). 2019. *From speech acts to lay understandings of politeness: Multilingual and multicultural perspectives*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 346 pp., Hardback ISBN: 978-1-107-19805-0. Price: Hb \$ 125.00.

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Eva Ogiermann and Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich's edited volume is dedicated to Maria Sifianou whose research on cultural variation, globalization, incivility, (im) politeness, metalanguage, and social media has significantly broadened and diversified the scope of politeness research (e.g., Sifianou 1992, 2013, 2015). This collection begins with an introduction that provides a broad stroke of (im) politeness research and maps out the structure of the book. Part I (Chapters 1–6) advances the central role of speech acts in (im)politeness research by examining their realizations in longer stretches of text across different cultures and media. Part II (Chapters 7–12) focuses on the varying metapragmatic understandings of (im)politeness, which enrich and diversify the theorization of (im)politeness phenomena. The volume closes with a personal reflection from Sifianou's PhD thesis co-supervisor, Peter Trudgill.

Chapters 1 and 2 extend Sifianou's (1992) characterization of Greek culture as a positive politeness culture. In the first chapter, Spyridoula Bella furthers Sifianou's seminal work on offers in Greek by exploring their situational variations of power and distance with mixed methods of open role plays, retrospective verbal reports, and authentic conversations. She finds that Greek politeness is moderated by situational symmetry such that communicators tend to adopt positive politeness in symmetrical situations and negative politeness in asymmetrical situations. In the following chapter, Angeliki Tzanne examines the discursive strategies food bloggers used to construct friend/in-group identity. Guided by Brown and Levinson's politeness typology and bloggers' linguistic and paralinguistic evaluation of others' comments, the author identifies various forms of praising used to claim common ground and establish solidarity. Specifically, praising is coupled with expressions of exclamative, exaggerated interest, positive opinion, and common ground.

Moving away from the Greek culture, the next two chapters investigate positive politeness in Persian and Spanish. In Chapter 3, Zohreh R. Eslami, Nasser Jabbari, and Li-Jen Kuo examine compliments among Iranian Facebook users.

The results show that when complimenting the other's profile photo, Facebook users frequently opted for the "like" button, gave explicit compliments, and employed modifiers that are emotionally charged. While elliptical forms were extensively used in explicit compliments, implicit compliments tended to be more creative. This study contributes to the paucity of research on naturally occurring Persian data in an online context. In Chapter 4, María Elena Placencia seeks to address the gap of examining complimenting behavior among Ecuadorian Instagram users. Based on compliments collected from seven female teenagers and informal interview data from two of them, the author identifies verbal, nonverbal/pictorial, and hybrid forms of compliment strategies, with elliptical as the most frequently occurring subcategory. A salient feature revealed in this study is that Instagram users often display creativity.

The last two chapters in Part I discuss speech acts that may be subject to negative evaluations. In Chapter 5, Spyros Armostis and Marina Terkourafi investigate the perception of thanking items in Cypriot Greek based on experimental manipulation of prosody and linguistic items. The first experiment reveals that compared to non-rising intonation, rising intonation is more likely to lead to a discourse marking interpretation rather than a sincere thanking interpretation. The second experiment tested interlocutors in familiar contexts and found that while both thanking items received positive evaluations in a low-imposition context, the variant that is borrowed from English was more negatively evaluated as off-putting, curt, arrogant, and phony than the variant that is inherited in Cypriot Greek. One methodological innovation is that the study demonstrates the effectiveness of using auditory presentation to examine a non-standard language variety. Chapter 6 problematizes that disagreement in family talks is complex because it is face-threatening on one hand but is potentially beneficial to the whole family on the other hand. Using multimodal conversation analysis and interviews, the author Eva Ogiermann analyzes disagreements during everyday interactions in Polish homes. Her results reveal the complexity of (im)politeness in conversations, suggesting that politeness researchers need to go beyond linguistic and metalinguistic comments and include various semiotic resources such as objects, gestures, and eye gazes.

Part II begins with two chapters discussing the metapragmatic understanding of politeness notions between different varieties of English, which lacks empirical research from an emic perspective. Jonathan Culpeper, Jim O'Driscoll, and Claire Hardaker adopt corpus-based methods to study the layperson's metalinguistic evaluation of British and North American notions of politeness. In their first study, the authors use Sketch Engine to examine common collocates of *polite* in British and American subsections in the Oxford English Corpus. To triangulate their findings, they also compare the frequencies of politeness-related terms

based on geolocated Twitter data. The results show that British and North American conceptualizations of politeness share many similarities but also reveal differences that are both consistent and inconsistent with stereotypes. Drawing on corpus data, locally situated interviews, and metacomments in naturally occurring conversations, Michael Haugh's Chapter 8 examines the metapragmatic understandings of *consideration* in English contexts. The results suggest that the connection of *polite* and *considerate* is mediated by *respectful* and *courteous*. The author finds that the metapragmatic evaluation of consideration is largely similar between Australian and New Zealand English users, but there could be systematic differences depending on situational variations and at various levels of abstraction.

