

OXFORD STUDIES IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

The Pragmatics of Politeness

Geoffrey Leech

The Pragmatics of Politeness

OXFORD STUDIES IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

General Editors:

Nikolas Coupland

Copenhagen University, University of Technology, Sydney, and Cardiff

University

Adam Jaworski

University of Hong Kong

Recently Published in the Series:

Sociolinguistic Variation: Critical Reflections

Edited by Carmen Fought

Prescribing under

Pressure: Parent-Physician

Conversations and Antibiotics

Tanya Stivers

Discourse and Practice: New Tools for

Critical Discourse Analysis

Theo van Leeuwen

Beyond Yellow English: Toward a

Linguistic Anthropology of Asian

Pacific America

Edited by Angela Reyes and

Adrienne Lo

Stance: Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Edited by Alexandra Jaffe

Investigating Variation: The Effects of

Social Organization and Social Setting

Nancy C. Dorian

Television Dramatic

Dialogue: A Sociolinguistic Study

Kay Richardson

Language Without Rights

Lionel Wee

Paths to Post-Nationalism

Monica Heller

Language Myths and the History of

English

Richard J. Watts

The "War on Terror" Narrative

Adam Hodges

Digital Discourse: Language in the

New Media

Edited by Crispin Thurlow and

Kristine Mroczek

Leadership, Discourse and Ethnicity

Janet Holmes, Meredith Marra, and

Bernadette Vine

Spanish in New York

Ricardo Otheguy and Ana Celia

Zentella

Multilingualism and the Periphery

Sari Pietikäinen and Helen

Kelly-Holmes

Discourses in War and Peace

Edited by Adam Hodges

Legal-Lay Communication: Textual

Travels in the Law

Edited by Chris Heffer, Frances Rock,

and John Conley

Speaking Pittsburghese: The Story of a

Dialect

Barbara Johnstone

The Pragmatics of Politeness

Geoffrey Leech

The Pragmatics of Politeness

Geoffrey Leech

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide.

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi

Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi

New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece

Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore

South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and certain other countries.

Published in the United States of America by

Oxford University Press

198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016

© Oxford University Press 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by license, or under terms agreed with the appropriate reproduction rights organization. Inquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above.

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Leech, Geoffrey N.

The pragmatics of politeness / Geoffrey Leech.

pages cm. — (Oxford studies in sociolinguistics)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-19-534135-5 (pbk. : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-0-19-534138-6 (hardcover : alk.

paper) — ISBN 978-0-19-971224-3 (ebook) 1. Politeness (Linguistics) 2. Grammar,

Comparative and general—Honorific. 3. Pragmatics. I. Title.

P299.H66L44 2014

401'.41—dc23

2013047103

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Abbreviations and Special Symbols xv

PART ONE **Laying the foundations**

1. Introduction 3

- 1.1 Eight characteristics of politeness 4
- 1.2 Some distinctions to bear in mind 9

2. Politeness: viewpoints 28

- 2.1 What is to be explained? Five explicanda 29
- 2.2 An overview of theories or models of politeness 32
- 2.3 The model presented in this book in comparison with others 43
- 2.4 Other basic questions 48
- 2.5 Conclusion 54

3. Pragmatics, indirectness, and neg-politeness: a basis for politeness modeling 55

- 3.1 A problem-solving view of pragmatics: *S*'s problem and *H*'s problem 56
- 3.2 Simple sentences, propositionals, and pragmatic force 58
- 3.3 Exclamations and isolates (including pragmatic particles) 65
- 3.4 Default interpretations and default decisions 66
- 3.5 The representation of pragmatic meaning 68
- 3.6 Neo-Gricean default thinking 71
- 3.7 Conventional implicature and pragmaticalization 74
- 3.8 Summary and conclusion 76

4. Politeness: the model 80

- 4.1 Criticisms of B&L (1987 [1978]) and also of Leech's *POP* (1983) 81
- 4.2 Restatement of the treatment of politeness in *Principles of Pragmatics* 87
- 4.3 Rethinking the maxims of politeness in *Principles of Politeness* 90
- 4.4 Important disclaimers and caveats 98
- 4.5 Interlinguistic and cross-cultural variation in politeness 105
- 4.6 Postscript on politeness in relation to honorifics 108
- 4.7 Postscript on face 109
- 4.8 A tentative conclusion on universals of politeness 111

PART TWO **Politeness and impoliteness in the use of English****5. A case study: apologies 115**

- 5.1 Apologies: speech events seen as prototype categories 116
- 5.2 A digression: apologies and other speech events 119
- 5.3 Prototypical and less prototypical apologies 122
- 5.4 Apologies: the pragmalinguistic facet 124
- 5.5. Apologies: the sociopragmatic facet 128
- 5.6 Responses to apologies 130
- 5.7 Public apologies 131
- 5.8 Conclusion 132

6. Requests and other directives 134

- 6.1 What is a request? Requests and related speech events 134
- 6.2 The parameters of request territory 138
- 6.3 Strategies for directives 147
- 6.4 Pragmatic modifiers 159
- 6.5 Responses to requests 176
- 6.6 Concluding remarks 178

7. Other politeness-sensitive speech events 180

- 7.1 Offers, invitations, and undertakings 180
- 7.2 Compliments and criticisms 186
- 7.3 Thanks 196
- 7.4 Agreement, disagreement, advice, and *O*-focused suggestions 201
- 7.5 Congratulations, commiserations, and good wishes 208
- 7.6 Concluding remarks 214

8. Politeness and its “opposites” 216

- 8.1 Nonpoliteness: lack of politeness or impoliteness 216
- 8.2 Impoliteness 219
- 8.3 Sarcasm or conversational irony 232
- 8.4 Banter: mock impoliteness 238

PART THREE **Further perspectives****9. Methods of data collection: empirical pragmatics 247**

- 9.1 An overview of methods 247
- 9.2 Rating, multiple choice, and interview tasks 250
- 9.3 Discourse completion (DCTs) 252
- 9.4 Closed and open role play 253
- 9.5 Observation of authentic discourse 254
- 9.6 Conclusion 260

10. Interlanguage pragmatics and politeness across languages and cultures 261

- 10.1 Background to interlanguage pragmatics 262
- 10.2 The ILP paradigm of research 264
- 10.3 Research on different L1 groups learning English 269
- 10.4 Methodologies of ILP data collection 270
- 10.5 ILP research in relation to politeness 271
- 10.6 ILP and the Politeness Principle 273
- 10.7 ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics 275
- 10.8 ILP hypotheses informed by the GSP model 280
- 10.9 Conclusion 281

11. Politeness and the history of English 283

- 11.1 Historical pragmatics and politeness 283
- 11.2 Politeness in Old English (before 1100) 285
- 11.3 Politeness in Middle English (1100–1500) 286
- 11.4 Politeness in Modern English (after 1500) 289
- 11.5 Recent and current developments 293
- 11.6 Concluding remarks: Is politeness on the decline? 297

Appendix: Pragmatics, indirectness and neg-politeness: the background 303

- A1 The precursors of modern politeness studies: a brief sketch 303
- A2 A new “take” on Searlo-Gricean pragmatics 316
- A3 Conclusion 320

References 321

Index 337

PREFACE

Politeness is a topic on which people have very different opinions (and “people,” in this case, includes linguistic scholars and researchers). According to one view, politeness is a superficial and dispensable adornment of human language, rather like icing on a cake. For others, including myself, it is a deeper phenomenon, something that human communicators would find it hard to do without.¹ Many children learning their native language soon discover the importance of saying things like *please* and *thank you*, which are insisted on by their parents in the process of socialization—becoming “paid-up” members of human society. This reminds us that politeness is a social phenomenon—and yet a social phenomenon largely manifested through the use of language.

Hence politeness has to be studied in terms of the relationship between language use and social behavior. This area of linguistic study is typically called *pragmatics*. However, pragmatics—the study of language use and its meaning to speakers and hearers—can readily be seen in terms of two interfaces: the one between pragmatics and linguistic form (known as *pragmalinguistics*) and the other between pragmatics and society (known as *sociopragmatics*). It is virtually impossible for any book to cover all aspects of politeness, and therefore I have oriented this book more toward pragmalinguistics, an area that has been somewhat neglected of late, while not ignoring sociopragmatics. This means taking a fairly detailed close-up view of the way a language is used for politeness, rather than the big-picture view of how politeness relates to social behavior and society in general. Another major limitation of this book is that its focus will be mainly on one language: English.

Although the emphasis will be on polite forms of language and how they are used, it is important not to ignore impolite linguistic behavior—the topic that will be dealt with in Chapter 8, and which has recently become a popular area of research. At the same time, I naturally devote most of my attention in other chapters to politeness, rather than impoliteness, as some degree of politeness is generally considered the unmarked form of behavior.

¹ To illustrate what dire consequences can result from ignoring politeness, Suzuki (2007: 98) reports, citing Coulmas (1992: 299), an incident in 1975 when a Japanese man was murdered by a social superior he had addressed using *-kun* (a familiar/intimate mode of address). Other publications highlight, less dramatically, the bad effects of impoliteness. For example, Flin (2010) shows how incivility at work can have dangerous consequences. She cites cases of argumentative airline pilots flying 150 miles past their destination, students insulted by a professor performing worse in memory tests, and incivility in British hospital operating theaters possibly affecting the performance of surgical staff.

This book is not meant to be a guide to “how to be polite.” Its primary task is a descriptive one—to give an account of politeness phenomena (in English)—and, as an important part of that, to provide a framework for analysis—a model or theory of politeness as a characteristic of human behavior.

The chapters of this book are organized in three parts as follows. Part I, consisting of the first four chapters, covers the groundwork.

In Chapter 1, I ask readers to take a new look at politeness: it is something we largely take for granted, but when we examine it objectively, it has some extraordinary features. Chapter 2 provides an overview of models or theories of politeness that have so far made some impact on the field. Chapter 3 deals with the background in linguistics and pragmatics of the present approach: the history of pragmatics within the “Anglo-American” tradition. Chapter 4 presents my own model of pragmatics; it is a reworking of an article previously published as Leech (2005, 2007), going back ultimately to my work in pragmatics in Leech (1977, 1983).

In Part II, I get down to some detailed descriptive analysis of politeness phenomena in English, using mainly material from two corpora: the British National Corpus (BNC) and the Longman Corpus of Spoken American English (LCSAE). Chapter 5 deals with apologies, and in Chapter 6 this continues with an analysis of requests. Chapter 7 completes the sequence of three descriptive chapters on politeness by tackling a number of other types of speech events involving politeness, including offers, compliments, advice, agreement, congratulations, and commiserations.² I am grateful to Pearson Education for making the latter corpus available to me and other researchers at Lancaster University on license. Because I have relied largely on these corpora, I have to concede that this book focuses mainly not only on one language, but on two major regional varieties of that language—British and American English—and that the attention to British English (my own variety) is greater than to American English.

Chapter 8, although it still has the descriptive orientation, breaks away from the theme of “politeness” to consider phenomena that are in various ways the opposite of politeness. Impoliteness or rudeness is the most important phenomenon dealt with in this chapter, which however also takes a close look at conversational irony or sarcasm (understood as mock politeness) and with banter (understood as mock impoliteness). These can be seen as secondary manifestations of human

² From Chapter 2 onward, especially in the more data-reliant Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I rely largely on authentic examples from these corpora. The sources of the examples will be indicated by the abbreviated name of one of these corpora followed by an identifier for the source text (e.g., LCSAE 15309, BNC H7F). Both corpora are cited in a basic orthographic transcription—as, unfortunately, more detailed transcriptions are at present not available. A few examples from the BNC are from written sources, and this is made clear in their citation. Otherwise illustrations are taken from spoken language. Other corpora or subcorpora of spoken English are occasionally used, e.g., the Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English. Illustrative utterances that are unattributed to a particular source may be attributed to me.

conversational behavior, contrary to politeness, and unlike politeness in their intent and effect, but (as I argue) dependent on politeness for their explanation.

Part III contains the concluding chapters of the book, opening up three important research topics that can only be dealt with in outline in this book. These chapters are shorter than most of the others, as they are intended to offer a “taster” of topics that have been much researched, and that could not be adequately treated in less than a whole volume. My aim has also been to indicate how the model presented in Chapter 4 and developed in the rest of this book could be applied to these important areas. Chapter 9 deals with the questions, How do we know about the pragmatics of politeness? What kinds of observational or experimental evidence can be brought to bear? Hence its title “Methods of Data Collection: Empirical Pragmatics.” Chapter 10 moves on to a field widely researched in recent years, inter-language pragmatics—that is, how do learners acquire pragmatic abilities when they learn a second or foreign language? Naturally it is not an insignificant part of L2 acquisition to learn how to be appropriately polite (or when needed, impolite!) in the second language. This chapter confines itself largely to politeness in the learning of English as a second language. Chapter 11 adds a historical dimension to the study of politeness in English; it provides a brief diachronic sketch of politeness across more than a millennium of history.

The book ends with an appendix, references, and an index. The appendix is entitled “Pragmatics, Indirectness and Neg-politeness: The Background” and presents some of the earlier and later history of pragmatics in the Anglo-American tradition (with reference to the seminal work of the philosophers Austin, Grice, and Searle), which constitutes the foundation of work in that tradition going on today. I felt that much recent research in pragmatics has departed from that intellectual tradition, and people needed to be informed or reminded of some of the key features of pragmatics as it was when I started publishing in the field in the mid-1970s. I began by supposing that this material would be part of Chapter 3 (entitled “Pragmatics, Indirectness, and Neg-politeness: A Basis for Politeness Modeling”). Then I had second thoughts, and made this material into an extra chapter, preceding the present Chapter 3. But I was still dissatisfied, and (advised by Jonathan Culpeper) I reworked it again and put it at the end of the book as an appendix, which could be studied, consulted, or ignored according to the needs of the reader. As it is, the reader has to go through four introductory chapters before reaching the descriptive heart of the book, and I would find it excusable if some readers skimmed through those chapters and settled down to read Chapters 5 to 8, which are probably more congenial for the average reader.

This book swims somewhat against the tide of recent research on politeness. Since the millennium we have seen new approaches flourish: approaches placing emphasis on the complexities of politeness and impoliteness as they work themselves out through extended discourse. This has been a salutary move in some ways: it has confronted us with the many-faceted and dynamically changing behavior of individuals in conversational discourse, in workplace discourse, in public

discourse through the media, and so on—often with interesting and illuminating results. At the same time, abstractions, subtleties, and terminological ambiguities have proliferated. It is easy to get lost in the complexities and particularities of discourse: focusing on an extended piece of dialogue can lead to a lot of contextual niceties that need explanation but are not generalizable. It has been difficult to see the forest for the trees. I believe there is much to be gained, then, by going back to first principles, and to the linguistic roots of pragmatics. Hence a pragmalinguistic approach, taking a close-up view of language as its starting point, can be justified anew.

Obviously and unavoidably, though, this book does not give the whole picture. It goes back to a simple starting point in another way. As I have already said, it largely deals with just one language—although reference to other languages will be made where they usefully can, particularly in Chapters 4 and 10. Again, the justification can be given that this simplifies the task, making it manageable within one volume. An enormous amount of recent research and publication has been undertaken in the general area of cross-cultural pragmatics—analyzing politeness from the point of view of contrasts and similarities across languages and cultures. No serious account of cross-cultural pragmatics can be attempted in this book. But I am conscious of the criticisms that have been made of early “pioneering” work on politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]), Leech (1983), and others. Like much of pragmatics in the 1970s and 1980s, it was biased toward Western, and more specifically Anglo-American, culture, and therefore misrepresented politeness, ignoring considerable if not radical variations across the multiplicity of linguistic communities. In trying to avoid this fault, I have submitted Chapter 4 (where I present my model) in its earlier forms of Leech (2003, 2005) to representative readers of different cultures, who have been good enough to supply me with comments and examples, to show where an English-language-oriented account applies or does not apply to their own language/culture. Leech (2007), on which Chapter 4 is closely modeled, uses examples and discussion of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, to give an idea of how the model would apply to Eastern languages and cultures. At the same, I hope that this book will make a contribution to the pragmatics of English: accounts of English phonetics, phonology, and syntax are easy to find, but accounts of English pragmatics are more elusive.

Still concentrating on English, however, I have also largely omitted another very important area of research, the study of variation in politeness in the vast cultural community of English language users, giving little attention to politeness according to sociocultural variables such as region, gender, age, and social class. For example, how do English-speaking populations in the United States or Singapore (say) differ in terms of politeness from those in the UK? How do female users of the language differ from males in the use of politeness? And, although it is widely suggested that politeness has been since the eighteenth century, and still is today, the preserve of the comfortable middle classes, this has not been thoroughly researched and I have little to say about it. Other

dimensions of variation—particularly gender differences—have however been widely studied and debated (see the contrasting standpoints taken by Holmes 1995 and Mills 2003). It ideally needs another book, taking variation among the kinds of English speakers as its theme, to cover these areas, just as there is a need for a sociopragmatic angle, to complement the pragmalinguistic angle that is more prominent here.

I have sometimes used the term *Anglo*, borrowed by Wierzbicka (2003[1991]) to refer to the “communicative culture” associated with native speakers of English, and more especially with countries in which English is spoken as a mother tongue by the majority of the population, for example, the United States, the UK, Canada (minus Quebec), and Australia. The term will be disfavored by some, but I find it preferable to *Anglophone*, which tends to be used more of countries in which English is not the main language.

For all the feedback I have received, I am grateful first to my colleague Jonathan Culpeper, whose constructive comments have helped to improve the book greatly, and to two anonymous reviewers, who have likewise contributed useful critical observations. I am also grateful to Julia Youst MacRae, who read the manuscript and commented on it from the point of view of American English. More generally, I owe thanks to the following for their help, advice, and criticism of my work on politeness over a number of years: Jenny Thomas, Noriko Tanaka, Toshihiko Suzuki; and also to the following for help on particular languages: Hela Ajmi and Nahed Ghazzol (Arabic), Fu Pei, Luo Qing, and Richard Zhonghua Xiao (Chinese); and Soo-kyung Kim and Hyeon Oak (Korean). My thanks go more particularly to Hallie Stebbins of Oxford University Press for the friendly help and support I have received during the preparation and production of the book. Finally, I gratefully acknowledge permission from Cambridge University Press for reproducing Figure 2.1 and Figure 9.1, and permission from De Gruyter to reuse the article “Politeness: Is there an East-West divide?” (Leech 2007) in a much modified form as Chapter 4 of this book.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SPECIAL SYMBOLS

AmE	American English
B&L	Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978])
BNC	British National Corpus
BNCdemog	The demographically sampled spoken data of the British National Corpus
BrE	British English
CCSARP	Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project
CECL	Centre for English Corpus Linguistics, Louvain-la-Neuve
CP	Cooperative Principle
D	social distance (= horizontal distance) between <i>S</i> and <i>O</i>
DCPSE	Diachronic Corpus of Present-day Spoken English
DCT	discourse completion test (or task)
EFL	English as a foreign language
ELF	English as a lingua franca
ESL	English as a second language
FEA	face-enhancing act
FTA	fact-threatening act
GSP	General Strategy of Politeness
<i>H</i>	hearer (or reader), i.e., addressee(s)
ICLE	International Corpus of Learner English
IFID	illocutionary force indicating device
ILP	interlanguage pragmatics
ISA	indirect speech act
L1	first language (mother tongue)
L2	second or foreign language being learned
LCSAE	Longman Corpus of Spoken American English
LINDSEI	Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage
LOCNEC	Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation
LOCNESS	Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays
NL	native language (= mother tongue)
NNS	nonnative speaker
NS	native speaker
<i>O</i>	other person or people, i.e., other than the speaker/writer
<i>P</i>	power (= vertical distance) of <i>S</i> over <i>O</i> or of <i>O</i> over <i>S</i>
pers. comm.	personal communication
<i>POP</i>	<i>Principles of Pragmatics</i>

PP	Politeness Principle
R	rank of imposition (i.e., to what extent a speech act indicates imposition on <i>O</i>).
<i>S</i>	speaker (or writer)
SLA	second language acquisition
<i>T</i>	familiar second-person singular pronoun (in some European languages)
UK	United Kingdom
U.S.	United States
<i>V</i>	polite or respectful second-person pronoun (in some European languages)
WSC	Wellington Spoken Corpus (of New Zealand English)

Special Use of Symbols

*.....	* before a sequence of words indicates that the sequence is unacceptable in English.
?.....	? before a sequence of words indicates that the sequence is of doubtful acceptability in English.
<- ->	in transcriptions from the British National Corpus indicates the beginning or end of a sequence in which different speakers were simultaneously speaking.
[...]	in an illustrative quotation indicates the omission, for convenience, of some part of what was said.
boldface	is used in illustrative quotations to highlight the part of the example to which attention is drawn.

Use of Quotation Marks

In the authorial text I use double quotation marks (“ ”) as a default, and single quotation marks (‘ ’) for quotations within quotations. Single quotes are also used in textual examples to replicate the use of single quotes in the original, and to delimit turns by different speakers. A further use of single quotes is to represent a *semantic gloss*, where the intention is not to represent the actual words used but the (approximate) meaning associated with an expression.

