Locher, Miriam A., Watts, Richard J., 2008. Relational work and impoliteness: negotiating norms of linguistic behavior. In: Bousfield, D., Locher, M. A. (Eds.), Impoliteness in Language: Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin, pp. 77–99.
Montgomery, Barbara M, Baxter, Leslie A. (Eds.), 1998. Dialectical Approaches to Studying Relationships. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ.
Spencer-Oatey, Helen, 2011. Conceptualising 'the relational' in pragmatics: insights from metapragmatic emotion and (im)politeness comments. Journal of Pragmatics 43 (14), 3565–3578.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.09.012

Discussion note

Interpersonal pragmatics and cultural discourse

Donal Carbaugh *, Brion van Over

University of Massachusetts Amherst, United States

Received 27 July 2013

Helen Spencer-Oatey's article in this special issue challenges us to consider several matters concerning the study of pragmatics. We share many of those concerns with her especially the profound importance of hearing, in pragmatic interaction, the participants' perspective(s) in the matters at hand. In what follows, we briefly summarize some of our shared concerns, while contributing a related perspective on those concerns. The perspective we add seeks primarily to bring into view cultural discourses which, we argue, are formative, not only of relational meanings but moreover of ''interpersonal ideologies'' (Fitch, 1998:12). We want to emphasize at the outset that our goal is to extend the conversation of the featured article by offering our thoughts; we are not implying that Spencer-Oatey's research should have been done differently, only that we share certain interests and there are distinct and complementary ways of addressing those interests.

1. The need for a ''grassroots perspective''

Spencer-Oatey writes about the need to consider a ''grassroots perspective'' when exploring interpersonal pragmatics generally or ''relating'' more specifically. We agree wholeheartedly with this. We assume this consideration raises the question: what do participants themselves take to be significant and important in their social interactions or in their interactions at work?

Our take on this matter draws on cultural discourse theory which is designed to give special and detailed attention to two very general discursive matters, *the exact terms people use when interacting with each other and the interactional forms in which these uses occur*. To draw attention to these as devices in cultural discourse our theory focuses on participants' terms, and when found to be widely and deeply intelligible to participants, we conceptualize them as ''cultural terms'' (Carbaugh, 2007). Further, to draw attention to the focus on the participants' perspective about interaction, and the shared meanings about the flow of pragmatic acts, we conceptualize this as ''cultural sequencing.'' The former eventually brings into view how participants themselves say, or speak, to the matters at hand; the latter brings into view their sense of the interactional sequence into view. Analyzed together, when conducting our analyses, we find shared vocabulary that is distinctive to a community as well as pragmatic forms through which people live in community. Our sustained attention, respectively, to participant terms and forms is a commitment to understanding the grassroots perspective of special concern to Spencer-Oatey.

Two types of analyses are required, we think, in working toward these ends. One is careful descriptive analyses, preferably, of the actual, routine interactions participants do. This roots pragmatic analysis in the fertile soil of a discourse's making. This provides analysts with first-hand materials which are, in this case, part of the participants' everyday work-life. While interview data may be helpful in reporting about such work, it is not the same as the doing of the work itself. In other words, workers can no doubt, retrospectively, construct verbal interpretations about work, but these constructions are

* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: carbaugh@comm.umass.edu (D. Carbaugh), brivox@gmail.com (B. van Over).

uprooted plantings of grass grown elsewhere, products of an interview event which is parasitic on events elsewhere. How this sort of reconstruction relates to a work environment is problematic. In other words, the meanings that take root in the interview may and often do reveal other matters more salient in the interview event itself than to the routine matters of working relationships.

Let's look at a specific instance of data presented in the article. Example 5 in Spencer-Oatey's article contains data which includes the participant's phrases ''English small talk'' and how ''in German there's not even a translation for'' it. This sort of descriptive data, provided in an interview event, includes a participant's discourse about one folk genre of talk, identified by the interviewee as ''English small talk,'' and makes a claim about it: It is allegedly absent in German (ambiguously presented as perhaps absent both in the German language and apparently as a form of interaction among Germans). As a result, we hear an interactional sequence being recounted by the English speaker, in brief:

(1) I asked a co-worker, while in the lift, ''how was your weekend?''
(2) In response, I – the English speaker – was ''just completely ignored,'' ''got literally no answer,'' while the German interlocutor ''just tried to avoid the subject.''
(3) The interactional outcome of this sequence – a question and its non-answer – from the view of the English participant, was described as ''weird'' and ''very strange.''