The remaining four chapters move away from English contexts and look at metapragmatics of politeness across different languacultures. In Chapter 9, Saeko Fukushima takes a metapragmatic approach to examine an alternative interpretation of politeness as attentiveness in Japanese culture. Based on questionnaire and focus group data, the author confirms that attentiveness is closely related to politeness in Japanese. Specifically, the questionnaire data show that attentiveness is most related to empathy, followed by consideration, altruism, and helping behavior. The focus group data further reveal the nuances among these terms: compared to attentiveness, consideration is connected to a sense of obligation; empathy is connected to stronger emotion; and altruism and helping behavior are connected to receiving rewards in return.

In Chapter 10, using content analysis and linguistic analysis, Miriam A. Locher and Martin Luginbühl explore the differing norms of politeness between Germans and Swiss Germans. Their results suggest that framing politeness norms as a cross-cultural discussion invites more generalizations at the national level, and local norms of behavior are often overgeneralized as cultural or national norms. One interesting finding is that the difference between dialect and standard variety is only made salient when the linguistically superior German is involved. These observations point to a need to further examine metapragmatic norms of politeness both across and within national borders.

To address the complex understanding of globalization in different cultures, Chapter 11 compares Chinese and Western emic understandings of *quanqiuhua* (globalization) and *guojihua* (internationalization). Based on historical data collected from previous literature, Google books, and Chinese etiquette manuals, Dániel Z. Kádár and Yongping Ran find that globalization is positively evaluated in Chinese cultures but is negatively evaluated in Western cultures. Subsequent analysis shows that it is *internationalization* rather than *globalization* that is often used to describe politeness in Chinese contexts. These discrepancies point

to the need for a more critical examination of lexemes such as *globalization*, *internationalization*, and *politeness* in different languages.

Finally, following discursive (im)politeness research's treatment of face as an independent field of inquiry, Pilar Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Patricia Bou-Franch examine the emic conceptualizations of face (*imagen*) in Peninsular Spanish. By analyzing dictionaries, newspapers, and focus group discussions, the authors find that *imagen* does not only refer to physical appearance but also denotes both identity and second-order face, involving notions of credibility, prestige, worth, and ideology. The study concludes that the emic and etic interpretations of Spanish *imagen* convey different meanings, and the Spanish notion of face is more closely related to Goffman's original definition rather than Brown and Levinson's definition of face.

Overall, this volume features salient methodological strengths in data collection and data analysis. Contributors examined diverse types of data, such as naturally occurring conversations, (geo-located) social media interactions, large-scale corpora, role plays, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, etiquette manuals, and dictionaries. Within the same chapter, authors often base their analysis on multiple data sources and corroborate their findings with a mixture of quantitative and qualitative analyses. Such a practice echoes Jucker's (2018) call for triangulation of data that could yield better understandings of pragmatic phenomena.

Moreover, chapters in this volume have covered a range of languacultures, extending to those that are generally understudied (e.g., Ecuadorian Spanish in Chapter 4) or are unexpectedly understudied (e.g., first-order British politeness in Chapter 7). Most of the contributions, however, tend to share characteristics of populations in WEIRD societies (i.e., Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic), which have been considered as the least representative for generalizing human behaviors (Henrich et al. 2010). Specifically, many of the studies focus on cultures in the Global North, such as the majority of Europe, North America, and Australasia. The research community could benefit from further examining societies from the Global South, including developing countries in Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Pacific Islands. Moreover, quite a few contributions relied on participants who are young and well-educated (e.g., Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12). While providing invaluable findings, these samples may not represent the (im)politeness behaviors and perceptions of populations from a different socioeconomic status within the same national border. Therefore, even situated in a heavily studied languaculture, researchers could still explore samples representing different levels of socioeconomic status. For example, while Chinese contexts have become a major testing ground for (im)politeness theories, few studies have examined rituals that happen within marginalized communities

such as underground rap battle groups in China (Jia and Yao 2022). Studying these groups is important not just because they are underrepresented but because they represent communities that do not conform to the dominant cultural norms in a society.

In conclusion, the present collection embodies a nice marriage of the analyst's etic perspective and the participants' emic interpretation of (im)politeness phenomena, offering contextualized and yet replicable research agendas to politeness research (e.g., "a three-pronged methodology" in Chapter 12, p. 305). As such, it not only informs politeness scholars about the latest theoretical developments in the field but also offers researchers applicable methodologies to examine (im)politeness phenomena across cultures. The volume is valuable to researchers interested in communication studies, cultural studies, and linguistic pragmatics.

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