Use of *He* and *She*

The pronouns *he* and *she*, when referring to speakers and other persons, are generally used as in Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995: 256): *she* referring to the speaker and *he* to the addressee. However, in commenting on examples (e.g., corpus examples), the gender of the speaker/hearer is sometimes clear, in which case *he* and *she* are used in their normal gender-specific sense.

The Pragmatics of Politeness

PART ONE

Laying the Foundations

Introduction

A virtuoso violinist finishes her performance with a great flourish, and the audience responds with tumultuous applause. The soloist (rather than punching an imaginary victim or waving her arms triumphantly in the air) has a meek smile on her face, and lowers her body repeatedly while the people in the audience continue to clap their hands enthusiastically. After several bows (rather than curtsies, these days), the soloist is embraced by the conductor and the leader of the orchestra and retreats from the platform, but the applause continues, reaching a new crescendo as she walks on again, smiling, and starts the same routine again.

This strange ritual continues—with more entrances and retreats by the soloist—until the soloist decides to play an encore, or else the audience decides that it has done enough honor to the performer and lapses into silence.

The ritual is familiar, but it takes a minute or two to consider why it takes place. It can be explained as a manifestation of politeness, or what I like to call “communicative altruism.” Politeness, in this broad sense, is a form of communicative behavior found very generally in human languages and among human cultures; indeed, it has been claimed as a universal phenomenon of human society.¹ What it means to be polite, I will argue, is to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with. This concept in Chinese society goes back more than two thousand years—dating at least from the book *Lǐ Jī*, reputedly by Dai Sheng, which begins, “Speaking of *lǐ* [i.e., politeness], humble yourself and show respect to other” (quoted from Gu 1990: 238). In the example we are considering, although there is no speech, there is communication: bowing and clapping are instances of gestural communication, and the message is clear.

¹ The claim for the universality of politeness phenomena is most strongly associated with the seminal politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]). Others have been strongly critical of this claim, insisting that such phenomena vary radically from one culture to another; see, e.g., Wierzbicka (2003 [1991]: ix–xiii). I discuss this further in 4.1.1. Ironically, Levinson has recently coauthored an influential article that rejects language universals as a “myth”; see Evans and Levinson (2009).

The audience says (by clapping) “We think you’re great.” The soloist (by bowing, again and again) lowers herself, and says in effect, “I am not so great as all that—I’m humbling myself as I meekly accept your applause.”

But just by watching, we cannot be sure how genuine the audience’s appreciation is. Perhaps they are clapping “just out of politeness.” And inside, the soloist may feel triumphant and full of self-congratulation—though she tries not to show it. Inside, some members of the audience may have a poor opinion of the violinist’s performance—but they clap just the same, as it would be embarrassing not to. Inner feelings are not the concern in this present study of politeness: it is concerned, rather, with politeness as an observable behavioral phenomenon. Hence when I say politeness is “communicative altruism,” this should not be misunderstood: the “altruistic meaning” conveyed via communication should not be equated with genuine altruism, where someone does or says something unselfishly, for the sake of some other person(s)—to extend a helping hand to them. Often communicative altruism and genuine altruism do coincide, but it is not difficult to imagine or recall cases where they do not. Think of a case where the speaker (A) politely praises the violin playing of the other person (B), not because A wants to do something nice for B, but because A wants to flatter B with the selfish motive of hoping to get a better job. Or consider the more extreme “Thane of Cawdor” case where A politely invites B to stay at A’s house, in order to have a better opportunity to murder B. In principle and sometimes in practice, politeness is distinct from “true” altruism, just as making a statement about the world is distinct from telling the truth.

But before we leave this initial scenario of the violinist, it will be useful for demonstrating some further aspects of the politeness phenomenon.

1.1 Eight Characteristics of Politeness

A first point—a fairly obvious one—is that politeness is *not obligatory*. People can be nonpolite: they normally will not behave politely unless there is a reason to be polite (even if the reason is somewhat vague, such as following convention). They can also be impolite (see 8.2, in Chapter 8): for example, a member of the concert audience could have booed, hissed, or sat in stony silence when the time for applause arrived. In the case of concert performances, this seems to be rare in English-speaking societies, even when the performance is poor—but it cannot be ruled out. Politeness is generally thought to be a good thing, and socialization of children includes learning to be polite. However, there are occasions where rudeness or impoliteness is felt to be desirable—where the recipient of impolite behavior “had it coming to them.”

A second point about politeness is that there are varying *gradations* of polite and impolite behavior. This can be illustrated in a highly conventionalized form in our example of the violin performance. A bow is a gesture of lowering oneself physically, and hence socially—and the deeper the bow, the more self-lowering

and polite it is deemed to be.² The clapping and cheering, on the other hand, is a response signaling appreciation or high evaluation of someone's performance—and the louder and the more prolonged the clapping is, the greater the appreciation signaled and the more polite the response.

Third, notice, further, that there is often a *sense of what is normal*,³ recognized by members of society, as to how polite to be for a particular occasion. If, after a thrilling and dexterous piece of playing, the violinist received only two perfunctory rounds of applause, lapsing into silence as soon as she left the platform, this would be felt to be less polite than normal. In fact, English has an idiom to capture underpolite compliments: “damning with faint praise.” On the other hand, if the audience continued its rapturous applause for ten minutes, repeatedly cheering on the soloist's return to view, this would be considered exceptional if not excessive—a case of overpoliteness.

Fourth, how far politeness will occur, or whether it will occur at all, *depends on the situation*. Just suppose we are no longer in a concert hall, but in a football stadium. The footballer who scores a goal, instead of bowing meekly, is likely to execute some kind of war-dance, signaling his delight and self-congratulation. Instead of meekness, he shows exultation: “Wow! I am the greatest!” The crowd cheer him, but the cheers could have quickly changed to jeers and boos if he had committed a fatal error and deprived his team of victory. The difference between this and the concert is that the one occasion is almost a kind of ritualized warfare, whereas the other is not. Similarly, there are activity types⁴ where impoliteness dominates over politeness, and indeed part of the rationale of those activity types is that they encourage discourtesy. Examples where rudeness is generally more salient than politeness are:

- ❑ The leader of the opposition questioning the prime minister at “Question Time” in the British House of Commons
- ❑ Certain “reality” TV shows, where contestants are routinely humiliated or are shown being subjected to verbal abuse
- ❑ Training recruits in an army boot camp
- ❑ Interrogation of a prisoner of war or a crime suspect

² Of relevance here is the semiotics of bowing in Japan; see Mizutani and Mizutani (1987: 52–57). As is well known, history provides many examples of more extreme cases of self-lowering, for example, prostration or kowtowing, as practised in imperial China and in the past history of other societies.

³ On the view that normativity is a key feature of politeness, see Fraser (1990) and, for a critical view, Eelen (2001: 121–187). More general importance can be attached to the concept of social norms as it has been developed in sociological, games theoretic, and evolutionary psychological thinking (Bicchieri 2006, Posner 2002, Huang and Wu 1994). See also Culpeper (2011a: 36–38) on three kinds of social norms in the social psychology literature: the norms of *equity*, *reciprocity*, and *social responsibility*.

⁴ On activity types, see Levinson (1979). Recently the theme of impoliteness has become prominent in research, and a number of researchers, among them Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2011a); Culpeper, Bousfield, and Wichmann (2003); Ilie (2004); and Bousfield (2008), have investigated how certain activity types are conducive to impoliteness, rather than to politeness.

- ❑ Hostile cross-examination in a court of law
- ❑ Heckling a speaker at a political meeting⁵

There are also situation types where impolite behavior breaks out sporadically, even though it is widely disapproved of; for example, in the UK there has been public disquiet about abusive members of the public using rude and aggressive language in addressing health professionals and other public servants.⁶

Fifth, there is a *reciprocal asymmetry* in polite behavior between two parties, A and B (in this case we will consider A to be the audience and B to be the soloist). Whatever is felt to be polite in A's behavior (in attributing high value to B) would be felt to convey the reverse of politeness if observed—on the same occasion—in B's behavior. A's behavior (clapping and cheering) in this case is meant to attribute high value to B and B's performance. B's behavior (bowing) is meant to attribute low value to B and B's performance. To give high value to the other party or to attribute low value to oneself is felt to be polite; to do the opposite—to give high value to oneself or low value to the other person—is felt to be impolite.

In Chapter 4, I will go into more detail over giving high/low value. But for the present, the idea is probably near enough to being self-explanatory. In polite utterance, the other person is considered the beneficiary and the speaker is not.

Another term I will try to explain more fully later is *politeness* itself. This word has been endlessly discussed, and no doubt it is understood somewhat differently by different people. (What is more, if an equivalent for “politeness” is sought in other languages, there are further differences to cope with.⁷) For instance, the English word *polite* is not always a commendation. Indeed, some readers may have been unhappy with my characterization of the violinist's and the audience's conventional behavior as “polite,” because “polite” in contemporary English often conveys the idea of superficial good manners purely as a matter of form. If we say “She was (just) being polite,” we imply that her polite behavior was superficial, perhaps even

⁵ This list is provided by Culpeper et al. (2003), who cite, among others, these additional references: Culpeper (1996) on army training discourse, Lakoff (1989) and Penman (1990) on courtroom discourse, Vuchinich (1986) on family discourse, Labov (1972b) on adolescent discourse, Labov and Fanshel (1978) on therapeutic discourse, and Beebe (1995) on “everyday conversation.”

⁶ There is another way in which politeness depends on the situation: other goals concerning self-presentation in interaction with the other person may conflict with politeness. For example, in certain cultures the desire to maintain an honorable “face” may lead to the avoidance of apology, which can be face-threatening to the speaker (see further 5.7). A theory of politeness as “communicative altruism” is not meant to account for all aspects of interactional behavior under the general umbrella of what Spencer-Oatey (2008) calls “rapport management,” in which concern for the other may have to be balanced against concern for oneself.

⁷ Of course, different terms for politeness exist in other languages, e.g., French *politesse*, German *Höflichkeit*. See Watts (2003: 14–16). One of the arguments against universalism is that these terms are by no means translation equivalents in all contexts, and the use of “politeness” biases discussion toward the concept of politeness in the English-speaking world. “Politeness” is still a usable term, however, in the same way that “meaning” is usable in semantics, although it can have various senses. The “technicalization” of terms in everyday vocabulary is widespread in academic discourse. See further 2.4.1 on the term *politeness* and its interpretation.

insincere. Likewise the expression “polite applause” will almost certainly convey the impression that the appreciation was not heartfelt. However, the choice of terminology is secondary to the characterization of the phenomenon being studied. Although it is not a precise fit, “politeness” fits the phenomenon I have described as “communicative altruism” fairly well, and I will continue to use it in this sense (see further discussion in 2.4.1). “Politeness” is well established as an area of research in academic circles, especially in pragmatics.

A sixth, and rather bizarre, aspect of politeness is that it can manifest itself in repetitive behavior, which is to a lesser or greater degree ritualized. The reiterative ritual of the performer’s entrances with renewed applause is one example. If we dig down to the foundations of this largely automatic ritual, we see a kind of *battle of politeness* taking place, where A and B take contradictory positions. The politeness of the audience is to prolong the applause; the politeness of the soloist manifests itself in being modest enough to acknowledge the applause with a humble posture and then to make a rapid exit as the applause dies down. But the audience, by continuing to applaud without any diminution, signals that it is not willing to let the soloist vanish from the scene like that. Hence, when the applause continues and the soloist at last returns to the stage, she enacts a ritual of yielding to the pressure of the audience. This may be repeated a number of times before the audience feels it has “given back enough value” to the performer and her performance. Other examples from personal human interaction are the ritual of repeated invitations and refusals, as in this example:

Stage (1):	A invites B	----->	B declines the invitation
Stage (2):	A re-invites B	----->	B declines again
Stage (3):	A re-re-invites B	----->	B finally accepts

In many parts of the world, such as China, this ritual is said to continue at least until the third iteration, while in English-speaking societies it is less elaborate.⁸ A further instance of such repetitive “battles of politeness” is the verbal tug of war that takes place between two diners at a restaurant, when both of them insist on paying the bill: “I’ll pay the bill”; “No, you won’t—I will”; “NO! really—I insist!”—and so on. We can say that this kind of iteration, although apparently bizarre, actually follows rather naturally from the *reciprocal asymmetry* of politeness as discussed in the fourth characteristic above:

- ❑ A attributes high value to B by offering to pay for B’s dinner
- ❑ B (responding) attributes high value to A by offering to pay for A’s dinner
- ❑ and so on

⁸ See Gu (1990: 252–253) for an example of the traditional Chinese three-times-repeated invitation. Also see Hua, Li, and Qian (2000) on similar repetitive behavior in gift offering and acceptance in Chinese.

Because of the mutually contradictory positions maintained by A and B, B cannot accept A's valuation and A cannot accept B's. The tug of war has to be played out, often by reaching some kind of compromise (e.g., "OK, but I'll pay next time").

Seventh, it is fairly central to politeness that it involves the passing of some kind of *transaction of value*⁹ between the speaker and the other party. For example, in thanking, we thank someone *FOR something*; in requesting, we make a request *FOR something*; in making an offer or invitation, we offer *something* to the addressee. The "something" referred to here is something of value (either material or abstract) that is supposed to pass from one person to the other. Traditionally, in linguistics, the study of politeness has centered on certain kinds of speech act, all of which involve such a transaction. I have already mentioned *thanks*, *requests*, and *invitations*, but there are also *compliments*, *congratulations*, *condolences*, *apologies*, *offers*, *advice*, and the like. Often the typical responses to these speech acts are also polite, but in an opposite way to the speech act itself. (Again, reciprocal asymmetry is at work.) For example, the response to a thank-you is often to deny A's owing a debt to B: "Not at all," "It was nothing," "No problem," "Don't mention it."

An eighth characteristic of politeness is its tendency to preserve a *balance*¹⁰ of value between the participants A and B. This is particularly clear in the cases of thanks and apologies, two speech acts that may be described as remedial, because they seek to rectify the sense of debt that one participant has to the other. In one case, thanking, the sense of debt arises from an act of kindness of the other party; in the other case, apology, it arises from the offense committed by the speaker, who tries to repay the debt in words. This metaphor of "repaying" "debt," deriving from commerce and finance,¹¹ can be fruitfully extended to other speech acts, where social value passing from one participant to another ultimately, though not necessarily immediately, is felt to require recompense. Going back to the concert-hall scenario, the skilled performance of the violinist "requires" immediate homage in the form of applause. If the applause continues past two or three entrances and exits by the performer, an imbalance arises between the value of the performance and the value of the applause, and so an encore (a further payment by the performer) is felt to be appropriate.

⁹ This is close to the understanding of "transaction" we find in Milroy (1980/1987: 48): "Messages which pass along network links can be seen as transactions, governed by the principle that the value gained by an individual in a transaction is equal to, or greater than, the cost. These transactions may consist of goods and services of many kinds, including greetings, civilities, jokes, information, as well as (for example) sex, child-minding services, or assistance in times of sickness and poverty."

¹⁰ Bayraktaroglu (1991) and Watts (2003), among others, have explored the idea that politeness has the function of maintaining social equilibrium. In this connection, Werkhofer (1992) sees a powerful analogy between politeness and money. It is only a short step from the physical metaphor of "balance" to the accountant's metaphor of "balance sheets." Here we can relevantly continue the quotation from Milroy in the previous note: "When goods and services flow in both directions between links, it is useful to speak of *exchange*. In this sense, most speech events are tokens of exchange. A purely transactional speech event, where messages travel in one direction only, is rare."

¹¹ See Watts (2003: 143–144) and references he makes there to Werkhofer's money analogy (1992).

Contrast this with some bigger favor such as an invitation to stay with the speaker as a guest. The hospitality can scarcely be wholly “repaid” by thanks, however profuse, and a gift is offered by the guest as a “token” of gratitude; or (usually after a delay) the invitation may be reciprocated. This kind of reciprocity, although not calculated with the rigor of the accountant’s balance sheet, represents politeness as having a potentially enduring effect on human relations in the form of social capital: a balance sheet between two people—albeit a vague and implicit balance sheet—is kept in terms of favors and debts.

1.2 Some Distinctions to Bear in Mind

We now leave the concert-hall behind, and to avoid misunderstanding, it is important to make certain distinctions.

1.2.1 TRIVALENT V. BIVALENT POLITENESS

Politeness can be seen as only part—though a major part—of a more general range of socially communicative strategies we may include under the umbrella of *rapport management*¹² or *relational work*¹³—that is, the skilled practice of establishing and maintaining good relations (*rapport*) between members of society. There is also a type of behavior similar to “transactional politeness” as already described except that it does not depend on a transaction of value.¹⁴ In reference to some Asian languages and cultures, this is called *honorification*—sometimes more simply translated into everyday English as *deference*. Honorification is very important in some societies, for example, in Japan and Korea, whose main languages (Japanese and Korean) contain elaborate honorific systems enabling speakers to show degrees of respect or deference to the addressee or to a third party. Such systems also have humiliating forms, whereby speakers humble themselves in relation to another party—thus reinforcing the stance of deference. Unlike choice of polite remarks in English, in Japanese the choice between different forms and degrees of honorification applies to all linguistic utterances. Hence it is often pointed out that in Japanese, one cannot make a remark about the weather, nor

¹² *Rapport management* is from Spencer-Oatey (2008: 12–15), who uses it as a cover term for a range of normative behaviors including “rapport maintenance” and “rapport enhancement,” subsuming politeness as generally understood.

¹³ *Relational work* is from Locher and Watts (2005).

¹⁴ There is, however, a sense in which such a transaction takes place in honorification: to use an honorific form is to pay a tribute to the other person, almost to pay a compliment. On the other hand, this is a highly grammaticalized and conventionalized politeness, where the compliment (if we can call it that) has a very generalized import, which could be verbalized as “I pay you the respect you deserve.”

observe that “Today is Saturday,” without indicating one’s social standing with respect to the addressee.¹⁵

Such a situation arises in English only in extremely restricted circumstances. As an example, in the armed forces it is considered obligatory for a member of the ranks to address an officer as *sir* or *ma’am*. In general, however, English is situated toward the opposite pole from Japanese and Korean in showing unusually limited opportunities for honorification. In English, honorific terms of address (vocatives) such as *sir* and *madam* are generally optional, and are in any case infrequent.¹⁶ Moreover, unlike French and many other European languages, English has no honorific formal/polite second-person pronoun like the French singular use of *vous* contrasting with the familiar pronoun *tu*.¹⁷

In spite of differences,¹⁸ it is often felt that honorification is a kind of polite behavior¹⁹ and deserves to be included under the same umbrella of “politeness” along with the transactional politeness already described. It accords with the definition already given, whereby polite communication involves giving value to the other person and not to oneself. It shows the mutual asymmetry already noted as a cardinal characteristic of politeness: for example, in Japanese, someone refers to his or her own name using the noun *namae*, but to the addressee’s name as *o-namae*, with the honorific prefix *o-*:

- (2) *Namae-wa Brown desu. O-namae-wa?*
 ‘My name is Brown. And yours^[+honorific] is...?’

It would be culturally virtually impossible for the speaker to reverse the positions of *namae* and *o-namae* here, giving honor to the speaker instead of the hearer.

I have therefore followed the common practice of including honorification under politeness, but at the same time there is need to separate honorification, by calling it *bivalent politeness*, from transactional politeness, which I will call *trivalent*

¹⁵ Matsumoto (1988: 415) illustrates this with three Japanese translations of *Today is Saturday*, respectively “plain”, “polite” and “superpolite”: *kyoo wa doyoobi da*; *kyoo wa doyoobi desu*; *kyoo wa doyoobi degozai masu*.

¹⁶ In a corpus study of vocatives in British and American conversation, I found (Leech 1999: 113) that honorific forms such as *sir* accounted for fewer than 1 percent of vocatives. See Table 11.2 in Chapter 11.

¹⁷ This distinction between familiar and polite/respectful second-person pronouns is found very widely across European languages apart from English, as well as in languages elsewhere in the world. It is commonly referred to as the *T/V* distinction, following the seminal study by Brown and Gilman (1960), who characterized the choice between the *T*-form and the *V*-form as being determined by the two dimensions of “power” and “solidarity” (corresponding to the dimensions of *vertical* and *horizontal* distance as used in this book).

¹⁸ One of the differences is that bivalent politeness relates to “persisting” sociolinguistic features (i.e., features relatively stable through time), whereas trivalent politeness refers to “dynamic” (pragmatic) features of language that develop over time in the course of interaction. Cf. also Kasper’s characterization (1990) of what I call bivalent politeness as having a “social indexing” function.