A cultural discourse analysis of this sort of data may add some further cultural interpretation to these descriptive data, as well as to these sorts of data more generally. Here is how. We could start from the English view, and ask, what sort of interactional sequence is being identified by this speaker through the phrase, ''small talk''? This type of language use has been explored in great detail. We find that every language used in every known speech community uses terms to talk about pragmatic action and talk itself; we conceptualize these as ''terms for (pragmatic action) talk.'' These have been studied around the world in many languages (e.g., Baxter, 1993; Carbaugh et al., 2006a,b; Fitch, 1998; Garrett, 1993; Townsend, 2009; Wilkins, 2005, 2009). We have found such a term can do deep semantic work as each can carry complex cultural meanings about the interactional sequence it identifies, about a model of proper personhood associated with it, about the structuring of social relationships through its form, about the emotional valence of interaction so conceived, and about the place of this sort of pragmatic activity in social life itself.

In this case, the English speaker's comments can be understood to say something about a staple of interactional life, being a good sociable person, establishing friendly relationships in places like a lift, ably establishing a casual feel and ease at work, through such a form, even if for a short time in one's everyday life. Perhaps it is this sense of the term which the English speaker references in her discursive nutshell as ''nice.''

But the data includes and thus invites the cultural analyst to consider a second, German view. Some English speakers have reported that in Germany their questions such as ''how was your weekend?'' or ''how are you?'' have been responded to by Germans with the following: ''what is it that you actually want?'' or ''you don't really care do you?'' or ''you Americans are so fake'' (see Carbaugh, 2007:39–54). If this is the case, then perhaps (!) from a German view, there are other meanings associated with this form and its place in social, work life and relations. There are several possibilities. Perhaps there is an implicit, albeit German understanding that one should not mix personal and business matters especially when at work, that if one speaks there it is better to be efficient or serious rather than to be superficial or playful, that friendly interaction like that being initiated with ''how was your weekend'' invites a tedious, superficial kind of talk that can violate a German preference that one speak at work about more substantial and serious matters. It is also interesting to note that for the German to verbally evaluate this form they have to either (1) have some familiarity with it and those who they perceive to use it (e.g., Americans) or (2) they may have a similar form which this kind of verbal participation sounds like to them, but which carries different meanings.

Note further that the corpus of data in the article by Spencer-Oatey puts a variety of language resources at play including their meanings for rendering pragmatic action and meaning, American English, British English, Chinese, French, and presumably German as well as Spanish. In order to grasp face and relational work in each, we need a perspective which helps us understand each, through its own terms, forms, and meanings. We think further that the dialectics or salient semantic dimensions need discovered in each case, a point we mention in concluding below.

2. How a grassroots perspective can be conceptualized

There are two general types of issues we want to discuss here. We take Spencer-Oatey's concerns to span both, that is, (1) how we conceptualize the claim that this is a finding about the participants' view of the matter; and (2) how we conceptualize the general theory that led to that sort of claim.

A brief illustration of the first sort of claim appears above as when an interpretation of ''English small talk'' is given. The claim is made using the participant's terms including ''small talk'' (in quotes); the symbolic contrasts of this with the

''German''; a description of an act sequence which itself is about an intercultural dynamic; and the resulting evaluation of it – the interactional event and perhaps the German interlocutor as well – as ''weird'' or ''strange.'' This sort of claim is again at two levels, the description of the language being used, and its interpretation via the cultural logic-in-use by the English speaker (and in turn, by the German speaker). The claims draw attention to the cultural terms, sequencing, and cultural logic being used in pragmatic action, and further to participant's accounts about that pragmatic action. We note Spencer-Oatey's desire to offer something constructive to a business manager. The above analyses we find are immediately digestible to those from whom the data come, and offer in almost every case we know, new reflexive paths for future thought and action (Carbaugh et al., 2011a,b).