¹⁹ In Japanese, the term for “polite language,” *keigo*, is generally understood to refer principally to honorific usages.

politeness.²⁰ What bivalent means here is that honorific forms are normally selected on the basis of two sociopragmatic dimensions, vertical and horizontal distance (also referred to as “power” and “distance,” or “power” and “solidarity”). For example, in deciding to use an honorific form such as *sir* or *Dr. Smith*, we evaluate our relationship to the addressee in terms of horizontal social distance (on a scale going from the most intimate or familiar relationship to the most distant) and vertical social distance (on a scale going from someone with the lowest power or status relative to speaker to the highest power or status relative to speaker). The kind of politeness I have called “trivalent” and that is more central to politeness in the English-speaking world, on the other hand, involves a third dimension, which can be called the *weightiness of the transaction*. (Elsewhere I refer to this dimension as “the cost-benefit scale”). These three are arguably not the only factors determining choice of the degree of politeness, but as I will suggest in 4.5.3, additional factors can be reduced to these, which are the most important. They are well-known in debates on politeness, and are referred to by Brown and Levinson (1987), authors of the best-known monograph on politeness, as P (power) D (distance) and R (rank of imposition). P is assumed to represent a potentially asymmetric power relation between the participants in a dialogue, and D a symmetric relation. The distinction between bivalent and trivalent politeness will be further discussed in 4.6.

1.2.2 POS-POLITENESS VS. NEG-POLITENESS

Another distinction is made between the positive and the negative sides of politeness. The phrases *positive politeness* and *negative politeness*, indeed, have been very familiar in writings on politeness, as they are key terms in Brown and Levinson’s model of politeness.²¹ However, I propose to use them somewhat differently from Brown and Levinson’s usage, and to minimize confusion with their usage I will replace “positive politeness” and “negative politeness” by “pos-politeness” and “neg-politeness.” Neg-politeness is the more important type: its function is mitigation, to reduce or lessen possible causes of offense. Polite requests, for example, are polite in this negative sense: they are aimed at reducing the cause of offense that would occur if one were to express the imposition in its bluntest form. Using an imperative such as *Say that again* (the direct strategy that Brown and Levinson call “bald on record”) contrasts with, say, *Could you say that again?* where the demand is presented indirectly in the form of a question. Neg-politeness typically involves indirectness, hedging, and understatement, which are among the best-known and most-studied indicators of the polite use of language.

²⁰ Trivalent and bivalent politeness corresponds roughly to what Kasper (1990) distinguishes as “politeness as strategic conflict-avoidance” and “politeness as social indexing.” However, trivalent politeness is not merely a matter of conflict avoidance but of comity enhancement; see pos-politeness as well as neg-politeness in the next section (1.2.2).

²¹ Goffman (1956: 227–228) used these terms first, and they were subsequently adopted by Brown and Levinson (1978). See 2.2.2.

Pos-politeness, on the other hand, gives or assigns some positive value to the addressee. Offers, invitations, compliments, and congratulations, then, are examples of pos-politeness. Thank-yous and apologies are also kinds of pos-politeness, although they presuppose a position where A is deemed to owe something to B. As remedial strategies, they can be regarded as a subcategory of pos-politeness: the speaker makes a positive gesture to cancel out an imbalance favoring the speaker or disfavoring the hearer. (This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 and in 7.3.)

Neg-politeness is generally more important than pos-politeness because failure to show enough neg-politeness is likely to leave the other person with a sense of grievance (“taking offense”) and can lead to social disharmony or worse: it is a sin of commission. On the other hand, failure to show an adequate degree of positive politeness—for example, failure to congratulate the addressee on some achievement—is likely to have less disruptive consequences, being less noticeable: it is a sin of omission. However, since both pos- and neg-politeness are scalar in nature, they have varying degrees of strength or intensity, and (for example) a thank-you that is not sufficiently warm or enthusiastic can offend just as much as a request that is not sufficiently oblique.

The best way to tell the difference between neg- and pos-politeness is this. In the case of neg-politeness, to increase the degree of politeness, we *diminish* or *soften* the expression of (negative) value in the transaction. But in the case of pos-politeness we *magnify* or *strengthen* the expression of (positive) value. Thus to increase the politeness²² of our thanks, we can use various intensifying strategies:

- (4) *Thanks* → *Thanks a lot* → *Thank you very much* → *Thank you very much indeed*, etc.

(The arrows signal increasing politeness.) In both cases, there is a tendency for politeness to be associated with wordiness: the more indirect and “mitigated” a request is, the more words it is likely to contain:

- (5) *Lend me your pen.* → *Could you lend me your pen?* → *I wonder whether you would be kind enough as to lend me your pen?*²³

The same tendency to prolixity, as we see in (4) and (5), is found in expressing pos-politeness as in expressing neg-politeness: the more the speech act is intensified, the longer it gets. This correlation of indirectness and wordiness with politeness is a tendency, rather than a rule: there are counterexamples such as *Leave me alone*

²² This is what I call pragmalinguistic (or context-free) politeness, rather than sociopragmatic (or context-sensitive) politeness; see 1.2.3 and 1.2.4.

²³ These examples are from Locher and Watts (2005), who argue that *Could you lend me your pen* doesn't have to be more polite than *Lend me your pen*. I disagree with them, at least in believing that the simpler and more natural case (the default case) would show greater politeness, if what I call “pragmalinguistic politeness” is in question. Locher and Watts sum up their position (ibid.: 29) “Hence no utterance is inherently polite.” Their use of “polite” here corresponds to my “sociopragmatically polite”; see 1.2.3.

versus *How many times do I have to tell you to leave me alone?* where the longer utterance seems more impolite.

One afterthought to this section arises. I described thanks and apologies as examples of pos-politeness (because politeness is increased by intensifying the thanks or the apology). However, in one respect, these remedial speech acts resemble neg-politeness. Because they are remedies for a debt owed to the other person, failure to thank or apologize can cause a sense of grievance in the hearer, just as failure to be neg-polite (as in a directive) does. Partly for this reason, thanks and apologies are felt to be particularly salient forms of polite behavior, and *thank you* and *sorry* are among the most frequent markers of politeness in English.

My main reasons for avoiding the familiar Brown and Levinson (B&L) terms *positive politeness* and *negative politeness* are as follows. (1) There is a lack of correspondence between B&L's "positive face" and "negative face," which mars the value of this distinction. (2) The notion of *positive politeness* in B&L's scheme is too broadly defined, to include a wide range of solidarity-building strategies, which in this book come under such headings as "camaraderie," "endearment," and "banter." My objections under (1) and (2) are further discussed in 1.2.6.2 (on face) and 4.4.2 (on pos- vs. positive politeness).

1.2.3 PRAGMALINGUISTICS VS. SOCIOPRAGMATICS

Is politeness a linguistic phenomenon, or a social/cultural phenomenon? The obvious answer is that it is both, but there are two subdomains we may call "pragmalinguistics" and "sociopragmatics,"²⁴ one oriented to linguistic realizations of politeness, and the other oriented to the social or cultural determinants of politeness. This corresponds to a more familiar distinction, in linguistics, between *context-free* and *context-sensitive*, or between *form* and *function*.

Let's consider this distinction in more detail. Politeness can first be studied as to how it is conveyed or manifested, linguistically: this is *pragmalinguistics*. English speakers, for example, frequently make use of questions, modal auxiliaries, and hypothetical past tense forms of the verb in expressing a polite request. The request form *Could you write it down for me?* illustrates all three of these features. We can give good reasons for these features contributing to politeness. First, the question form, in principle, consults the hearer and gives the opportunity for the hearer to say *yes* or *no*, i.e., to comply with the request or to refuse. Second, the modal auxiliary *Can* or *Could* means that the question is about the hearer's *ability* to comply with the request, rather than *willingness*; hence, in principle, another opportunity to refuse is offered, in that the hearer could reasonably reply without offending the previous speaker that he or she cannot carry out the speaker's wishes (for lack of paper, or of time, and so on). Third, the use of the hypothetical past tense (*could*

²⁴ These terms were originally used by Thomas (1983) and Leech (1983).

instead of *can*) places the request, in principle, in a possible world different from the world of reality—thereby distancing the request from the here-and-now and from direct imposition. Other factors to bear in mind in investigating pragmalinguistics are the frequency and the degree of conventionalization or idiomatization (a process I will refer to more technically as *pragmaticalization*) associated with the lexicogrammatical form of the sentence. Although semantically the formula *Could you X* incorporates various strategies of neg-politeness for apparently mitigating the imposition on the hearer, in practice it has become highly conventionalized, so that it is simply understood as articulating a request in a formulaic, albeit reasonably polite form. In other languages, e.g., in Spanish, such conventionally indirect formulae are less conventionalized, and less frequently used (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989: 47–49). The formulaic expression of politeness has gone further in tokens such as *please* and *thank you*, which have been reduced through pragmaticalization.²⁵ Historically, these can be seen to have emerged from polite utterances with lexicogrammatical structure: *I thank you* and *if you please*.

Pragmalinguistics thus concerns such phenomena as the range of lexico-grammatical resources of the language, their meanings, their degree of pragmaticalization, their frequency, and how they are deployed as linguistic strategies of politeness. *Contrastive* pragmalinguistics analyzes and compares the linguistic resources for politeness available, and their use, in different languages.

The socially oriented facet of politeness, on the other hand, is studied by *socio-pragmatics*. More particularly, here are studied the various scales of value that make a particular degree of politeness seem appropriate or normal in a given social setting.

We have already noted in 1.2.1 three scales of value that have this role: the scales of horizontal and vertical distance between speaker and addressee, and the weightiness of the transaction. Clearly, for sociocultural reasons the evaluation of a situation in terms of these scales will affect the degree of politeness. Variation in age, gender, social class, and locality will all have a potential impact; and judgments about weightiness will also depend on a range of cultural factors. From a cross-cultural perspective, it is generally held that English-speaking cultures place more weight on the autonomy of the individual²⁶ than do most other cultures, so

²⁵ See 3.7 for further discussion of pragmaticalization, a process of diachronic change that has similarities with grammaticalization (Hopper and Traugott 1993/2003). Pragmaticalization, like grammaticalization, is associated with phonetic reduction and merger of linguistic forms. See also Watts (2003: 176).

²⁶ Here a relevant model for studying pragmatic competence is that presented by Hofstede and Hofstede (2005)—where culture is studied in terms of dimensions of value, including power-distance and collectivism versus individualism—see further 2.2.5, fn. 5; and 4.1. In this sociological study the four inner-circle English-speaking countries, the United States, Australia, Great Britain, and Canada (including French-speaking Quebec), rate highest on the individualism scale (out of seventy-one countries). Individualism is associated with the high evaluation of privacy, and preserving the integrity of the individual from encroachment. On a more popular level, Fox (2004: 43) claims that “it is impossible to overstate the importance of privacy in English culture.”

that avoidance of direct imposition on the hearer in directives (in keeping with what in 4.3.1 is called the Tact Maxim) shows especially elaborate development in English. In many other cultures, however, more weight is placed on the value of generosity, for example, showing oneself to be generous in offers and invitations. This is just one simple example of what is to be studied in the domain of sociopragmatics. The main point to observe here is that sociopragmatics is concerned not so much with the resources of language used to express politeness, as with the scales of value that cause a culture to assign more social importance to certain transactions than to others. Comparative sociopragmatics is often called “cross-cultural pragmatics,” as it compares not languages but cultures: that is, it compares the levels of value that cultures and subcultures apply to determine the appropriate degree of politeness.

As the example of English requests shows, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics are not to be studied in isolation from one another. They are both *facets* of pragmatics: one facing toward language and the other toward society. A key part of the study of politeness is to investigate how they interconnect: how the pragmalinguistic resources of a language enable cultural values to be expressed.

Often the phrase *communicative competence* (Hymes 1966) is used to denote the kind of knowledge or capability people possess in being able to use a language appropriately and successfully. Of this, *pragmatic competence*, in addition to linguistic competence, is a major part. As far as politeness is concerned, I have indicated that pragmatic competence is not all of one piece: actually, it consists of two closely connected types of capability, which can be called *pragmalinguistic competence* and *sociopragmatic competence*.

1.2.4 PRAGMALINGUISTIC VS. SOCIOPRAGMATIC POLITENESS

What I called “absolute” and “relative” politeness in Leech (1983), I now prefer to call *pragmalinguistic* and *sociopragmatic* politeness.²⁷ Let me explain. If we look at the examples in (4) and (5) in 1.2.2 above, we see there is a step-by-step increase in politeness: *Thanks* is somewhat less polite than *Thanks a lot*, *Thanks a lot* is somewhat less polite than *Thank you very much*, and so on. Or is it? In the politeness literature, there has been much criticism of the concept of “absolute politeness,” as I unwisely called it in Leech (1983). It has been said that there is no such thing as a polite utterance out of its context.²⁸ Certainly, it can be urged that even an

²⁷ The term *absolute politeness* as opposed to *relative politeness* used in Leech (1983: 83–84, 102) has led to much criticism and misunderstanding. Hence I avoid these terms in this book.

²⁸ Locher (2006: —250–251) and Locher and Watts (2008) have maintained that “There is no linguistic behavior that is inherently polite or impolite”. Absolute politeness has been rejected also by Wierzbicka (1991/2003), Watts (2003), and Mills (2003). Watts (2003: 166) argues that “there are no objective criteria for determining politic behavior [*politic behavior* being the term he uses for normal politeness]. There are also no purely subjective criteria, since social practice is always and only *interactive*.” And Mills (2003: 4) maintains that “it is only participants in specific communities of practice who are competent to judge whether a language item or phrase is polite for them or not.... Communities of

utterance like *Thank you very much* can be impolite in certain contexts. For example, *Thank you (very much)* can be intended ironically, as a complaint against someone who has just caused you offense, as in this dialogue between mother (Sarah) and daughter (Clare):

- (6) “If I were ever to get accused of any crime . . .”
 “Hmm?”
 “I hope to God I wouldn’t get landed with anyone like you on the jury.”
 Oh, her daughter could be a little charmer, couldn’t she?
 “Thank you, Clare,” said Sarah.

[from Simon Brett, *After Henry*, London: Penguin Books, 1987, p. 100]

(Notice that Sarah’s interior monologue in the fourth line of this passage is also ironic.)

We could not say that, in (6), *Thank you very much* would be more polite than *Thanks*. The argument against pragmalinguistic politeness is that it is always possible to think of a context in which a supposedly polite utterance can be used impolitely. But this, I argue, is throwing the baby out with the bath water. If we consider *Thank you* semantically, it amounts to an expression of gratitude (= “I thank you”). When *very much* is added, an intensification of this is expressed, and so linguistically and semantically the meaning of *Thank you very much* is more polite than that of *Thank you*. It is true that in some exceptional contexts this will not be interpreted as a polite utterance. Ironical remarks, for example, reverse the normal values of polite and impolite. But irony/sarcasm, as I will argue in 8.3, is a special case, a second-order principle exploiting the phenomenon of politeness. As a default judgment, we can make statements comparing degrees of politeness out of context (see 3.4), and on that basis it would be foolish to deny the everyday observation that *Thank you very much* expresses a greater degree of politeness than *Thanks*.²⁹ Pragmalinguistic politeness is assessed on the basis of the meaning of the utterance *out of context*³⁰; but it is important to note that only *relative* and not *absolute* degrees of politeness can be recognized. If an utterance basically conveys a certain degree

practice are in a constant process of change, determined by the actions and assessments of individual members in relation to the group.”

²⁹ See Jaszczolt (2002: 247–251; 2005) on default thinking semantics and pragmatics; also Levinson (2000) on “presumptive meaning.” For further discussion, see 3.4, and 9.2, where I report an experiment eliciting judgments of politeness out of context.

³⁰ “Pragmalinguistic” might be questioned here. Surely such judgment of meaning out of context should be labeled “semantic.” However, because pragmalinguistic politeness implies an evaluative judgment about speaker and hearer, it does involve *S* and *H* as pragmatic entities, and cannot be divorced from general considerations of context. In terms of Levinson’s theory of presumptive meaning, it belongs to utterance-type meaning rather than utterance-token meaning (Levinson: 2000). It might also be queried whether a term other than “politeness” should be used for pragmalinguistic politeness—say, courtesy, civility, mannerliness, consideration. All I can say here is that I have tried using such partial synonyms of politeness, and I find they obscure more than they clarify. Polysemy of politeness is something we have to live with, as (I would argue) speakers of English do in ordinary everyday usage.

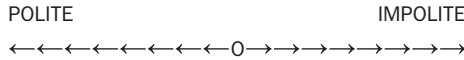


FIGURE 1.1. The bipolar scale of sociopragmatic politeness.

of politeness, this can be strengthened (in the case of pos-politeness) by semantic intensification (for example, adding *very much*) or (in the case of neg-politeness) by semantic hedging and toning down (for example, adding *a little bit*). Thus, of the three utterances below (partly modeled on example (5) in 1.2.2 above), we can say with confidence that, on default interpretations, (7a) is less polite than (7b), and (7b) is less polite than (7c)³¹:

- (7a) *Lend me your pen.* →
- (7b) *Could I borrow your pen?* →
- (7c) *I wonder if I could just borrow your pen for a moment?*

Pragmalinguistic politeness provides an easy entry into the study of politeness: for example, learners of English as a foreign language would be badly served if they were told nothing can be said about the relatively different degrees of politeness associated with the forms of language, such as (7a–c), and their meanings.

On the other hand, *sociopragmatic politeness* (or “relative politeness” as I called it in 1983) is a matter of judging politeness in context. Consider the case where A has lent B something of little value—say, a pen to write a signature—and the contrasting case where A has lent B something of great value—say, a holiday home where B’s family can stay for a month. In the former case, *Thanks* would be considered an adequate expression of gratitude, whereas in the latter it would not. By contrast, in the same case *Thank you very much indeed* would be considered overpolite in the former case, but not so in the latter case. This example makes the obvious point that social judgments of politeness depend not just on the words used and their meanings but also on the context in which they are used (and also such matters as prosody and word stress). Sociopragmatic politeness is politeness relative to the situation, and it can be evaluated on a bipolar scale. In principle, “appropriate politeness” can be seen as the zero-point of a scale, from which we can recognize degrees of underpoliteness going toward the negative pole, and degrees of overpoliteness going toward the positive pole (Figure 1.1).

In practice, we use the adjective *polite* to describe behavior that is toward the positive end of the scale, and *impolite* or *rude* to describe behavior that is toward the negative end of the scale. Pragmalinguistic politeness, on the other hand, is a unidirectional scale (Figure 1.2).

In this case, at the bottom end of the scale, at the zero point marked “O” is nonpoliteness. In the case of thanking, the minimal or “O” point is the absence

³¹ There are good reasons for regarding these as ordered in terms of politeness as stated; see 4.2.2 and 9.2. For further consideration of the lexi-grammatical strategies in these utterances, see 6.3.



FIGURE 1.2. The unipolar scale of pragmalinguistic politeness.

of any expression of gratitude. At the top end of the scale there is no end point (as the concept of “maximum politeness” makes no sense; we could always go on intensifying), but there are degrees of pragmalinguistic politeness in the expression of gratitude, as already shown, and on the whole people can make consistent judgments in comparing the pragmalinguistic politeness of one utterance and another.³² When the utterances are placed in a clearly delineated context, however, the judgment of relative politeness is likely to be sharper. Although there is clearly a strong correlation between degrees of pragmalinguistic politeness and degrees of sociopragmatic politeness, there are always exceptional cases where the correlation fails, as in ironic (or sarcastic) remarks:

(7d) *I wonder whether you would be so very kind as to sit still for a moment?*

This utterance seems so excessively polite (by most standards) in requesting a small favor that its overpoliteness may trigger a hostile, ironic interpretation. The implication could be that the hearer has been excessively fidgety, and the speaker’s patience is running out.

1.2.5 ADDRESSEE POLITENESS VS. THIRD-PERSON POLITENESS

In much of the discussion above, I have assumed that politeness is directed toward the hearer(s) or addressee(s) of an utterance. This is the usual case, but a minute’s thought will yield examples where the person who is the “target” of politeness is not the addressee but some *third person(s)*, i.e., neither the speaker nor the addressee. The third person(s) may be someone present during the speech event; for example, a speaker addressing a husband and wife may pay a compliment to their daughter who is standing nearby (*God does she look gorgeous*).³³ In other cases, the third person(s) may also be someone who is absent, and therefore incapable of appreciating the polite remark. Several kinds of third-person politeness are illustrated here³⁴:

- (a) Third-person honorifics: *I’m hoping to meet her Ladyship this evening; May I speak to Professor X, please?* etc.

³² This is shown in tests carried out by Walters (1979), Carrell and Konneker (1981), and Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) on both native speakers and nonnative speakers; also, my own limited test of judgments of politeness out of context is reported in 9.2.

³³ The example is from Locher and Watts (2005: 25–26).

³⁴ Superficially similar to third-person politeness are cases of polite third-person address, which are, however, quite different. One of the well-known forms of honorification is the use of third-person pronouns (such as German *Sie*) or noun phrases as a substitute for the second-person pronoun, e.g.,

- (b) Proxy requests, invitations, thank-yous, etc., where the addressee, intermediary, is asked to relay the message on to the third person: *Please give my best wishes to X. Would you please thank X for me? Please pass on my deepest apologies to X.*
- (c) A political apology (see 5.7)—where a politician or a head of state apologizes to a whole population for (for example) a war crime. Many victims who are intended recipients of the apology may not read or hear the apology; many may even be dead.
- (d) Various kinds of written texts, where the writer shows politeness to someone who may happen to read, or not to read the text: e.g., blogs, newspapers, academic books, articles, and so on: *Congratulations to all who solved last Monday's puzzle.*

Cases (a)–(d) have different characteristics, but collectively show how the demarcation lines between addressees and third-person recipients of politeness can be blurred. Case (b) can be excluded from the list, if we take the view that a proxy speech act is actually a request for the hearer to perform another speech act, such as thanking, *on behalf of* the speaker. And yet here, the real transaction of politeness is between the speaker and the third person(s), rather than between the speaker and the addressee. Cases (c) and (d) illustrate the problem of identifying the beneficiary of politeness in the case of written or broadcast texts whose target audience is vague and potentially open-ended.

A further factor blurring the edges is this. When third-person politeness occurs on a personal level (e.g., in private conversation) it is likely to be because the third-person recipient is in some way affiliated with the addressee, and so the addressee in practice by extension may be thought to include the third person. For example, a speaker might praise (or mitigate criticism of) a member of the hearer's family; the hearer's friend; the hearer's native land; the club, society or association the hearer belongs to; or the institution in which the hearer works, such as a university:

- (8) *I see York beat Lancaster again in the games.*

The Universities of York and Lancaster have a “local derby” in which they contest various sports. If (8) is said by the vice-chancellor of York to the vice-chancellor of Lancaster, it may be felt somewhat impolite, as the former is boasting about his renewed success over the latter (although, in fact, the vice-chancellor did not take part in any of the sports: he is boasting *on behalf of* “his” sports players). On the other hand, if (8) is said by the vice-chancellor of Lancaster to the vice-chancellor

Would the young gentleman please step this way? This is extremely rare in English today, although it has survived in the use of *the Right Honourable Member for...* and similar third-person address forms in the British parliament. However, despite the obliquity, here it is the *addressee*, not a third person, who is the target of politeness. For further discussion from a historical viewpoint, see 11.3 and 11.4.

of York, he may be felt to be somewhat polite, in being modest and gracefully admitting defeat. A yet further interpretation may be that the two are close friends who like to joke at one another's expense about their universities' sporting rivalries. In that case, no judgment about politeness will be involved, and this will come under the heading of *banter* (see 8.4).

This kind of phenomenon is often discussed in the politeness literature under the heading of "in-group vs. out-group," or alternatively "me-territory" and "you-territory." In traditional Japanese society, for example, the in-group concept has a powerful influence on politeness, including the use of honorifics³⁵: the speaker's family is by association part of his or her in-group, and so in addressing an out-group member, a *pater familias* has to apply the conventional self-abasement not only to himself but to his wife and children. It would be virtually unthinkable to apply the honorific word for wife *okusan* or *okusama* ("lady wife") to one's own spouse. The practice of making laudatory remarks about one's spouse or partner, not unusual in the West, would likewise be scandalous to the traditional Japanese. This polite abasement of the speaker's in-group may be foreign to English speakers, but the corresponding polite ascription of value to the hearer's in-group is not; for example, there is nothing odd about congratulating parents on their children's examination success. In fact, failure to do so could be regarded as a *faux pas*.

This is a convenient point at which to explain my use of the abbreviations *S* ("speaker") and *H* ("hearer") and *O* ("other"). The first two are commonly used in pragmatics to identify respectively the initiator and the addressee of an utterance. I will use *H* in this sense from time to time throughout this book, especially when discussing particular examples, but will also use *O* as a more inclusive symbol, subsuming *H*. When discussing recipients of politeness in general, I will use the abbreviation *O* (for "other person") instead of *H*. The abbreviations *S*, *H*, and *O* can also be conveniently extended to plural as well as singular participants, and to discourse in written form as well as in speech. Thus *S* will be interpreted as "speaker(s) or writer(s)"; *H* will be interpreted as "addressee(s), whether hearer(s) or reader(s)"; and *O* will be interpreted as covering both addressee(s) and third person(s), when they are the recipient(s) of politeness. An added advantage of *O* is that, as an umbrella term for addressee(s) or third person(s), it avoids the potential for confusion in distinguishing these two categories of politeness recipient. Hence I will use *S* and (particularly) *O* very broadly, but this is precisely the kind of broad interpretation, I maintain, that is appropriate for the general understanding of politeness.

³⁵ Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 74) associate collectivist societies with the power of the group over the individual. Such societies are strongly associated with in-group culture, based ultimately on the extended family. The high rating of PDI (Power Distance Index) associated with collectivist societies tends to be negatively correlated (ibid. p. 78) with the Individualism Index (IDV), which, naturally enough, tends to be associated with individualistic societies, particularly inner-circle English-speaking societies. For a historically based study of the strong association between individualism and Western European societies, especially that of England, see Macfarlane (1978, 1994).

1.2.6 SOCIAL VS. PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF POLITENESS

The last distinction I want to consider briefly in this opening chapter concerns the underlying function of politeness. Of the two major functional explanations of politeness that have been put forward, one is social and the other is essentially psychological. But, as I will argue, these explanations are quite compatible with one another; we do not have to choose between them.

1.2.6.1 The Social Explanation of Politeness: Comity

Let's begin with the social explanation. The argument here is that politeness is a safeguard against disruptive forces in society.³⁶ Lakoff (1990: 34) defines politeness as "a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange."

The one word I would take issue with in Lakoff's definition is "designed." There can be no implication, from a scientific point of view, that politeness is a result of conscious *design*. However, much research in evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology has laid stress on the advantages that accrue to human societies through cooperation and companionship in comparatively large social groups. By "comparatively large" is meant here "of the order of 150 or more": this figure, admittedly imprecise, is that arrived at by Dunbar (1996), whose thesis is that the evolution of language empowered the human race to develop larger social groups than other species (including other primates), enabling social bonding and collaboration to take place on a much larger scale in complex societies.

It is generally assumed that forms of politeness occur in all societies. This is even conceded by Watts (2003),³⁷ who is generally averse to universalist claims. On the other hand, no one has, to my knowledge, claimed that politeness is characteristic of other animal species.³⁸ This is not surprising, as politeness depends on highly developed social systems, as well as on the existence of forms of symbolic behavior, such as gesture and language. However, the origin of politeness probably goes back to *cooperation* and *altruism* (or unselfishness), which have been observed as functional forces not only in social groups of *homo sapiens* but of other species as well. By cooperation is meant the phenomenon of human beings acting together in pursuit of common goals. It is obvious that our species relies on cooperation, a form of behavior in which individuals contribute to a common benefit, for many aspects of the functioning of society. For example, the exchange of goods (barter) and its more abstract symbolic development (money) are clearly forms of cooperation that serve the interests of individuals involved in trade. Evolutionary, social, and games theorists (e.g., Hamilton 1963, Axelrod 1984/2006, Pinker 2011: 532–536)

³⁶ As Eelen (2001) discusses critically, this social explanation of politeness is associated with Lakoff, Leech, and others.

³⁷ Watts (2003: 261): "So (im)politeness, must be universal."

³⁸ An exception may be the appeasement behavior (equivalent to human bowing or kowtowing) associated with certain animal species; see Sparks (1982: 112–113, 208).

have proposed explanations of how cooperative and altruistic behavior has evolved, but the matter will not be further pursued here.

Altruism is generally considered to refer to actions that are beneficial to some other individual(s), but not to the actor himself or herself. Games theory (Axelrod 1984/2006) has shown how cooperative behavior that nevertheless punishes noncooperation (the so-called “tit for tat” or “do as you would be done by” strategy) gives the advantage to altruism against alternative strategies, by establishing and maintaining an “evolutionary stable environment” that on average cannot be bettered.

In the first instance reciprocal altruism must have developed as “cooperation with a memory.” For example, one person “altruistically” provides a benefit to another without expecting any immediate payment or compensation. However, this is not an unconditional gift; if no recompense is returned, the antisocial “cheat” who obtains favors but does not reciprocate is judged culpable and may be punished through ouster from the group. It has been suggested, too, that third-party observers may play a role in this blackballing of cheats: the reputation of being antisocial may spread to a whole group, not just to the perpetrator’s victim. We note already here a similarity to politeness phenomena: a harmful deed should bring group-sanctioned retaliation, but a way to avoid this is by a timely apology, from which the perpetrator may also benefit socially in being reputed a polite, socially well-integrated individual. In this way a mutually beneficial equilibrium can be maintained, something beneficial to the society as a whole.

It should be emphasized, though, that the preceding sketch is based on cooperation and altruism as general evolutionary outcomes, not specific to *homo sapiens*. Is human politeness as we see it today an outcome of this inheritance? If so, it is a very indirect development, hugely dependent on advanced communication through language and on cultural transmission among human societies, and only more distantly on the genetic code that we inherit from our remote hunter-gatherer pleistocene³⁹ ancestors. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that the genetically programmed mechanisms of cooperation—supremely, the ability to use language—must have developed at a time when human communities were restricted to small groups of probably fewer than 150⁴⁰—a far cry from the global megacommunities of today.

³⁹ The argument is from evolutionary psychology—that anything confined to the general human gene pool would have to have originated in comparatively recent evolutionary history, which nevertheless dates from prehistoric (Pleistocene) periods of the human race. See Dunbar (1996: 114, 151).

⁴⁰ Dunbar (1996, 2004: 192) suggests that language evolved to facilitate the bonding of larger groups. The main planks of his argument are that (1) among primates, social group size appears to be limited by the neocortex; (2) the size of the human social network appears to be limited to about 150; (3) the time spent on social grooming by primates is directly related to group size because it plays a crucial role in bonding; and (4) language evolved, with the evolutionary growth of the neocortex, among humans to replace social grooming because the grooming time required by our large groups would have made impossible demands on our time.

Nowadays the group with which we behave cooperatively includes large numbers of strangers whom we have never met before, and from whom we can expect no benefits in the future. Yet cooperative and altruistic communication, in one sense, seems natural. Consider these two cases:

CASE A. I see that Ms. X, sitting near me on the train, has bought a cup of coffee and a sandwich from the buffet car. I have just gotten on the train, and don't know which way to walk to buy myself a coffee. I ask her where the buffet car is. She points toward the front of the train, and I walk in that direction, with every confidence that she will have told me the truth rather than a lie.

CASE B. I am driving my car in a congested area of a city. I reach a T-intersection, and wish to move into the main road ahead, but alas my way is blocked by a long line of cars moving very slowly in a line. After a short while, however, Mr. Y, one of the drivers of the vehicles in the queue, slows down and signals to me to drive in front of him to join the main road.

In case A, without the assumption of cooperation, there is a 50 percent chance that Ms. X will give me the wrong information. In case B, without altruism, I am likely to be kept waiting for a very long time. Yet because of cooperation and altruism, my expectations in both cases are high for a more favorable outcome, which in practice is fulfilled. In case A, Ms. X shows cooperative behavior in giving the truthful answer rather than the untruthful one (see Appendix, A1.2 on the truthfulness maxims, or Quality Maxims, of Grice's Cooperative Principle). But there is no altruism here; there is no sense in which Ms. X has sacrificed some benefit due to herself for my sake. In case B, Mr. Y shows altruistic behavior: whereas it would have marginally benefited him to bar my entry into the stream of traffic, he sacrifices this small benefit to himself while I push in front of him.

It is difficult to say at what stage the system of politeness, as a social institution, developed—but the step from altruism to “communicative altruism” seems to have been a natural one, contributing to the avoidance of discord and to the cohesion of social groups even though language gave no guarantee that symbolically expressed altruism was sincere and would be followed through in action.

Some writers (e.g., Watts 2003: 50–53) have opposed the “social cohesion” explanation of politeness, and have instead favored the view that there is a strong association between politeness and the exercise of power. Watts (e.g., 2003: 11, 13, 73) also repeatedly characterizes the exercise of politeness as a struggle for hegemony.⁴¹ My own view, however, is that this is a second-order phenomenon; only when one has explained the “communicatively altruistic” view of politeness can one explain how it can be exploited strategically in the exercise of, or struggle for, power. Much polite behavior takes place in private conversational contexts where no power

⁴¹ Many of the discourses discussed by Watts (2003) as examples of politeness conveniently fit this view, as they are taken from media events (e.g., interviews of politicians), some of which are confrontational (see pp. 6–7, 135–138, 202, 214, 218–220, 237–246).

factor is at issue. And let it once again be stressed that “communicative altruism” is not altruism; politeness is perfectly compatible with (though, in my view, not especially motivated by) egotistical drives and the exercise of power.

1.2.6.2 The Psychological Explanation of Politeness: Face

The foregoing social explanation of politeness might be considered sufficient in itself, without resort to an additional psychological level of explanation. But clearly the group tendency to avoid discord and seek concord has to be enacted through *individually* motivated acts of politeness—a psychological matter. The concept of *face* proposes itself at this point as the psychological correlate of the social comity factor just discussed.

The best-known theory of politeness, that of Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]), is founded on the psychological notion of *face*,⁴² and many other writers on politeness, including more than a few who disagree with Brown and Levinson’s characterization of “face,” adopt a face-based approach. Face is assumed to be a positively evaluated property possessed by individual human beings. Brown and Levinson took as their starting point Goffman’s definition of *face* (1967) as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.” However, Goffman went on to say that face was something lent to the individual by society, and Gu (1990), commenting on face from the Chinese viewpoint (face being a concept borrowed from Chinese), maintains that face is something belonging to society rather than to the individual. In any case, although face is projected as an element of the psychology of the individual, it is very much a reflection of the individual’s relation to other individuals and to society.

Brown and Levinson went on to distinguish between *negative* and *positive* face, as seen in the accompanying box.

Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to nondistraction—i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or “personality” (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61)

In practice this definition has been much criticized, and, as explained in 1.2.2, I have already tried to redefine the boundary between negative and positive

⁴² On the Chinese origin and conception of face, see Gu (1990), Mao (1994). According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 89ff.), face is associated with collectivist societies. The Chinese societal view of face is illustrated by this quotation from Ho (1976): “Face is lost when the individual either through his action or that of people closely related to him, fails to meet essential requirements placed on him by virtue of the social position he occupies.”

politeness differently, renaming them “neg-politeness” and “pos-politeness.” Here is my definition of face:

Face is the positive self-image or self-esteem that a person enjoys as a reflection of that person’s estimation by others.⁴³

Negative face goal: the goal of avoiding loss of face. (Loss of face is a lowering of that self-esteem, as a result of the lowering of that person’s estimation in the eyes of others.)

Positive face goal: the goal of gaining or enhancing face (i.e., the heightening or maintaining of a person’s self-esteem, as a result of the heightening or maintaining of that person’s estimation in the eyes of others.)

However, the important points are these:

- (a) Although Brown and Levinson define face as a property of a “model person,” I assume that, even if abstract and hugely influenced by social context, face has to be considered a psychological property of real people. If I lose face, it is I that experience loss of face at first hand; other people may observe my loss of face, and indeed may have played a part in causing it, but it is not *their* loss of face.⁴⁴
- (b) Having described face as a person’s “psychological property,” we have to make clear that it is a part of our psychological make-up that depends on, and feeds back into, our rapport with other people in the social environment.
- (c) Brown and Levinson’s conception of politeness is that it is a way of protecting face against *face-threatening acts* (FTAs). For example, a directive such as *Fetch me that book* is an FTA, threatening the addressee’s freedom from imposition. So a polite move would be to mitigate that threat, by using an indirect directive: *Would you mind fetching me that book?*

However, face-threat mitigation (the negative aspect of politeness) is only one side of the coin. The other side is face enhancement (see e.g., Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997), as in compliments, invitations, condolences, and the like. Unlike Brown and Levinson, I see face-threat mitigation as the function of neg-politeness only, whereas face

⁴³ In this sense, face relies on one’s ability to evaluate how one appears from the viewpoint of another participant (cf. Arundale 2006). This, in turn, relies on *theory of mind* (see Sperber and Wilson 2004: 623–635, Sodian and Kristen 2010), the ability to attribute mental states not only to oneself but to others, which undeniably applies to humanity, but only doubtfully to other species.

⁴⁴ This, of course, is considering face on an individual level. There are also circumstances of collective face loss and face maintenance—for example, where a nation, a profession, or a business suffers face loss due to some crime committed by its members—in which case face loss may be felt by the individual members of that organization. Similar is the case where face loss may occur by “contamination”—for example, where loss of face by a family member has a knock-on effect in face loss by other family members. (See the discussion of official/public apologies in 5.7). In all such cases, however, the loss of face is felt, psychologically, in the last analysis by individuals.

enhancement is the function of pos-politeness. For Brown and Levinson, positive politeness is simply an additional set of strategies for avoiding face threat. Thus for the two sides of face, Brown and Levinson perceive an imbalance, whereas for me the two sides are mirror images of one another.

For me, too, the two explanations of politeness—social and psychological—are not competing alternatives. The social theory of politeness helps to show why politeness has a function in human society, and why politeness is a more “normal” phenomenon than impoliteness. However, if politeness is to predominate over impoliteness, the psychological disposition toward politeness and cooperation has to be implanted in the individual. This disposition, which we call face, is acquired by children in the socialization process. To complete this brief account, there are two missing pieces of the jigsaw.

First, how does the connection between face in the individual and comity in the social community get established? The most helpful theoretical account here is that of Parsons (1966: 5), discussed in Eelen (1999: 240ff.), whose *cybernetic hierarchy* explains how cultural and social systems (the upper part of the hierarchy) exert regulative influence over the lower part—that of the personality system and the behavioral organism (the lower part of the hierarchy). However, according to Parsons, the influence is only partly top-down; there is also a bottom-up influence from the individual’s domain to the social domain. The important point, here, is that social and psychological tendencies toward politeness are mutually supporting: the preservation of face and the preservation of comity are intimately interconnected.

The second piece of the jigsaw is, How has the evolution of politeness—so widely observed in human societies and languages—come about? The sociopsychological theory of Bourdieu’s *habitus* is useful here (1977, 1991). Bourdieu defined *habitus* in these terms (1977: 72):

...systems of durable, transposable disposition, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structure of practices and representations which can be objectively “regulated” and “regular” without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

Another explanation, in some ways equivalent, though from a very different intellectual background, is that of the *meme* (Blackmore 1999, Dawkins 1976/1989: 192–201), inspired by evolutionary genetics. Just as genes, or gene complexes, are the replicators in the Darwinian struggle of survival and natural selection, so memes or meme complexes are the replicators in the “cultural natural selection” process that developed in prehistoric human communities. According to this view, memes are cultural phenomena (including skills, artifacts, theories, religions) that may prosper and spread in societies according to their value to the survival of their human hosts,

even though their persistence may not be due to any conscious design. The survival value of politeness to the community where it was established could have led to its spread and eventual institutionalization, without the necessity of any planned dissemination by its adherents.

Maintaining face gives individuals the motivation to be polite, and hence (by the social theory of politeness) it contributes to the cohesion and stability of human societies. Politeness contributes to face on two levels. On the first level, politeness serves the face of *O*. On the second level, it also serves the face of *S*. This is because politeness is judged as a socially desirable quality,⁴⁵ a social norm in the evaluative sense, raising the esteem in which *S* is held by *O* and by observers generally. The social explanation and the psychological explanation of politeness work together to give a fuller understanding of how politeness functions, both for the individual and for society. Together, they explain why politeness exists.

For those who feel unconvinced by this account of politeness as a beneficent force, I refer to historian of language and cognition Steven Pinker's book *The Better Angels of our Nature* (2011), which itemizes in horrific mathematical detail the violence, aggression, genocide, hate crimes, and atrocities with which the history of the human race is disfigured. There is no doubt that homo sapiens has been, and remains, uniquely a species that both commits and suffers from (often) horrific violence inflicted by some of its members on others. From this, we can argue that politeness, far from being just the icing on the cake, is a needful ingredient of human society. The more surprising message from Pinker (2011), again documented in great historical detail, is that over the millennia and the centuries, the amount of violence perpetrated by man on man has decreased remarkably.

Controversies remain over the details, but today no biologist doubts that evolutionary dynamics like mutualism, kinship, and various forms of reciprocity can select for psychological faculties that, under the right circumstances, can lead people to co-exist peacefully. (573)

Personally, I believe that politeness, building on empathy (572–592) and theory of mind (see Sodian and Kristen 2010), is one of those forms of reciprocity.

⁴⁵ Social norms can be associated with observed statistical norms: "Norms are standards for behavior that exist within a group or category of people... the norm is statistical: it indicates the choice made by the majority" (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005: 21).

Politeness

VIEWPOINTS

I cannot find a better way to begin this chapter than quoting the words with which Richard Watts begins his book *Politeness* (2003):

Writing an introduction to politeness is like being in mortal combat with a many-headed hydra. You've barely severed one head when a few more grow in its place.