We have organized our contribution to this discussion using a general theory of cultural discourse. Its theory and methodology, concepts and modes of analysis, are presented in detail elsewhere (e.g., Berry, 2009; Carbaugh, 2005, 2007; Carbaugh and Cerulli, 2013; Scollo, 2011). We emphasize the approach as a general theory with several distinct objectives; it is designed to discover local discursive practices, to describe and document these, to interpret their meanings to participants, as well as to comparatively and critically assess those for purposes of social betterment. Based upon empirical research from around the world, the approach focuses analyses on any of five discursive hubs. These bring into view terms and forms of identity, personhood and face, social relationships (and institutions), emotion, sequential action, and concerns about the nature of things. We summarize these respectively as five discursive hubs of being, relating, feeling, acting, and dwelling. Each has its own discursive devices – its own terms for identities, about relationships, forms for action, vocabularies of emotion, and that identify the nature of things – to activate these concerns. As with example 5 above, we focus on a term for discursive action, for example ''small talk'' and the implicit cultural meanings associated with it concerning appropriate relationships, social actions, being a proper person, the expression of emotion, and social living in specific places.

This general approach, when applied to specific cases, seeks to particularize our understanding of each as a discursive concern (such as face or relational concerns), puts each into play with the others, all the while exploring the local terms, forms, and meanings at play through them. The approach overlaps considerably with some of Spencer-Oatey's main concerns with interpretive claims benefitting from careful semantic analyses (e.g., Goddard and Wierzbicka, 2013).

We will briefly mention two other points in concluding. Regarding ''dialectics,'' as noted above, from a cultural perspective, there is a prior question about what, if any, tensions or pulls are active or salient in the local discourse, from the participants' views. One cannot presume a priori that separation-union, or inclusion-exclusion, or private-public, and so on are the active ones. This is something to be discovered and described, that is, to be treated as an empirical finding.

Similarly, at times, we found the ''locus'' of concern to be in motion. In other words, when we conceptualize relationships, we might be thinking about a relational interaction, an individual's view of a relationship, local terms for relations, and the like, moving from interactional, to cognitive, to linguistic matters. We find it noteworthy that Goffman's concept of face was fundamentally a relational one based as it is in patterns of interaction; it is both in and a consequence of interaction. As such, it is not equivalent to one's self-concept, but a ''line'' – to use Goffman's concept - that others take you to be enacting at some interactional moment. The precise interactional concern has wavered as subsequent discussions about face, politeness, interaction, and relating make clear (cf. Arundale, 2010; Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010; Kádár and Haugh, 2013). Theorizing is difficult when the locus of the theoretical concern varies. Relating this to the interests of this forum, one might ask of what the dialectics are properties? Are they conceptualized as in interactional patterns, individual minds, a social relationship, language itself, and/or some other entity? We find it fruitful to track this movement in discussions about relating, face, and politeness, to theorize precisely with this in view, and to explore the grassroots of cultural discourse where such pragmatic concerns grow.

References

Arundale, Robert B., 2010. Constituting face in conversation: face, facework, and interactional achievement. Journal of Pragmatics 42 (8), 2078–2105.

Baxter, Leslie, 1993. Talking things through'' and ''putting it in writing'': two codes of communication in an academic institution. Journal of Applied Communication Research 21, 313–326.

Berry, Michael, 2009. The social and cultural realization of diversity: an interview with Donal Carbaugh. Language and Intercultural Communication 9, 230–241.

Carbaugh, Donal, 2005. Cultures in Conversation. Lawrence Erlbaum Publishers, Mahwah, NJ/London.

Carbaugh, Donal, 2007. Cultural discourse analysis: the investigation of communication practices with special attention to intercultural encounters. Journal of Intercultural Communication Research 36, 167–182.

Carbaugh, Donal, Cerulli, Tovar, 2013. Cultural discourses of dwelling: environmental communication as a place-based practice. Environmental Communication: The Journal of Nature and Culture 7, 1–32.