—Preface (p. xi)

There is, indeed, something particularly baffling and many-sided about this topic—as the list of considerations regarding politeness in the previous chapter may have already suggested. Politeness inhabits a multidimensional space, within which most of the variables are difficult to pin down. Publications in the field are typically beset by fundamental issues that might be called philosophical, or to use Eelen's term (2001), metatheoretical: What is the nature of politeness? Does it belong to linguistics, sociology, social psychology, cultural history, anthropology? Does politeness lie in the mind of the speaker, the hearer, both, or neither? Can one build a coherent theory of politeness, and if so, what theoretical stance should be taken? I confront such issues in this and the following two chapters.

Oddly, the theory and the basic premises of study do not seem to define themselves more clearly over time. As pioneers of modern politeness studies, Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1978) put forward a rather clearly articulated theory, and it is probably still true to say that up to the present time no one has produced a better one. Twenty-five years later, Watts, a severe critic of Brown and Levinson, ends his book (2003: 262) by admitting that his is not a “better theory” than preceding ones, and indeed he as good as admits that politeness is incapable of systematic study.¹ Although B&L (as I will call them throughout, for brevity's sake) have not contributed further to their framework since a reissued edition with

¹ See the discussion of Watts in 2.2.11. He states: “there are no objective criteria for determining politic behavior [his term for normal politeness]. There are also no purely subjective criteria, since social

a preface came out in 1987, their monograph remains the landmark publication to which all new publications, it seems, look back. Yet B&L's theory is recognizably flawed and has been attacked from all sides. Later authors almost inevitably spend time pointing out its inadequacies. I have also done this in Leech (2007), and, while recognizing the strengths of B&L, will inevitably follow the same pattern in my discussion of them in Chapters 2 and 4. At the same time, I will also try to give an account of the goals and methods of politeness research, in such a way as to avoid much of the picking over of basic issues that has bedeviled the field.

It is worth pointing out, on a more optimistic note, that the last twenty-five years have seen great advances in collecting and analyzing data relevant to politeness as manifested in various language, cultures, and communities. Watts, in the Preface already quoted (2003: xi), announces that he has a bibliography of approximately twelve hundred titles on politeness. This reflects an immense proliferation of politeness studies, which has brought progress by filling the gaps in our knowledge on the empirical and descriptive levels, a process that is still continuing today.

I have called my theory-oriented Chapter 4 "The Model" rather than "The Theory" because it seems that even B&L's approach, which has come closest to it, has not achieved what a full-fledged theory is meant to achieve. Desiderata such as full explicitness, testability, and replicability are still largely lacking: politeness studies are in a pre-theoretical stage that might be called "model building." This book is more like a voyage of discovery in which questions of politeness will be explored, demonstrated, illustrated, and analyzed from a consistent point of view. At the same time, I hope to show, especially in Chapters 5–7, how politeness modeling can be answerable to the data of real language use. Before presenting my own model in detail in Chapter 4, in this chapter I will address differing viewpoints on the subject, and in Chapter 3 (together with a clarificatory Appendix) I will sketch the pragmatic foundations of politeness "theory" since it emerged as a recognizable research focus nearly forty years ago.

2.1 What Is to be Explained? Five Explicanda

In Chapter 1 I listed and discussed some of the characteristics of politeness. To continue this chapter, I return to some of those, and add some new ones. My aim, at this point, is to attempt definition of the explicanda of a theory or framework of politeness: What, in giving a systematic account of politeness, is one trying to explain? To arrive at a set of explicanda, it is useful to pose the question, What would a theory of pragmatics *without* an account of politeness fail to explain that could be explained by a theory of pragmatics including politeness?

practice is always and only *interactive*" (2003: 166). The prospects of being able to analyze or explain politeness phenomena, on this shifting basis, are pessimistic. Although I concur with Watts on the interactive nature of "social practice," I do not believe such a pessimistic view is necessary.

(Here I am presuming a pre-theoretical everyday understanding of what politeness is.) In general, pragmatics aims to explain phenomena of language use in context, especially contextually determined interpersonal meanings. One prominent theme here is the problem of indirectness: of accounting for the commonly indirect relation between what people say and how their utterances are (meant to be) interpreted. To this, we may add the need to explain why certain forms of expression (and their associated meanings) are to a greater or lesser extent favored and others disfavored or avoided. This can also address frequency: some utterances are less likely to occur in a given (type of) context than others, and are seen as (in some degree) marked or *dispreferred*.

- (a) **Indirectness:** As already discussed, indirectness—the gap between (explicit) sense and (implicit) force, and the relation between them—is not exclusively an issue of politeness. But, to a considerable extent, it is. We need to explain why it is that people, in communicating with one another, so often “beat about the bush”—say something different from what they mean. Also, it is necessary to explain *degrees* of indirectness and how these correlate, in many cases, with degrees of politeness.
- (b) **Reciprocal asymmetry:** Again, as already discussed, the asymmetry of self-reference vs. other-reference in politeness needs to be explained. Why is an acceptable thing for *S* to say about *H* not acceptable thing for *S* to say about *S*? Similarly, why is an acceptable thing for *S* to say about *S* not an acceptable thing for *H* to say about *S*? For example:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (1) You're such a wonderful cook! | (2) ?You're such a lousy cook! |
| (1a) ?I'm such a wonderful cook! | (2a) I'm such a lousy cook! |

We can easily think of contexts in which (1) and (2a) would be natural things to say. But (2) and (1a), although their grammaticality is not in doubt, are so strongly marked for impoliteness that it would be difficult to contextualize them (except in nonserious banter between intimates; see 8.4).

One extreme case of reciprocal asymmetry is the bizarre phenomenon of “battles of politeness” or *pragmatic paradoxes* discussed in 1.1(vi), e.g., where two interactants fail to agree on who should pay the bill for a meal at a restaurant, or whether someone who has borrowed some money should pay it back or not.

- (c) **Gradations of politeness.** It is feasible and important (as I claimed in 1.1) to explain gradations of politeness—such that it can be generally (if not invariably) agreed that, in a given situation, *X* would have been a less/more polite thing to say than *Y*, and *Y* would have been a less/more polite thing to say than *Z*. Speakers of a language routinely have to weigh degrees of politeness in everyday communication, and hearers likewise.
- (d) **Opposite interpretations of elliptical expressions.** *Good luck* means that *S* wishes *H* to have good luck. *Bad luck* (or *Tough luck*) means that *S* is

sorry, and commiserates with *H* about *H*'s bad luck. Why is it that *Bad luck* means “I’m sorry about your bad luck” and cannot mean *I wish you bad luck*? and that *Good luck* means “I’m glad about your good luck” and cannot mean *I am sorry about your good luck*? A theory of politeness is needed to explain this anomaly. These expressions, incidentally, are both illustrations of the Sympathy Maxim—see 4.3.1 (M9)—which applies both to good wishes and to condolences (see 7.5.2, 7.5.3). Essentially, the principle at work is that it is preferable to attribute favorable meanings to *H* (i.e., meanings that give value to *H*) rather than unfavorable meanings.

- (e) **Preference and dispreference.** This last item on the list needs a longer explanation. Conversational analysts have noted that in exchanges known as *adjacency pairs*, where a particular kind of turn spoken by speaker *A* is typically followed by a response turn spoken by *A*'s interlocutor *B*, there is often a preference for one kind of response rather than its opposite (see Levinson 1983: 332–345). For example, in response to a request, the preferred second turn is to indicate compliance, while the dispreferred one is to indicate refusal. Another way to handle this imbalance between one response and another is to use the terms *unmarked* and *marked* familiar in syntax and morphology. The preferred option is felt to be unmarked, in the sense that it is normal and expected, whereas the dispreferred option is felt to be marked, less usual. As a sign of this, it is the dispreferred option that is often accompanied by indications that it is somehow unexpected and exceptional. As Levinson (1983: 334) points out, signs of dispreference in turn taking include:
- (a) *Delays*: notably a pause, or a time gap, before the responder replies to the preceding turn
 - (b) *Prefaces*: pause-filling utterance initiators like *Well...* and *Uh...*, which suggest that the responder is finding the dialogue situation problematic and wishes to temporize before replying
 - (c) *The use of “appreciations” if relevant* (e.g., following offers, invitations, advice), for example, *Oh, that’s very kind of you, but...* or *That’s a very good question, but...*
 - (d) *The use of qualifications* such as *I don’t know for sure, but...*
 - (e) *Hesitations* during the turn, including filled pauses such as *um* and *er*
 - (f) *Accounts* (also called *grounders*): “carefully formulated explanations of why the dispreferred act is being done” (Levinson 1983: 334), e.g., *No, I’m sorry, I can’t, cuz I’ve got an appointment with the dentist at 11.15*

The question here is, Why do these preferences and dispreferences exist? Surely all these characteristics of dispreferred responses are caused by the responder’s reluctance to perform the dispreferred speech act. But why the reluctance? Often it is

TABLE 2.1
Preferred and Dispreferred Responses.

First parts	Second parts	
	Preferred	Dispreferred
(i) Request	Acceptance	Refusal
(ii) Offer/Invitation	Acceptance	Refusal
(iii) Assessment	Agreement	Disagreement
(iv) Question	Expected answer ²	Partial answer or nonanswer

Note: based on table 6.1 in S. C. Levinson. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 336.³

because of the reply’s face-threatening nature, thwarting the conversational goals of the other speaker. In other words, the motivation is politeness, or more precisely the mitigation of impoliteness.⁴ Levinson’s examples of pairs of utterances (adjacency pairs) are as in Table 2.1.

The lists (a)–(f) and (i)–(iv) above are not complete. Notice, for example, that one of the devices used for introducing a dispreferred response is to preface it by an expression of regret. Another is to put the response in the form of a *hedged performative* (Fraser 1975; see 6.4.1e). Both are illustrated in:

(1) *I’m afraid I have to disagree with you.*

where *I’m afraid* introduces a note of regret or apology, and the modality of obligation in *I have to* makes it seem that the speaker is compelled (presumably against her will) to disagree. In contrast to this, the preferred speech act *I agree...* would seem bizarrely impolite if combined with these mitigating devices:

(1a) *?I’m afraid I have to agree with you.*

2.2 An Overview of Theories or Models of Politeness

Before presenting my own framework for politeness in detail in Chapter 4, I will now give an overview of various theories that have been put forward so far, in the main following the list of theories surveyed by Eelen (1999: 10–27; 2001: 2–29).

² That is, a canonical answer, filling the gap of information posed by the question, e.g., “How old are you?” “I’m twenty.”

³ The last row of Levinson’s table is omitted here. It contains the columns “Blame, denial, admission,” which clearly do not fit the paradigm of polite exchanges. Levinson offers no examples, and the motivation for placing this row in the table is dubious. The explanation of its presence, however, may be that an act of “blaming,” being generally an impolite speech act, is preferentially followed by a matching FTA (a denial of guilt), as the principle of balance (1.1) exonerates the hearer from being polite in response to impoliteness.

⁴ It is curious that Levinson, co-author of the most-cited theory of politeness, does not here offer an explanation of dispreferred speech acts in terms of politeness.

2.2.1 ROBIN T. LAKOFF

Robin T. Lakoff, called by Eelen “the mother of modern politeness theory,” began the modern study of politeness from a pragmatic point of view in Lakoff (1973), taking a broadly Gricean perspective (see Appendix, A1.2), and proposing three politeness rules: “Don’t impose,” “Give options,” and “Make A feel good—be friendly.” In a later publication (1990: 35) she came up with three rather different rules—“Distance,” “Deference,” and “Camaraderie”—stating that these may have different degrees of importance according to the culture. Lakoff’s account was not worked out in detail, but it set people thinking about the pragmatic impact of politeness on linguistic behavior and convention.

2.2.2 BROWN AND LEVINSON

Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) developed, as already mentioned, a more clearly articulated model, which, although it was built on a Gricean foundation, took into account a broader view of social behavior, in particular developing the concept of *face*, influentially introduced into Western social theorizing by Goffman (1967), as the key to the study of politeness. In practice, the whole focus of B&L’s theory was on face-threatening acts (FTAs) and the strategies of politeness that were designed to redress or mitigate them. When someone has the need or wish to perform an FTA—say, a directive speech act of asking someone for a lift to the train station, then a choice of five major strategies, according to B&L, can be employed, as shown in the tree in Figure 2.1.

In the figure, the strategies are ordered bottom-up according to the estimated increase of risk of face threat. The biggest risk is to use a “bald on-record” strategy—the most direct—as in *Give me a lift to the station*. The second option, positive politeness, is illustrated by *Give me a lift to the station—there’s a dear*, using

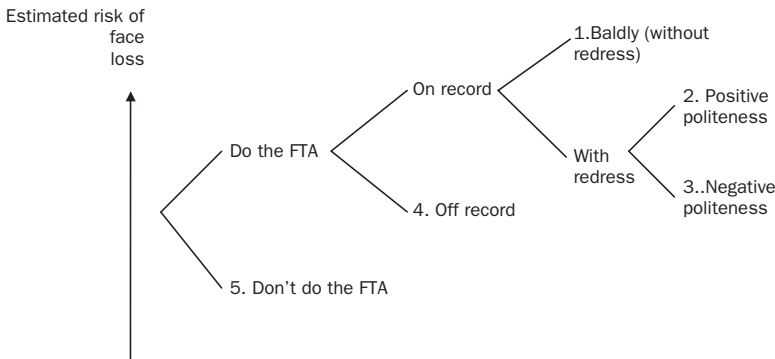


FIGURE 2.1 Brown and Levinson’s strategies for avoiding a face-threatening act.

Note: based on the illustration in P. Brown and S. C. Levinson. *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 60.

an endearment to boost *H*'s positive face. Negative politeness is illustrated by *Could you possibly give me a lift to the station?* reducing the face threat by mitigating the force of the imposition. Although the request is on-record (meaning it is conventionalized as having the force of a directive), *S* can employ a range of redressive strategies, for example expressing the request as a hypothetical question, giving *H* the option to decline the request. Off-record politeness, on the other hand, is illustrated by a hint such as *Oh dear, I'm late for my train again* or *Are you driving to the station, by any chance?* where the hope is that *H* will give *S* a lift without having been overtly asked. The last and least face-threatening strategy, of course, is not to ask for a lift at all, thereby avoiding all face threat, and no doubt missing one's train!

In detail, positive and negative politeness break down into a wide choice of linguistic strategies, of which B&L offer fifteen positive and ten negative. In addition, they list fifteen off-record strategies. To choose the most appropriate strategy, *S* has to estimate the weightiness of the FTA, which (as explained earlier) is calculated in terms of three (in principle) quantifiable components: D (distance), P (power), and R (the rank or degree of imposition).

In addition to *face*, B&L emphasize *rationality* as a second human trait entering into their account of politeness: human communicators, in being polite, use rational means to preserve face in despite of FTAs. B&L's account of this employs a partly formalized version of practical reasoning termed "Kenny logic" (after Kenny 1966) "which guarantees inferences from ends or goals to means that will satisfy those ends" (B&L 1987: 64).⁵ More discussion of B&L's model follows in 4.1.

2.2.3 GEOFFREY LEECH

Geoffrey Leech also offered a Gricean pragmatic account of politeness, proposing a Tact Maxim (1977) and, more generally, a *Politeness Principle* (PP; 1983) as complementary to Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP). Unlike grammar, which is rule-governed, pragmatics is, according to Leech, principle-governed. (Here it is assumed that whereas rules are constitutive in force, principles are regulative).⁶ The PP postulates that interactants, on the whole, prefer to express or imply polite beliefs rather than impolite beliefs. Polite beliefs expressed by the speaker *S* are beliefs favorable to the other person *O* (and/or unfavorable to oneself), whereas impolite beliefs are beliefs unfavorable to *O* (and/or favorable to *S*). Like the CP, but unlike the constitutive rules of grammar, the PP is a principle that can be observed,

⁵ I see this logic of goals and means as appropriate to the speaker's end of the communicative process; see 3.1. At the hearer's end, another type of reasoning (abductive) is appropriate.

⁶ Searle (1969: 33) distinguishes regulative rules, which "regulate antecedently or independently existing forms of behaviour," from constitutive rules, which "do not merely regulate, they create or define new forms of behaviour." To use two of Searle's examples, rules of etiquette are regulative (they regulate, for example, how we eat meals in company), whereas rules of games like chess or football are constitutive. Searle (1969) regards the rules or conditions that apply to speech acts in pragmatics as constitutive, whereas my position is that they are regulative.

breached, suspended, or flouted; it can also, like the CP, be subclassified into more specific “subprinciples” or (as Grice calls them) *maxims*. To account for polite linguistic behavior, Leech postulate six maxims, summarized in the imperative mood as follows:

In observing the PP, *S* will (all other things being equal):

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------|--|
| (I) | TACT MAXIM: | minimize cost to <i>O</i> , [and maximize benefit to <i>O</i>] |
| (II) | GENEROSITY MAXIM: | minimize benefit to <i>S</i> , [and maximize cost to <i>S</i>] |
| (III) | APPROBATION MAXIM: | minimize dispraise of <i>O</i> , [and maximize praise of <i>O</i>] |
| (IV) | MODESTY MAXIM: | minimize praise to <i>S</i> , [and maximize dispraise to <i>S</i>] |
| (V) | AGREEMENT MAXIM: | minimize disagreement between <i>S</i> and <i>O</i> [and maximize greement between <i>S</i> and <i>O</i>] |
| (VI) | SYMPATHY MAXIM: | minimize antipathy between <i>S</i> and <i>O</i> [and maximize sympathy between <i>S</i> and <i>O</i>]. |

Note that, as in the case of Grice’s CP, use of the imperative mood, in stating these maxims, does not mean that the maxims are presented as prescriptive. Rather, they are claimed to be descriptive of what happens in communication “by default,” that is, if no other principles, maxims, or other constraining factors intervene.

Some evidential basis for these maxims will be presented in Chapter 4, when I re-present these maxims as substrategies of a “General Strategy of Politeness.” The present account in essence will follow the same model as I presented in Leech (1983). But some weaknesses of that framework have been criticized (see 4.1.1), e.g., an unnecessarily large number of maxims; the use of the terms *maxim*, *maximize*, and *minimize* above; and the very different status of the PP, compared with the CP. Chapter 4 of this book presents a revised version of the model, taking these criticisms into account.

2.2.4 YUEGUO GU

Yueguo Gu also follows a Gricean approach but argues that the Gricean politeness theory, as presented by B&L and Leech for example, needs to be modified to account for the traditions and practices of politeness in Chinese. For Chinese, the PP is regarded as a “sanctioned belief that an individual’s behavior ought to live up to the expectations of respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement” (Gu 1990: 245). Gu mentions four politeness maxims (Self-denigration, Address, Tact, and Generosity) and also proposes a “Balance Principle” by which the favors done by A to B are balanced by the favors done by B to A—so that the PP in effect has the function of maintaining social equilibrium.

In a later article, “Five Ways to Handle a Bedpan” (1997), Gu proposes a three-tier process of goal-oriented linguistic activity: (a) goal development analysis,

(b) talk exchange development analysis, and (c) *interpersonal management* analysis. The third category includes politeness, but also other aspects of “rapport management” (Spencer-Oatey 2000b, 2008) such as camaraderie (Lakoff 1990) and banter (Leech 1983: 144–145).

A final point about Gu’s perspective is that in Chinese culture great emphasis is laid on “face,” which is regarded not so much as a psychological motivating characteristic of the individual (as in B&L) but as a normative social phenomenon, in the Confucian tradition. (This connects with the contrast between the individualist ethos of Western societies and the collectivist ethos of Eastern societies; see Chapter 1, footnotes 35 and 42).⁷

2.2.5 SACHIKO IDE

Sachiko Ide (1982, 1989, 1993) is another influential figure from the East, writing from a Japanese viewpoint; she is critical of B&L and Leech for their Western bias in favor of “strategic” interaction, where politeness is used in pursuit of individual goals. In her description of politeness in Japanese she draws a distinction between two kinds of politeness, to which she attaches the terms *volition* and *discernment*, the latter being the kind of politeness particularly associated with Japanese culture. Unlike the “volitional” politeness described by B&L, motivated by an individual’s wants, “discernment” (*wakimae* in Japanese) concerns the role and obligations of the individual as member of a closely knit group within a hierarchical society. Once again, this distinction recalls the collectivist versus individualist contrast between Western and Eastern societies (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). On the other hand, it meshes with the distinction (drawn in 1.2.1) between bivalent and trivalent conceptions of politeness, of which the former (having a social indexing function) belongs more to sociolinguistics than to pragmatics, and the latter belongs more to pragmatics, being concerned with ongoing interaction motivated by speaker and hearer goals.

Ide and others writing about discernment in Japanese have dwelt on the importance in politeness of the Japanese honorific system, which requires the use of a rich system of grammatical markers to signal appropriate respect, humbleness, etc., in the relation between *S* and *O*. On the other hand, other writers (e.g., Fukushima 2000 and Fukada and Asato 2004) have also recognized the volitional element in Japanese politeness, more in accord with B&L’s model.

⁷ It is clear that the contrast between individualism and collectivism is not an all-or-nothing matter. In cultural comparisons across nationalities (using questionnaire data) Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), following Hofstede (1991), ranked nations according to their “Individualism Index.” It appears from this that a strong association of Anglo societies with individualism is more than a folk belief. Fukushima (2000: 109–124), however, comparing various published accounts of the phenomenon, shows that the individualism-collectivism dichotomy is an oversimplification.

2.2.6 THE CROSS-CULTURAL SPEECH ACT REALIZATION PROJECT (CCSARP)

The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP). Shoshana Blum-Kulka (1982, 1985, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1985, Blum-Kulka et al. 1989) and her co-researchers such as Juliana House and Gabriele Kasper have influenced politeness thinking not so much at the theoretical level, but by their careful and productive methodology of collecting and analyzing speech-act data, especially in leading the ground-breaking Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP). The CCSARP team investigated in particular two speech acts often involving politeness: requests and apologies. Using the method of *discourse completion tests* (DCTs; see 9.1), they collected data from seven cultures/languages and compared them to arrive at conclusions about strategies used, and their relative frequency. So, for example, in requests Australian English speakers were found to use (applying B&L's terminology) bald-on-record strategies much less than some non-English-speaking groups:

Direct (bald-on-record):	AuE 9.8%	CaF 24%	Hebrew 33.4%
Conventional indirect:	AuE 82.4%	CaF 68.9%	Hebrew 58.6%

AuE = Australian English; CaF = Canadian French; “conventional indirect” corresponds to B&L’s “on record with redress”; the remaining small percentages, not shown here, are of “nonconventional indirect” strategies corresponding to B&L’s off-record strategies.

One of the most important theoretical and descriptive lessons learned from CCSARP is the recognition that speech acts should not be equated with single utterances (as in the Austin-Searle tradition); in real life they are often manifested in a sequence of utterances containing various elaborations of the main illocution (called the “head act”). For example, apologies potentially involve not just “saying sorry,” but contain one or more of (1) an illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) such as *sorry* or *pardon*, (2) an explanation of what brought about the offense (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 287 call such expressions “grounders”), (3) an expression of *S*’s responsibility for the offense, (4) an offer of repair, and (5) a promise of forbearance (1989: 20). The CCSARP model remains the most influential model for studying *interlanguage pragmatics* (i.e., the development of pragmatic competence in a language by nonnative speakers); see Chapter 10.

2.2.7 BRUCE FRASER AND WILLIAM NOLEN

Bruce Fraser and William Nolen (1981) put forward a “conversational contract” (CC) account of politeness. In this account, everyone who enters into a conversation brings to it a set of rights and obligations, which they mutually recognize. However, the terms of the “contract” are capable of developing in the course of the conversation by change of context or by renegotiation. Politeness is a matter of observing the CC, which establishes norms of behavior (including less centrally linguistic phenomena

such as turn-taking conventions and loudness of voice in interaction). Politeness is not seen as “strategic” or “rhetorical” but simply as “getting on with the task in hand in light of the terms and conditions of the CC” (Fraser 1990: 233). Politeness according to Fraser and Nolen is attributed to the speaker, rather than to the utterance, whereas the judgment of politeness is entirely in the hands of the addressee.

2.2.8 HORST ARNDT AND RICHARD JANNEY

Horst Arndt and Richard Janney (1979, 1983, also Janney and Arndt 1992) locate politeness within a more general model of “emotive” interactional behavior. They reject the idea of conventional rules of appropriateness along the lines of Fraser and Nolen. They place emphasis on the holistic behavior and responses of individuals, rather than on the linguistic channel of communication between them. For them, the notion of politeness equates with “interpersonal supportiveness,” which may be manifest not only in language but in paralinguistic and kinesic features: vocal quality, intonation, gesture, eye contact, and the like.

2.2.9 THE FRAME APPROACH: AIJMER, TERKOURAFI, AND OTHERS

The frame approach researches politeness in terms of “culture-specific ready-made patterns” (Terkourafi 1999: 107) and has been championed particularly by Aijmer (1996) and Terkourafi (1999, 2001, 2005), as well as influencing a number of other researchers. In Terkourafi’s words (2005: 106–107), “The notion of frames and their role in human understanding have [sic] been researched in a number of disciplines, such as artificial intelligence, sociology and linguistics.” Use of the term has consequently been extended to cover a range of conceptualizations, from the perception of static scenes and objects (Minsky 1975) to the sequential unfolding of events (Schank and Abelson 1977) and the construction of meaning therein (Goffman 1986). Within linguistics one may recall Fillmore’s “frame semantics” (1976, 1977), as well as a number of studies published under the title *Framing in discourse* (Tannen 1993), which appeal to frames in order to explain a variety of intra- and cross-cultural discourse phenomena, to mention but a small part of related research. What remains constant throughout these approaches is a reference to stereotypical pieces of knowledge, acquired through experience in the course of interaction with the surrounding (especially social) environment, and stored in the memory in such a way as to be easily retrievable—indeed automatically so—when triggered by features of the current situation. We can see that conventionalized forms of polite behavior may lend themselves to analysis in frame terms; this includes not only stereotyped features of the situation calling forth a speech act but also the associated formulaic patterning of language.

One example of a frame analysis is the treatment of apologies by Deutschmann (2003: 46), who presents a prototypical apology (1) as taking place within a frame where four other elements are present: (2) an Offender, (3) an Offended, (4) an

Offense, and (5) a Remedy (see Chapter 5, Figure 5.1). These elements may be to a greater or lesser extent implicit in the situation where an apology takes place. In the following simple piece of fictitious narrative, all four elements are clearly present:

Miles (2) said “Sorry” (1) to Milly (3) for eating her ice cream (4), and promised to buy her another (5).

The nature of the apology, as a speech event, depends on the relations between these elements: for example, how serious is the Offense? What is the relation between Offender and Offended? And is the Remedy sufficient to compensate for the Offense?

With reference to certain speech events, the concept of “frame” has been worked out in some detail by Aijmer, in her book *Conversational Routines in English* (1996), on the basis of an analysis of speech act frames in the London-Lund Corpus of spoken English:

The frame should be regarded as a hypothesis about speakers’ stereotypic knowledge of a situation and how this knowledge is organized in the long-term memory. In artificial intelligence “frame” is a “memorized framework” which contains stereotypic knowledge about places, people, function, etc (Brown and Yule 1983: 238f). People have frames for “rooms” or “houses,” as well as for linguistic facts like noun phrases, and there are probably also frames for thanking, apologizing, etc.

—Aijmer (1996: 27)

In the rest of her book, Aijmer studies frames for apologies, thanks, requests, and other varieties of speech event, relating the patterns of language to their functions and contexts. The *frame* is a particularly useful concept for routinized, conventionalized (*pragmaticalized*; see 3.7) forms of polite linguistic behavior, but we should not forget that in some respects being polite means using reasoning and imagination, not just memory, to cope with unusual as well as routine demands on our ability to manage rapport. It is worth noting that Aijmer’s book is subtitled *Convention and Creativity*, mentioning the opposite poles of the spectrum of pragmaticalization (see 3.7). Thus the frame approach, as Terkourafi (2001) has recognized, does not supersede the more pragmatically based inferential approach to pragmatic meaning (see Chapter 3).

2.2.10 SPENCER-OATEY AND RAPPORT MANAGEMENT

In her introductory chapter (Spencer-Oatey 2000b) to the book *Culturally Speaking: Managing Rapport Through Talk Across Cultures*, Spencer-Oatey⁸ puts forward a framework for analysis of sociopragmatics that enlarges the sphere of

⁸ This section is mostly based on Spencer-Oatey (2000a), although a subsequent edition of the same book has since been published, with a slightly different title: Spencer-Oatey (2008), *Culturally Speaking: Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. In the second edition, Spencer-Oatey’s “Introduction” has changed considerably, no doubt reflecting the book’s student-oriented format.

politeness to embrace a more general concept of *rapport management* (i.e., management of interpersonal relations). In this framework, rapport management breaks down into two main components: management of face and management of sociality rights. Taking her definition of face from Goffman (1972: 5) as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [*sic*] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact,” Spencer-Oatey departs from B&L’s distinction between positive and negative face (see 1.2.2, 1.2.6.2), pointing out that B&L’s positive politeness (concerned with preserving face or self-image) is of a very different nature from their negative politeness (concerned with the wish to be unimpeded by others). For Spencer-Oatey, the former concerns face, while the latter concerns not face but sociality rights: the entitlement of individuals to go about their business freely. As Spencer-Oatey puts it, B&L’s “negative face represents a desire for autonomy”, whereas their “positive face represents a desire for approval.”

Spencer-Oatey’s model therefore distinguishes between face management and the more general concept of rapport management. In addition, she distinguishes between two kinds of face—quality face and identity face—and two kinds of sociality rights—equity rights and association rights. The model, with these four components, can be represented as in the box below (based on table 2.1 in Spencer-Oatey 2000b: 15).

FACE MANAGEMENT (personal/social value)	
a QUALITY FACE (cf. Brown and Levinson’s positive face)	<i>personal perspective</i>
b IDENTITY FACE	<i>social perspective</i>
SOCIALITY RIGHTS MANAGEMENT (personal/social entitlements)	
c EQUITY RIGHTS (cf. Brown and Levinson’s negative face)	<i>personal perspective</i>
d ASSOCIATION RIGHTS	<i>social perspective</i>

The four components shown in capitals above all represent desirables for the individual employing rapport management:

- (a) QUALITY FACE is the value we claim for ourself in terms of personal qualities such as abilities and appearance, and is closely related to self-esteem.
- (b) IDENTITY FACE is the value we claim for ourself in terms of social role, such as group leader, customer, guest, or parent.⁹
- (c) EQUITY RIGHTS are the entitlements we feel we should have in terms of personal consideration and fair treatment from others.

⁹ The distinction between quality face and identity face is not specifically made in Spencer-Oatey (2008). Instead, an extra category of rapport management is introduced: that of managing interactional goals.

- (d) ASSOCIATION RIGHTS are the entitlements we feel we should have in terms of relations with other people—including “the appropriate amount” of friendship, involvement, or respect.

—Spencer Oatey 2000b: 14–15

In her second edition (2008), Spencer-Oatey does not make the distinction given above between quality face and identity face. No doubt this is because she has done much more thinking about the closeness of the relation between face and identity (Spencer-Oatey 2007), so that face is intrinsically bound up with identity (a topic that has become prominent in contemporary linguistics; see, e.g., Joseph 2004). She sees the characterization of face as involving three levels of representation: the personal or individual level (“I am Tara, a successful twenty-two-year-old female musician”), the relational level (“I am the daughter of A, the wife of B, the coworker of C, the employee of D, etc.”), and the group or collective level (“I am Algerian, Arab, and Muslim”). Each of these levels may be associated with particular face sensitivities; for example, it is possible to threaten someone’s face by disparaging (1) their person, (2) their parentage, or (3) their nationality.

Spencer-Oatey sees support for face needs and sociality rights as at the heart of face management. However, in Spencer-Oatey (2008: 17) she added a further factor that has to be managed in rapport management: interactional goals, for example, the goals we pursue in engaging in collaborative and competitive communication with others. From this we see that “rapport” in Spencer-Oatey’s conception is a very general phenomenon. As in the case of politeness (a term Spencer-Oatey prefers to avoid) one cannot assume that maintaining rapport is always the norm in human communication. Indeed, she is content to regard four possible orientations—rapport enhancement, rapport maintenance, rapport neglect, and rapport challenge (or threat)—as of equal status.

2.2.11 RICHARD J. WATTS

Richard J. Watts (1989, 1992, 2003) has championed a postmodernist, discursual approach to politeness, most fully developed on his book *Politeness* in 2003. Watts et al. (1992) drew a distinction between *first-order* and *second-order politeness*, a distinction taken up by Eelen (1999, 2001) as *politeness*₁ and *politeness*₂. Politeness₁ is politeness as a layperson’s concept, something that individuals talk about in everyday situations—and have an everyday understanding of. Politeness₂ is the technical or theoretically oriented use of the term, such as is found, for example, in B&L’s model of politeness as the avoidance or mitigation of face threat, or Leech’s model of politeness as seeking and maintaining social concord by means of the PP. Watts takes the view that politeness₁ should be the subject of politeness research. However, he notes that there is “bewildering ambiguity in the use of the terms ‘polite’ and ‘politeness,’” and also that terms approximating to the notion of politeness in other languages—such as *mianzi* (Chinese), *courtoisie* (French), *Höflichkeit* (German), *cortesia/urbanità* (Italian),

teineisa (Japanese)—often have somewhat differing meanings. There is therefore a danger, which Watts admits, that those who study politeness qua politeness₁ will pin their faith on an everyday concept that is shifting and ambiguous.

Another well-known distinction made by Watts is that between (im) politeness and *politic behavior*. Politic behavior is Watts's term applying to what some would call "routine politeness": it is "linguistic behavior which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient" (Watts 2003: 19). The terms *politeness* and *impoliteness*, on the other hand, are reserved for behavior perceived to be salient, at the positive end and at the negative end respectively of the "spectrum of politeness." I agree with Terkourafi's judgment (2005: 252) that the distinction between "polite" and "politic" behavior is the opposite of helpful, in that "Watts is compelled to draw an arbitrary line between the two (on the basis of the analyst's intuitions about what is politic)." Like others such as Ide et al. (1992/2005: 281), I find it easier to conceive of sociopragmatic (im)politeness as a bipolar scale, as outlined in Chapter 1 (Fig. 1.1), the midpoint of which is neither polite nor impolite, and on which an appropriately or routinely polite remark will be judged as polite, though not saliently so. Hence I will not make use of Watts's distinction between politeness and politic behavior.

Watts also regards it as impossible to make definitive statements about politeness, as politeness is variable according to context, and what is polite or impolite is unavoidably confined to the perceptions of the interactants. As a result, it seems that the Watts model can make only weak claims about politeness in reality:

The model I wish to develop does not claim *that* a particular utterance is a realization of polite behavior nor to explain *why*. It tries to offer ways of recognising *when* a linguistic utterance *might* be open to interpretation by interlocutors as "(im)polite."

—Watts (2003: 142–143; italics original)

In effect, Watts declares the impossibility of a predictive theory of (im)politeness, which, as Terkourafi (2005: 245) points out, "amounts to denying the possibility of theorizing about politeness at any level." Watts rejects the concord-building view of the function of politeness, and in contrast espouses the view that politeness is a matter of "discursive struggle" (142) and negotiation between interactants. He also regards politeness as a characteristic of hegemonic discourse, closely bound up with the exercise of power, including political power.¹⁰

¹⁰ Watts's power-oriented viewpoint is illustrated by this quotation (2003: 155): "Participants in verbal interaction will always be involved in a struggle over the right to exercise power over others." Regarding the link between politeness and political power, there can be an etymological confusion (of which Watts is not guilty) over the connection between the terms *polite* and *politic(al)*. He sees a link between politeness, politic behavior, and politics. In fact, the word *polite* in English comes, via French, from Latin *politus* "polished, made smooth," whereas *politic(al)* comes from the Greek *polis*, "city." The two are historically unconnected.

The ideological underpinning of Watts's conception of politeness is provided by Bourdieu (1977, 1990, 1991) and his concepts of *practice theory* and *habitus*. This approach has been referred to as *postmodernist*, a label espoused by Watts et al. (2005: xiii), which has also been applied to writers such as Eelen (2001) Mills (2003) and Locher (2004, 2006) taking a similar discourse-oriented perspective. *Postmodernist* has become increasingly current as a name for a prominent school of thought about politeness in the early twenty-first century (for discussion see Culpeper 2011a: 412–417). The postmodern viewpoint, as I see it, is one of skepticism toward abstract or theoretical conceptions of politeness, any stable interpretation of politeness, and any attempt to objectify the phenomena under study in politeness research. It also places politeness in the context of social struggle, seeing it as a tool for maintaining hegemony in the hands of the powerful, in contrast to the views of B&L, Lakoff, Leech, and the like, where politeness functions primarily as a means of maintaining face and social concord.

2.3 The Model Presented in this Book in Comparison with Others

The list of politeness theorists presented above is, naturally, far from complete. There are many additional influential contributors to the politeness literature, such as Janet Holmes (1990, 1995, 2006,) whose work on politeness in relation to gender, to social class, and to the workplace has significantly expanded awareness of how politeness in English can be analyzed in relation to such social parameters such as gender and social situation. She has used essentially a B&L framework.

However, the list in 2.2.1–2.2.11 is sufficient to illustrate major currents in politeness thinking over the last thirty years. These different approaches tend to be presented as in competition with one another, as if in choosing one we have to reject the others. Such dissent gives the impression that politeness theorizing is a Babel of contending voices, an impression accentuated by writers such as Fraser and Nolen (1981: 93), who represent this disagreement about what “politeness” means as the major problem to be overcome. But often the matters that appear to be differences of opinion are no more than differences of emphasis or perspective. To illustrate this point, I will try to show how my own current model of politeness actually combines many of the features of other models, while disagreeing with others on some rather limited, though sometimes fundamental, points.

Lakoff's rules of Deference and Camaraderie are very close to the principles of (bivalent) politeness and camaraderie I have argued for (see 1.2.1)—in fact, I have borrowed the term *camaraderie* from her. In this, her theoretical position focuses on bivalent politeness, whereas her earlier rules “Don't impose” and “Give options” are more focused on trivalent politeness.

B&L's “model person” possessing face and rationality seems too abstract and idealized a player to bear the main weight of explanation for politeness. However, I agree with B&L that face (although I understand it somewhat differently; 1.2.6.2)

and rationality are important components of a social-psychological explanation for the function of politeness. Alongside this, however, I would want to place a not-incompatible sociocultural explanation in terms of the goal of seeking comity (see 1.2.6.1).

Gu's reworking of my Generosity Maxim opened my eyes to a flaw in the 1983 model; also his Balance Principle, which recognizes the important element of balance or equilibrium underlying mutual politeness, needs to be recognized as an essential component of why people are polite. Other writers, such as Watts and Spencer-Oatey, also recognize this.

The idea that politeness is *normative* comes out particularly strongly in the conversational contract view of *Fraser and Nolen*, but it is also an essential feature of other models, including my own. As I see it, the nature of *sociopragmatic* politeness (as opposed to *pragmalinguistic* politeness) involves convergence on, or divergence from, a norm of what is regarded as appropriately polite for a given set of situational parameters. The normative nature of politeness has been questioned by Eelen (2001), because it appears to make the exercise of politeness an impediment to the individual's freedom of behavior. However, awareness of a norm does not compel obedience to a norm. Certainly a norm is not to be seen as some kind of superimposed restriction on behavior. Empirically, I see no problem in recognizing the existence of statistically observable politeness norms (as shown, for example, by convergent responses to discourse completion tasks and multiple choice questionnaires¹¹) as a background against which individual performances can deviate. Moreover, we carry around with us some contextually tunable sense of what is normal politeness as part of our social-cognitive response to communicative situations. When the comment is made that a person is "very polite," or "a little bit rude," and so on, we are implicitly acknowledging such a norm, from which individuals' behavior can deviate in a positive or negative direction.

Arndt and Janney lay great store on the responsiveness of the whole person in politeness; for them, the purely linguistic aspect of politeness must be integrated with other components of interpersonal emotive communication, including prosody, paralinguistics, gesture, eye gaze, kinesics, and proxemics. I recognize the importance of these additional channels of communication,¹² and in fact it has often been commented that the nonlinguistic channels may be more important for impressions of politeness than the actual words said. At the same time, I have to admit that little space in this book will be devoted to these features, which demand a rather different research paradigm. My two excuses for largely omitting nonlinguistic and prosodic aspects of politeness are that my research endeavor does not

¹¹ In an experiment involving nearly fifty questionnaires, I observed an 86 percent agreement between informants as to which of two utterances was more polite; see further 9.2.

¹² On the neglected role of prosody in politeness studies, see Culpeper (2011b) and Barth-Weingarten et al. (2009), on pragmatics and prosody. On nonverbal communication, see Watson (1970) on proxemics; Kendon (2004) on gesture; and Argyle (1975/1988) and Wharton (2009) on nonverbal communication in general.

extend beyond the linguistic, and that the corpora I have mainly used for examples do not provide paralinguistic or prosodic information. On the other hand, Arndt and Janney's characterization of politeness in terms of supportiveness is something I find compatible with my General Strategy of Politeness (GSP; 4.3), which identifies politeness with the assigning of high value to the other person's concerns and low value to one's own. Indeed, the two ideas are very closely associated: being supportive means *giving* empathetic support—something of value—to another person. Arndt and Janney's approach in particular highlights the importance of one of the constituent maxims of the GSP: the Sympathy Maxim, which focuses especially on the goal of identifying one's own feelings with the feelings of the other.