Carbaugh, Donal, Berry, Michael, Nurmikari-Berry, Marjatta, 2006a. Coding personhood through cultural terms and practices: silence and quietude as a Finnish ''natural way of being. Journal of Language and Social Psychology 25 (2006), 203–220.

Carbaugh, Donal, Boromisza-Habashi, David, Ge, Xinmei, 2006b. Dialogue in cross-cultural perspective. In: Aalto, N., Reuter, E. (Eds.), Aspects of Intercultural Dialogue. SAXA Verlag, Koln, Germany, pp. 27–46.
Carbaugh, Donal, Nuciforo, Elena, Molina-Markham, Elizabeth, van Over, Brion, 2011a. Discursive reflexivity in the ethnography of communication: cultural discourse analysis. Cultural Studies: Critical Methodologies 11, 153–164.
Carbaugh, Donal, Nuciforo, Elizabeth, Saito, Makato, Shin-shin, Dong, 2011b. Cultural discourses of ''dialogue'': the cases of Japanese, Korean and Russian. Journal of International and Intercultural Communication 4, 87–108.
Fitch, Kristine, 1998. Speaking relationally: culture, communication and interpersonal connection. The Guilford Press, New York.
Garrett, Mary, 1993. Wit, power, and oppositional groups: a case study of ''pure talk. Quarterly Journal of Speech 79, 303–318.
Goddard, Cliff, Wierzbicka, Anna, 2013. Words and Meanings: Lexical Semantics Across Domains, Languages and Cultures. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
Haugh, Michael, Bargiela-Chiappini, Francesca, 2010. Face in interaction. Journal of Pragmatics 42 (8), 201–207.
Kádár, Dániel Z., Haugh, Michael, 2013. Understanding Politeness. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
Scollo, Michelle, 2011. Cultural approaches to discourse analysis: a theoretical and methodological conversation with special focus on Donal Carbaugh's cultural discourse theory. Journal of Multicultural Discourses 6, 1–32.
Townsend, Rebecca M., 2009. Town meeting as a communication event: democracy's act sequence. Research on Language and Social Interaction 42 (1), 68–89.
Wilkins, Richard, 2005. The optimal form: Inadequacies and excessiveness within the ''asiallinen'' [matter-fo-fact] nonverbal style in public and civic settings in Finland. Journal of Communication 55, 383–401.
Wilkins, Richard, 2009. The asiasta puhuminen event. In: Wilkins, R., Isotalus, P. (Eds.), Speech Culture in Finland. University Press of America, Lanham, MD, pp. 63–84.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.09.013

Discussion note

Relational work and interpersonal pragmatics

Miriam A. Locher

University of Basel, Switzerland

Received 29 July 2013

1. Introduction

The field of politeness studies has developed considerably within the last decades and today we are faced with discussions on how to best approach this topic theoretically and methodologically, what its scope of investigation should be and how to best combine it with insights from other research traditions within interpersonal pragmatics (for overviews see Locher, 2012, 2013). This has advanced the field but it has also brought about the need to clarify positions in light of insecurities over terminology and research angle/interest. In this brief statement, I will first position my own understanding of the study of the relational side of language – largely developed together with Richard J. Watts and Andreas Langlotz – and react to a number of issues that were raised in connection with the notion of 'relational work' in Spencer-Oatey's contribution to this special issue.

2. A brief positioning of '**interpersonal pragmatics**' and '**relational work**'

In Locher and Graham (2010:2) we offer the term 'interpersonal pragmatics' for research that is interested in studying the interpersonal/relational side of language in use. To illustrate the relational impact on language use we can take the speech act of advising as a starting point: much of the language variation we witness in this speech act is caused by interactants judging whether the content of a particular piece of advice as well as its linguistic rendition (e.g. more direct or indirect forms of language; with or without lexical hedging) conforms to the norms of a particular practice in a particular context and whether such a rendition serves their relational goals (Locher and Limberg, 2012). Next to conveying a particular piece of advice (content/ideational), participants thus also project relational/interpersonal messages in their choice of language rendition. In Locher and Watts (2005, 2008) we argue that, depending on whether an appropriate or even positively marked form of advice-giving was found, an interactant might be deemed as merely confirming to norms or

E-mail address: miriam.locher@unibas.ch.