Ide's distinction between Discernment and Volition as two types of politeness, the former more associated with Eastern cultures and the latter with Western cultures, corresponds in essence to my distinction between *bivalent* and *trivalent* politeness (1.2.1), the former being richly developed in languages such as Japanese that have elaborate honorific systems. I also see these bivalent and trivalent conceptions of politeness as leaning respectively toward a sociolinguistic domain and a pragmatic one. As opposed to pragmatics, sociolinguistics tends to deal with variables that are relatively stable across time (Thomas 1995: 185–187): variables such as the gender, age, social networks, and social relations as measured according to B&L's P and D factors. Hence bivalent politeness ("discernment"), with its social indexing function, belongs here rather than to pragmatics.¹³ On the other hand, trivalent politeness ("volition"), dealing with dynamic goal-driven communicative behavior, belongs more to pragmatics. The goal-driven nature of trivalent politeness is likely to vary from one encounter to another, depending on the individual goals, as well as social goals, adopted by *S*. However, the two politenesses are not separate, and honorific usage can interact dynamically with context, as has been shown for Japanese by Okamoto (1999).

The *frame* concept is extremely useful for studying the conventionalized aspects of politeness. For example, *Aijmer* (1996: 14) follows Manes and Wolfson (1981) in listing the stereotyped patterns English speakers use to express compliments (see 7.2). What this shows is that in general we use only a tiny part of the resources of our grammar to express compliments—and the same applies in a greater or lesser degree to other politeness-sensitive speech events. This piece of grammar, although it is not by any means totally fixed, is simple enough to be easily retrieved when required from memory, together with situational aspects of the speech event that goes with it. However, although the linguistic aspects of such speech events can be rather easily studied using a corpus or other authentic dataset, it must be admitted that the contextual and functional aspects are less easy to specify and less answerable to empirical evidence. Two problems with frames as cognitive constructs are

¹³ However, not all sociolinguists would agree with this. The field of *interactional sociolinguistics* (Gumperz 1982) by its very name challenges the stability of variables associated with sociolinguistics.

that they are ultimately vague and they remain, in the long run, subject to empirical demonstration that has not yet been provided.

The rapport management approach of *Spencer-Oatey* has the advantage of correcting the incomparability of positive and negative politeness in the B&L model. It also has many useful and thought-provoking features, including the concept of rapport management itself, which unites under one umbrella varieties of attitudinal interpersonal behavior that the term *politeness* itself does not easily cover. I will have occasion to use the term *rapport management* myself, although I do not always find it useful to distinguish the two sets of categories into which Spencer-Oatey divides the territory of rapport management. The difference between quality and identity face is not always clear or important; for example, if one compliments a footballer on playing well, is this a matter of his inherent ability (quality face) or his team-playing role (identity face) that is being enhanced, or both? Similar misgivings may arise over the difference between equity rights and association rights; for example, if one apologizes for forgetting to send a birthday present to one's sister, is it an issue of equity rights (depriving her of a benefit to which she is entitled) or of association rights (failure to treat her as a sibling should be treated)? In practice, one wonders whether these distinctions can be helpfully and consistently made, or whether one category inevitably shades into another.

On the other hand, the distinction between face and sociality rights does seem to have significance for the accountability of the model. Consider the case of a request where a taxi passenger asks the driver to speed up, and a contrasting request where she asks him to slow down. Surely *Please slow down!* implies more face threat than *Please go faster!* even though the two requests need not be distinguishable in terms of B&L's three factors of P (vertical distance), D (horizontal distance), and R (weight of imposition)—see 1.2.1. The reason, if this is agreed, is that the request to go faster (well motivated if the passenger is in a hurry) implies confidence in the skill of the driver, and is to that extent face-enhancing, while the request to go slower implies that the driver is less than competent—since the passenger is unhappy with the speed, which might show reckless or dangerous driving. In this case, to explain the difference, an additional element of face threat (questioning the driver's competence), in addition to the P, D, and R factors, would be needed to explain the greater degree of (pragmalinguistic) politeness that might be employed for the slowing-down request.

I will end with one negative and one positive observation about Spencer-Oatey's rapport management model. The negative point is that her category of "sociality rights" appears to suffer from the same individualistic bias as B&L's model (see 4.1) in placing the wants or claims of the individual person at the forefront,¹⁴ whereas Ide (1993), Matsumoto (1988), and others have criticized this orientation as limiting

¹⁴ For example, Spencer-Oatey (2000b: 14) explains the categories of face and entitlement as follows: "we have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge or uphold our social identities..." and "we have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others..." etc.

the model's validity to Western "individualist" cultures, in contrast to Eastern "collectivist" cultures. The positive point is that Spencer-Oatey emphasizes the element of *value* in the concept of face (ibid.: 13–14), something that I take up in my model.

When we come to *Watts*, I have to recognize that my disagreements with him are more salient than the agreements. Nevertheless, I also recognize that *Watts's* contribution is considerable in sensitizing and enlarging the domain of politeness to emphasize the interactive dynamics of discourse, rather than just the somewhat minimal utterances and exchanges with which pragmatic approaches to politeness have tended to restrict themselves in the past. As this book orients itself to pragma-linguistics (see the Preface), I often feel that simple one-line or two-line examples are sufficient for my purpose, and that extended pieces of discourse used in exemplification can supply *too much* context information, needing far more space and time to explain. *Watts's* contribution to the sociopragmatic aspect of politeness research is, however, significant.

While I recognize *Watts's* (and *Eelen's*) distinction between first-order and second-order politeness as important, I disagree with *Watts's* implementation of it. For him, the study of politeness should focus on politeness₁, whereas for me it should belong to politeness₂.

My position calls for some explanation. It is quite true that in everyday usage terms like *politeness* are problematic, in that they have a meaning that suffers from unclarity and variability (particularly if one takes a cross-linguistic standpoint). If we accept the *prototype* (Rosch 1978) model of meaning in ordinary language, a widely accepted semantic model in cognitive linguistics (see Ungerer and Schmid, 1996/2006: 7–63), we must also accept that indeterminacy and gradience in more peripheral aspects of word meaning are normal. It can hardly be denied that, in ordinary usage, *polite* and related terms, such as *politeness* and *impoliteness*, suffer from such vagueness and variability. In addition, *polite* is a gradable adjective, which means that its referential scope varies in intensity along a scale of magnitude. In this, *polite* is no different from more frequent everyday adjectives such as *old*, *high*, and *difficult*. But when ordinary language terms are used for scientific inquiry, they need to undergo a technicalization process so that their reference can be used with greater objectivity and precision than in ordinary discourse, particularly with a model or theory in mind. *Culture* in anthropology, *society* in sociology, and *particle* in physics are examples of terms used somewhat vaguely in everyday discourse, but whose meaning is sharpened in academic discourse. To these we may add *politeness* (these days commonly combined with its negative in the parenthesized form (*im-*) *politeness*), which is still, in spite of the misgivings of many commentators, the term of choice to use for those studying the field.¹⁵ Such everyday terms, when used for scientific inquiry, are the most obvious to choose for purposes of technicalization. What happens when a word is adopted within a domain of scientific inquiry

¹⁵ This is illustrated by the fact that the only international journal at present dedicated to this field of research is called the *Journal of Politeness Research*.

is that it acquires a technical meaning defining its position more systematically so as to fit into a theoretical framework. The word in this technical sense usually has overlapping reference with the everyday lay usage of the term. But a danger of misunderstanding arises through possible confusion of the technical and nontechnical senses.

The concern about politeness₁ and politeness₂ is therefore a real one. But the need for technicalization of vocabulary as a step toward deeper and more systematic explanation is far from unique to politeness. Consider how terms used in grammar such as “present,” “past,” “active,” “passive,” “continuous,” “process,” and “achievement” are applied to verbs and verb constructions. They are obviously technically adapted to the linguistic domain, while still having a meaning strongly associated with their basic everyday sense. In pragmatics, terms like “utterance,” “context,” and “relevance” acquire technical usages that are still anchored in their vaguer everyday senses. The same observations apply to other terms in linguistics and pragmatics (such as “idiom,” “speaker,” “frame,” “scanning,” “presupposition”), and more generally to terminology used in the social and natural sciences. The technical adaptation of everyday terms to new and more precise uses is arguably an essential part of scientific model building, without which scientific terminology would be difficult to grasp. Therefore anyone undertaking an academic study of politeness needs to define what they mean by politeness—by which, it is now clear, I mean politeness₂ (see further 2.4.1). Despite overlapping reference, the everyday lay use of *politeness* cannot be relied upon for such purposes. And yet, politeness₁ cannot be dismissed from our attention, because it is largely the behavior people describe as “polite,” “poli,” “höflich,” etc., that enables us to recognize in terms of politeness₁ what we are studying as politeness₂.

2.4 Other Basic Questions

I have just argued that it is incumbent on anyone using the term *politeness* in an academic way to give an account of what they mean by that term. This is an appropriate point, then, for me to try to answer the question “What is politeness?” beginning with the everyday use of “politeness₁” as a means of entry to the technical use of “politeness₂.”

2.4.1 DISSECTING POLITENESS

In semantic terms, “politeness” is essentially a manner-adverbial notion, an attribute whereby a predicate is modified. That is, it is actions, human behaviors, etc., that are characterized as “polite,” this being in practice restricted to *communicative* behavior—not necessarily linguistic behavior, but typically so. Thus, contrary to the usual assumption that an adverb’s meaning is derived from the corresponding adjective, I argue that the least abstract use of the concept of politeness is thus found

in the adverb *politely*, as illustrated here (with examples from the British National Corpus):

- (3) When the Soviet plan reached Mr. Bush, he welcomed it **politely**, but with undisguised dismay. [BNC ABE]

This [*S did c politely*] seems to be the most basic formula for reporting the nature of politeness—where *c* is some communicative action, and *S* is some communicating agent, whom we can call a *communicator*—or more simply and typically, the *speaker*. From this, an adjectival use with an abstract noun of communication used to describe something politely uttered, as in *polite speech* or *a polite welcome*, can easily be derived. In everyday usage, however, it is also easy to apply the adjective *polite* to a person—the communicator—who either habitually or on one particular occasion behaves politely. Hence, the formula [*S is polite*] or [*S was polite*], although natural, is secondary, in logical terms, to the adverbial use of *politely*, and is to be unpacked as meaning “*S* is a person who typically behaves politely” or “*S* on a particular occasion behaved politely”:

- (4) If you are asking a favour, you must be **polite**. [BNC EEB]
 (5) Every taxi driver he encountered was **polite**, indeed charming.
 [BNC ABF]

The adjectival use of *polite*, whether attributing politeness to the speaker as in (5) or to the utterance itself (as in *The letter was polite* or *a polite welcome*), is thus easily seen as a metonymic variant of the basic formula [*S did c politely*].

It is instructive, in this connection, to explore the combinability of *politely* with various predicates. Communicative verbs go very easily with *politely*: *He greeted me politely*; *She was politely congratulated*... etc.—although some communicative verbs are by their nature conflictive (see 4.2.3), and therefore habitually impolite. It is difficult to contextualize, for instance, **Peter politely threatened/cursed us*. Some predicates do not go with *politely* at all, because they involve no agency and no communication: **Charles slept politely*. Some other predicates do not easily go with *politely*, because they are difficult to interpret as communicative; for example, *Hazel ate the cake politely* is slightly odd, but can be made intelligible by conjuring up the picture of Hazel smiling and taking delicate little bites interspersed with little gasps of appreciation, thereby communicating to her “addressee” that the cake is delicious and is to be savored rather than bolted. On the other hand, if *politely* is moved to an earlier position—*Hazel politely ate the cake*—the meaning changes somewhat, and the *fact* that she ate the cake *at all* becomes the manifestation of politeness.¹⁶ For example, let us suppose that Hazel’s hostess had baked a cake, and Hazel (although on a strict diet) decided to eat the cake as a polite gesture

¹⁶ This difference of meaning arises from the difference between a manner adverbial interpretation (where the adverb typically follows the verb and complement(s)) and a subject-orientation adverbial interpretation (where the adverb precedes the verb and complement(s)—see Quirk et al. 1985: 572–578).

to indicate that she appreciated her hostess's hospitable offering. There are therefore two "adverbial" notions of politeness, one where the action is characterized as being performed in a polite manner, and one where politeness is applied to the decision to perform the action itself.

Assuming these two closely related adverbial understandings of politeness, how do we define the notion of *politeness* itself? Defined as "the quality of being polite," *politeness* is at two removes in abstraction from the adverb *politely*. As an abstract noun, it denotes the quality of being *polite*, disassociated from any particular act of communication. In this, it achieves the generality necessary for theoretical treatment of the concept. But we are still in the realm of politeness.₁ The technicalization move to politeness₂ requires a further step. Using the model I am putting forward, we can now add a definition of politeness according to the General Strategy of Politeness (4.3): *S*, in communicating *politely* to *H*, gives (or attributes) greater value¹⁷ to *O* (the other person(s), who is probably *H*) than to *S*. As a first approximation (to be refined in 8.2), impoliteness is defined in the opposite way: viz. that *S*, in communicating *impolitely* to *H*, gives (or attributes) greater value to *S* than to *O*. The greater the difference between the value accorded to *O* and the value accorded to *S*, the greater the politeness or impoliteness. In this case, by eating the cake politely, Hazel accords positive value to *O* (the hostess), indicating that the cake is delicious, and thereby giving credit to the baker and provider of the cake.

Another, more contentious, aspect of the meaning of *politeness* is that what is done politely is also done in an intentional or goal-directed way.¹⁸ In this respect it fits the well-known Gricean paradigm of pragmatic meaning (discussed in Appendix, A1.2 and 1.3).¹⁹

2.4.2 DOES POLITENESS LIE IN THE MIND OF THE SPEAKER, THE HEARER, OR BOTH?

This leads us on to a vexed question on which there can be fundamental differences of opinion. It has been suggested (Eelen 2001: 96–98) that pragmatic politeness

¹⁷ This is not "value" in the more restrictive sense of Spencer-Oatey, who applies it to face rather than sociality entitlement. It will be seen in 4.3 that the notion of value is applicable to polite speech events in general, such that (for example) a polite request to open a door recognizes the negative value of the inconvenience to which *H* is to be subjected.

¹⁸ I tend to use *goal* in preference to *intention*, because it is a more general term that can more readily accommodate conscious and unconscious goals, multiplicity of goals, and different degrees of goal commitment and goal achievement. It is also the term generally used in cognitive science, which is arguably a more appropriate intellectual tradition here than the philosophical tradition of *intention* and *intentionality*.

¹⁹ Although *politeness* is normally an intended part of utterance meaning, it is possible to use the expression *unintentionally polite* in an intelligible way. I would argue, however, that this can be interpreted only in some special transferred sense; for example, *The message was unintentionally polite* could be interpreted as meaning "Someone construed the message as polite, in a way that was unintended by the speaker."

theorists have favored a speaker-oriented bias, whereas Mills (2003) and Watts (2003) claim that the judgment of what is polite is made by the addressee (or an observer) and is purely subjective. This latter stance, like the former, means incidentally that politeness is a subjective matter: politeness lies in the mind of the speaker, or alternatively in the mind of the hearer.

There is a subjective bias in giving precedence to either a speaker's or a hearer's viewpoint. Surely a better and more balanced position is to combine both viewpoints. What this means is that, as for pragmatic meaning as a whole, the politeness meaning conveyed by an utterance is both constructed by *S* and interpreted (or, if you like, co-constructed) by *H*. In Chapter 4 I return to the view (Leech 1983: 36–45) that elucidating pragmatic meaning involves two kinds of problem solving. *S*'s expression of pragmatic meaning involves one kind of problem solving (how to achieve communicative goals, by conveying to *H* one's intended meaning), and *H*'s interpretation of pragmatic meaning is another kind of problem solving (how to reconstruct the intended meaning of *S*). The reason why communication is on the whole more successful than unsuccessful is that the two problem-solving tasks tend to reinforce one another: they are both typically motivated by the desire to engage in successful communication (which is one way of interpreting Grice's Cooperative Principle; see A1.2). This is not to deny the significance of communicative failures: people have conflicting designs, talk at cross-purposes, misunderstand one another because of differing politeness norms, and so forth. But on the whole people are inclined to trust each other's communicative abilities rather than mistrust them; if this were not true, the use of language could not have played such a big part in the evolution of social *Homo sapiens* as it obviously has had. Moreover, in the course of dialogue, there are ways of repairing any breakdown of communication. For example, retrospective clarification can take place, as in this fictional example:²⁰

- (6) And as he handed Joe his drink he added, "I'm going in tomorrow."
 "What do you mean? To join up?"
 "Yes..." [BNC CFY]

Politeness is essentially no different from other aspects of the meaning of an utterance. However, it is atypical in that it can rarely be part of the utterance's explicit meaning.²¹ In this, it is similar to affective or attitudinal elements of meaning, which

²⁰ This claim is made with respect to culturally and linguistically competent native speakers; the situation with language learners (in both first and second language acquisition) is different, and *inter-language pragmatics* (see Chapter 10) is the subfield of pragmatics that investigates learners' degree of adaptation to the norms of the target language. Important here are the *pragmatic failures* (Thomas 1983), which arise in SLA contexts, including cases where there are differences between *S*'s and *H*'s construal of politeness.

²¹ One possible exception is the discourse particle *please*, which arguably adds the explicit information "*S* is being (pragmalinguistically) polite" to a directive (see 6.3.1). Another exception, perhaps, is an unhedged performative such as *I apologize* and *I beg your pardon*, which make the apologetic force of the utterance containing it explicit. On the assumption that apologies are intrinsically polite, these are instances of pragmalinguistic politeness, although they might not be judged sociopragmatically polite.

are often implicated rather than overtly expressed. For example, by a polite request *Would you mind opening the door?* the speaker means that *S* wants *H* to open the door, and additionally implicates that this request is (pragmalinguistically) polite (to such-and-such a degree, retrievable from the form and sense of the utterance). The problem-solving process by which this kind of implicature is constructed by *O* was sketched by Searle (1975), as discussed in section A1.3. The degree to which the utterance is (sociopragmatically) polite can be worked out by registering the number and kinds of strategies of mitigation employed (that is, the degree of pragmalinguistic politeness) and comparing this with what would be judged the norm of politeness in the context (see 4.5.2). This applies to neg-politeness (see 1.2.2). But in the case of pos-politeness, such as the compliment cited above (*It's absolutely delicious*), pragmalinguistic politeness is a matter of registering intensification strategies: here notice the use of the commendatory adjective *delicious* and the intensifying adverb *absolutely*. From here, *sociopragmatic* politeness is derivable by inference: the recognition that *S* is registering a highly commendatory attitude to the cake, plus the shared assumption that the cake was baked by *H*, leads to the conclusion that *S* is ascribing a highly positive evaluation to *H*. This together with the definition of politeness previously given ("*S*, in communicating *politely*^{*d*} to *H*, gives [or attributes] value^{*d*} to *O* [the other person(s)]") leads to the further conclusion that *S* is being polite^{*d*}. The superscript *d* in this formulation indicates a particular (in this case a high) degree of politeness. Part of the sociopragmatic meaning of a polite or impolite utterance is *how* (im)polite *S* is being.

The determination of whether *S* is being polite, and if so, *how* polite, is, like pragmatic meaning in general, initially a matter for *S* and secondarily a matter for *H*. The speaker aims to be polite (to a certain degree) as one of her communicative goals. The hearer aims to reconstruct that degree of politeness as one aspect of his interpretation: that is, of communicative goal reconstruction. The pragmatician's task of explicating polite communicative behavior, understood in this framework, should be labeled neither as "speaker-oriented" nor as "hearer-oriented." In a sense it is both. The analytic observer is in the position where assessment of *S*'s meaning and *H*'s meaning can be undertaken by a kind of triangulation. This means taking account of what is displayed in Table 2.2.

TABLE 2.2
How the analyst can (at least in part) work out pragmatic meaning.

Evidence of <i>S</i> 's pragmatic meaning	Evidence of <i>H</i> 's pragmatic interpretation
(a) What <i>S</i> said (b) What elements of context appear to contribute to <i>S</i> 's meaning, including what is known about <i>S</i> 's relation with <i>H</i>	(c) <i>H</i> 's response (verbal or nonverbal), indicating either understanding or misunderstanding of what <i>S</i> meant
<i>Common assumptions:</i> (1) that <i>H</i> has heard and semantically decoded what <i>S</i> said; (2) that <i>H</i> shares certain contextual knowledge with <i>S</i> ; (3) that <i>H</i> is able to use heuristic interpretative strategies including abductive inference to make sense of what <i>S</i> meant	

Of course the pragmatician-observer cannot get inside the head of the speaker or the hearer to find out what was really intended by *S* or reconstructed by *H*. But, through knowledge of the language and (to whatever degree is possible) of the context, as well as of principles of communicative cooperation and politeness, the pragmatician can use his or her own interpretative abilities and rationality, as well as observing signs of understanding or misunderstanding in the mutual responses of *H* and *S* in the discourse record. A further source of evidence can be found in the responses of other pragmatically competent native speakers or nonnative speakers who are observers of the speech event. No one can *prove* what happened, pragmatically speaking, in the minds of *S* and *H* during an interaction—what *S* meant, and what *H* understood *S* to mean—but on the above-mentioned evidence, well-founded hypotheses can be formed about polite and impolite behavior between *S* and *H*. There is no need to retreat to the dead end of subjectivism, which is our sole resort if we see the evaluation of politeness as residing only in the mind of one participant.

2.4.3 WHAT KINDS OF EVIDENCE FOR POLITENESS CAN BE ADDUCED?

A theory of politeness should be answerable to evidence, and there are three main observable factors to be considered here. First, there is evidence of what people say, or—less authentically—what they believe they *would* say (or someone else would say) in a certain situation. Second, there is the evidence of what context the words or utterances are spoken in; this is a very broad domain, varying from the immediate situation of a given conversational encounter to the cultural characteristics of the society in which it takes place. Third, there is a set of judgments about the degree of politeness involved; the judge in this case may be the person interacting in a dialogue (either *S* or *H*) or one or more third persons acting as analyst-observer. Ideally these three factors have to be studied in association with one another: for a given scenario, one needs to know (1) what was said, (2) in what context it was said (including the identity of *S* and *H/O*), and (3) what the degree of (im)politeness was judged to be. It need hardly be said that there are considerable difficulties in identifying data under these three headings. But, rather than discuss them now, I will postpone discussion to Chapter 9, where the collection of data relevant to politeness is the main topic.

2.4.4 WHAT DISCIPLINE DOES POLITENESS BELONG TO?

Does politeness research belong to linguistics? to sociology? to social psychology? to anthropology? My position in this book is that it belongs primarily to pragmatics, which is a branch of linguistics, although it has fundamental interdisciplinary ramifications. The richest and most specific form of data for studying politeness is *what people say in given communicative situations*. The study of the context relevant to what people say, however, takes us to the interface between linguistics and

social psychology, and additionally between linguistics and other disciplines such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology. There are also fuzzy interfaces between pragmatics and other branches of linguistics: sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, and discourse analysis. The boundaries between these subdisciplines are unclear and may be contested; as already noted in the relation between pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics, they very often seem to overlap. In the face of these uncertainties, I return again to the firmest ground of pragmatics: the utterances of speakers, together with the contextual information required for their interpretation, insofar as this can be provided.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt in outline with a number of basic issues to which attention needs to be given, before we can make serious progress in politeness studies.

First, I outlined a number of things that an account of politeness needs to explain: the phenomenon of polite indirectness, the fundamental asymmetry of politeness in dialogue, the fact that politeness is a matter of degree or gradation, the polite interpretation of some elliptical expressions, and the preferences and dis-preferences exercised, under the influence of politeness, by interactants in dialogue.

Secondly, I presented a brief overview of existing models of politeness, comparing them with my own. I argued that in the main these models are hardly in conflict; they all share common ground, and each seems to add something to the overall picture.

Finally, I tried to give brief answers to fundamental questions that people ask about politeness: What *is* politeness? Does it reside in the mind of speaker, hearer, or elsewhere? What kinds of evidence of politeness can be adduced? And to what discipline, whether linguistics or another discipline, does the study of politeness belong? In answer to this last question, I affirmed my position that politeness belongs centrally to the domain of pragmatics, and in the next chapter I will explore the foundations of this pragmatic view.

Pragmatics, Indirectness, and Neg-politeness

A BASIS FOR POLITENESS MODELING

This chapter offers, I hope, a fresh way of looking at directness and indirectness, centrally involving neg-politeness (see 1.2.2): its argument is somewhat novel, yes, but based on two traditional sources for pragmatic theorizing, those of Grice (1975, 1989) and Searle (1969, 1975, 1976). The emphasis here on neg-politeness is partly justified by the famous preference (as has been argued; see Sifianou 1999) of Anglo societies for negative politeness. More theoretically, it is justified by the need, in studying neg-politeness, to develop a pragmatics of politeness that will handle the indirect speech acts and implicit meanings so characteristic of neg-politeness, for example in requests. The intensification of meaning characteristic of pos-politeness, on the whole, does not have such problems.

The approach to directness and indirectness taken in this chapter builds on the two classic pillars of pragmatics: the speech act theory of Searle (deriving from Austin), and the Cooperative Principle (CP) and theory of implicature of Grice. These two pillars have differing rationales, and cannot be easily brought together in one theory. This integration, however, I will attempt in this chapter. The classic ideas of Searle and Grice themselves are so familiar to students of pragmatics that I will take them as largely given in this chapter. The Appendix at the end of the book, however, gives a brief sketch of what may be called the “philosophical preliminaries” of pragmatolinguistic politeness: its main sections deal with (1) Grice’s CP, (2) Searle’s speech acts, (3) indirect speech acts (ISAs¹), and (4) the synthesis of these in what I call “Searlo-Gricean pragmatics.”

¹ *Indirect speech acts* are more precisely termed *indirect illocutions*. Henceforward I will use “ISA” for them. They are explained in more detail in the Appendix, A1, A1.3.

3.1 A Problem-solving View of Pragmatics: *S*'s Problem and *H*'s Problem

The foundation stone of modern pragmatics is arguably Grice's definition (1957) of nonnatural meaning (meaning_{NN}),² or "speaker's meaning," as distinct from sentence meaning. (Alternatively the former can be labeled "pragmatic meaning" to distinguish it from "semantic meaning," as discussed in the Appendix, section A1.1.) Grice's formulation was as follows:

"A meant_{NN} something by *x*" is roughly equivalent to "A uttered *x* with the intention of inducing a belief by means of the recognition of this intention."

—Grice (1957: 219)

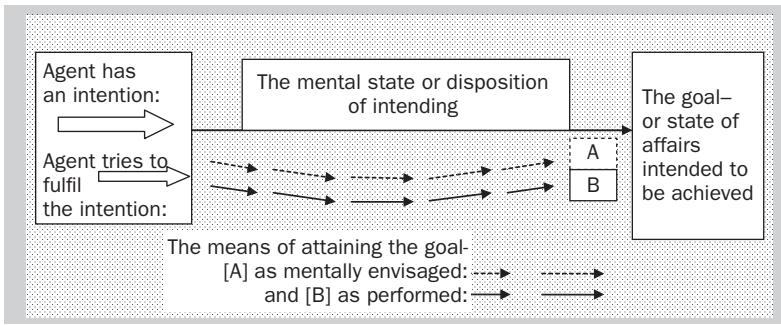
This can be considered a formulaic encapsulation of person-to-person communication by means of language. Two key points are first that pragmatic meaning resides in the communicative intention of *S*, and second that the interpretation of this meaning depends on the recognition (by *H* or some third party) of the intention.³ However, as we have seen, this communicative intention is by no means directly retrievable from the sense of the utterance alone. Inference, by which *H* reconstructs the intention from what is said (making use of contextual assumptions, regulative principles such as the CP, etc.), is fundamental to the pragmatic process of interpretation. Communication is therefore concerned with intentions or goals (from *S*'s point of view) and inferences about intentions or goals (from *H*'s point of view).

A third key point is that there is no way of being sure that what *S* meant (i.e., intended to communicate) is precisely recovered by *H*. There are a number of reasons for this, but the chief one is that the inference process is not a fail-safe deductive process.⁴ What I have referred to as "commonsense reasoning"—technically *abductive* reasoning—is based on certain assumptions (including the assumption that *S* is following the CP), which cannot be verified by *H*. Much of this reasoning is probabilistic. We all know that communication (even between people who speak the same language fluently and know one another well) is subject to misunderstanding,

² Grice (1957) chose the term *nonnatural meaning* to distinguish this (typically linguistic) sense of meaning from the sense of meaning that can be used of natural phenomena, for example, *Those brown leaves mean that the shrub is dying*. In this latter sense, there is an assumed entailment relation between "That shrub has brown leaves" and "That shrub is dying." (See the discussion of Gricean meaning in Jaszczolt 2002: 207–209).

³ For an argument against Gricean intention "at the heart of pragmatics," see Arundale (2008). Culpeper (2011a: 69) argues that communicative intentionality is a scalar property, meaning there are stronger intentions and weaker intentions—a position with which I concur, and which makes Gricean intentionality easier to accept. It is partly because of this unclarity, however, that I prefer to use *goal* (a term that can be more easily applied to unconscious as well as conscious dispositions) rather than *intention*.

⁴ Contrast the essentially deductive model of pragmatic reasoning adopted in Relevance Theory by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995: 93–108), a model that has more recently been modified; see the account of relevance-theoretic comprehension processing in Wilson and Sperber (2004: 613–617).



This diagram represents goal-orientation as a mental structure. The action to attain the goal can be either successful or unsuccessful. Moreover, it may follow the means mentally envisaged, or it may not.

FIGURE 3.1 A schematic view of the speaker's problem-solving process.

and the Gricean formulation of meaning_{NN} helps to explain why this is. We should also recognize that *S*'s communicative intentions can be deliberately unclear (one way of infringing on Grice's Maxim of Manner), and meaning is in part subject to negotiation between the interactants.⁵

Whether we take the speaker's or the addressee's point of view, pragmatics is about problem solving. From *S*'s point of view, the problem to be solved is: "Given that I want to communicate something to *H*, what is a good way of doing so?" From *H*'s point of view, the problem to be solved is: "Given that *S* said such-and-such, what did *S* mean (i.e., intend to communicate) by that?" Here we see that the two types of problem solving are logically quite different, and yet they are closely related, in that the goal of *H* is to reconstruct the meaning that it was the goal of *S* to convey. In their most general form, Figures 3.1 and 3.2 give a visual representation of the pursuit of these goals.

The two kinds of problem solving indicated here are associated with the essential rationality of pragmatic behavior. By "rationality" here I do not mean the formal logic of deductive or inductive reasoning about truth and falsehood, but the practical reasoning that takes us from goals (or ends) to means, and from means to ends. From *S*'s point of view, the need is (given some communicative goals *S* wishes to achieve) to determine the communicative means that will satisfy those

⁵ The idea of "negotiating" meaning is quite current in discourse analysis these days, but it is rarely analyzed. One example of how the opportunity for negotiating meaning arises is due to vagueness or ambivalence (either intentional or not) in what one party (*A*) to a dialogue says. This can subsequently be clarified by a second party (*B*), who may find one interpretation of *A*'s utterance more acceptable than another. *A*, in turn, may either accept or challenge *B*'s interpretation. To illustrate, we may turn to an example like (6a), *Are you able to print out a copy?* which can be interpreted either as an information question or as an indirect request. In response to this utterance by *A*, the interlocutor *B* can either accept or disclaim the directive implication of the utterance. Alternatively, *B* can reply *Yes, do you want me to do it?* thereby offering to *A* the opportunity to disambiguate.

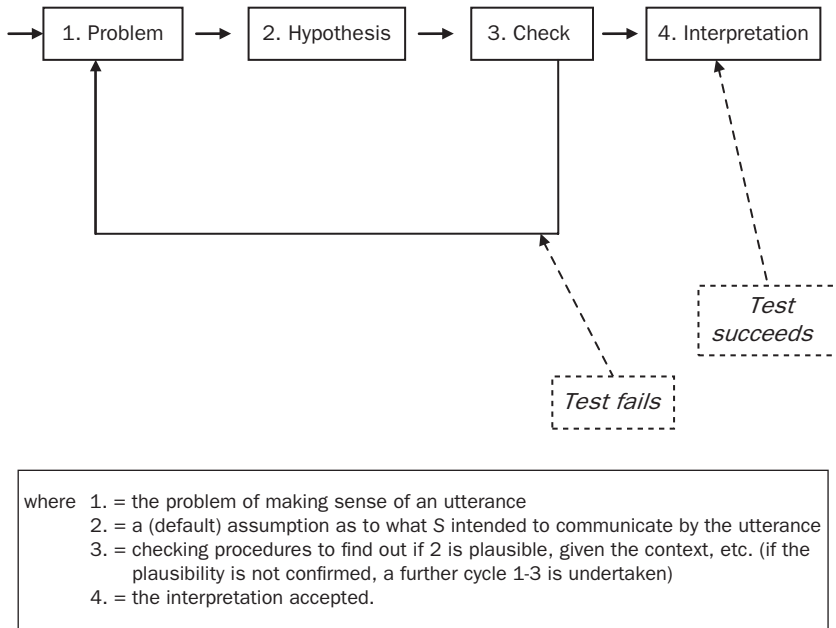


FIGURE 3.2 A schematic view of the hearer's problem-solving process.

goals. B&L (1987: 87–91) discuss this under the heading of Kenny logic. From *H*'s point of view, the need is (given some communicative message received from *S*) to determine the communicative goal(s) that brought about that message. This is what Grice meant in talking of the “working out” of implicatures, and what I briefly discuss in this chapter under the heading of abductive logic or abductive reasoning. In talking of the “essential rationality” of pragmatic behavior, I do not mean to exclude capacities that normally lie outside the province of the logician, such as linguistic decoding, inspired guesswork, and lateral thinking.

3.2 Simple Sentences, Propositionals, and Pragmatic Force

When talking about the communicative intention of *S*, or the pragmatic force of an utterance, it is tempting to assume that the intended meaning or force can be simply described by saying “*S* is uttering a request,” or “*S* is uttering a compliment,” etc. But this is a considerable simplification. For one thing, a request (for example) is intended to be a request *for* something to happen: a request that *H* pass the salt, that *H* post a letter, etc. Searle (1969: 31) made a basic distinction, here, between the propositional part (*p*) and the *illocutionary force indicating device* (*F*), or IFID, represented in the formula *F*(*p*). The *p* is just as much a part of the overall illocutionary force as the *F* is. But even the *F* here should not be thought of as representing a simplex speech-act type such as “request,” since requests come in

many types and flavors; some IFIDs such as *Could I possibly ask you to Verb?* have an indirect, complex, and fairly subtle illocutionary force. Similarly, the *p* should not be thought of as a simplex proposition. Yes, it can be a *proposition* with truth conditions: the promise that *I will meet you at 5 o'clock tomorrow* will acquire a false truth value if I do not turn up at the promised time. On the other hand, the *p* can be what Searle calls a *propositional function*, that is, the logical/semantic⁶ characterization of a question, lacking a truth value TRUE or FALSE. In the case of a *yes-no* question such as *Do you want a lift?* or *Is it time for lunch?* the missing truth value will be typically supplied by an answer *Yes* or *No*. *Wh-* questions, on the other hand, lack some other piece of information needed to complete the propositional content, as in *Where have you been?* (“You have been to *x*,” in which “*x*” represents the missing and sought-after piece of information.) Furthermore, *p* can be what I call a *mand* (Leech 1983: 114–117), which is the propositional element (expressed by the base form of the verb) underlying imperatives, infinitives, and mandative subjunctives. In the directive expressed by *Eat your lunch*, the propositional content “You EAT your lunch” (where in syntactic terms the small capitals represent the bare predicate without any indication of tense, aspect, mood, etc.) is combined with a proposal (*not* a proposition) that this state of affairs come into being. This is the meaning associated with a mand, which typically denotes an unfulfilled and sought-after future.⁷

There are therefore three major categories of propositional entity, a proposition [“IT IS SO”], a propositional function or question [“IS IT SO?”], and a mand [“BE IT SO”]. These distinctions for me are made at the semantic level (where the relation between speaker and hearer is not an issue), whereas for illocutionary distinctions such as the difference between a warning and a promise we have to look to the pragmatic level of speaker’s meaning or meaning-in-context. Searle, I argue, confusingly merged the semantic and the pragmatic, for example in treating the semantic category of yes-no questions on the same level of abstraction as the pragmatic category of warnings *W(p)*, both of these being variants (represented respectively as? (*p*) and *W(p)*) of his general formula *F(p)* (see Searle 1969: 31–32).⁸ Consequently he was

⁶ By “logical/semantic” I intend to include not only the semantic representation of an utterance but the limited pragmatic specifications needed to determine truth conditions in a corresponding proposition. In Neo-Gricean debate (see, e.g., Huang 2007: 216–241), the issue of pragmatic “intrusion” into semantics has been a major bone of contention, and the determination of reference—as required for truth conditionality—has been one of the concerns of that debate.

⁷ The mand is here the meaning associated with the present subjunctive and (typically) with the infinitive. Strictly we should here talk about a “realis mand,” and distinguish this from the “irrealis mand” referring to an unfulfilled present or past, associated with the past subjunctive in many languages. In English, the past subjunctive has virtually undergone a historical merger with the past indicative, and in present-day English irrealis is expressed (with the exception of the “*were* subjunctive”) by the simple past tense, which, with this meaning, I will call the “hypothetical past.” The concept of mand here is paralleled by Halliday’s use of the term *proposal* as distinct from *proposition* (Halliday 1985/1994: 68–71).

⁸ Searle did this, also, by giving grammarlike constitutive rules—which I follow Austin (1962) in calling felicity conditions—for speech act categories.

unable to make appropriate distinctions and generalizations on the semantic level about propositional functions and about mands. If we define a question, as Searle does, as a speech act with such felicity conditions as that (a) *S* does not know “the answer,” (b) *S* wants this information, and (c) the speech act counts as an attempt to elicit this information, then it becomes necessary, as Searle (1969: 66) finds, to make a distinction between “real questions” so defined and “exam questions” where conditions (a) and (b) do not obtain, and where, on the contrary, *S* believes herself to know the answer and wants to find out if *H* knows the answer. And as examples (3a–f) below indicate, Searle’s two types of questions are not the only ones: there are ratiocinative questions, Socratic questions, cross-examination questions, and so on. The generalization to be made about questions cannot be made at an illocutionary (pragmatic) level but is typically in their semantic characterization, viz. that the propositional entity lacks—and in a sense “seeks”—at least one piece of information necessary to make it a complete proposition. So construed, questions, in other words, are propositions with an information gap.

Pragmatically, on the other hand, a question is typically used to elicit propositional information from an addressee: indeed, the canonical logical answer to a question is a proposition, which can be expressed in a complete declarative sentence, or alternatively (and more briefly) in an elliptical nonsentential expression, each filling that gap:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1) | QUESTION: | CANONICAL ANSWER: |
| | “Your mother was born WHERE?” | “My mother was born IN CANADA.” |

The conversational exchange in (1) can be expressed (on the syntactic level) as follows:

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--|
| (2) | Interrogative: | <i>Where was your mother born?</i> |
| | { Declarative response: | <i>My mother was born in Canada.</i> |
| | { Equivalent elliptical response: | <i>In Canada</i> OR JUST: <i>Canada.</i> |

Of course, although the responses in (2) may be recognized as canonical answers, there are many responses to questions (evasive, noncommittal, indirect, uncooperative) that do not follow this pattern. As we will see in later chapters (especially at 6.5), responses to questions are often loaded with polite or impolite implications. A more immediately relevant point here is that questions, like mands, can have a wide variety of illocutionary functions, as these examples suggest:

- (3a) What’s her last name? [LCSAE 128501]
 (CANONICAL: a request for information)
- (3b) Who cares about your hair? [LCSAE 112402]
 (probably a rhetorical question, pragmatically nearly equivalent
 to an assertion “Nobody cares about your hair”)
- (3c) Who killed Abraham Lincoln?
 (probably a quiz question—where *S* probably knows the answer,
 and wants to find out if *H* does)

- (3d) Why didn't you wake me up? [LCSAE 138001]
(probably a complaint or rebuke)
- (3e) Could this go in the mail this afternoon?
(probably an indirect request for action)
- (3f) What?
(a demand for repetition)

All these sentences in the interrogative are bearers of a gap of information, but the reason for the gap, and the function of the speech act, vary according to the example and the context. However, (3a) probably represents the most common (and default) class of question: a request for information, and the majority of question types have as part of their communicative intention the eliciting of some piece of information to fill the semantic gap made apparent in the form of the question.

Corresponding to the three main simple sentence types (declarative, interrogative, and imperative), then, I propose a *semantic representation* in which the propositional element (p) is modified by three different logical operators: $\vdash X$ (proposition, also called statement), $? X$ (question), and $! X$ (mand). For example:

- | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| (4) | James is sitting down. | $\vdash X$ | "IT IS SO" |
| (5) | Is James sitting down? | $? X$ | "IS IT SO?" |
| (6) | Sit down, James. | $! X$ | "BE IT SO" ⁹ |

3.2.1 THE CATEGORY OF MAND

The term *mand* is not well established as are "statement" and "question" and needs some more detailed explanation. The imperative form of the verb, as in (6), is associated not only with commands or directives but with other speech acts for which the action or state of affairs X is represented as unrealized (although it may be realized in the future) and is proposed as desirable, for example, an offer (*Have another sandwich*), a good wish (*Enjoy your meal; Have a good holiday*), an invitation (*Help yourself*), a curse (*Drop dead, bitch!*). There are also third-person subjunctives such as the verb in *Heaven forbid!* and *So be it!* where in English the same base form of the verb is used with the same general "mandative" sense. Further, in subordinate clauses, the same base form of the verb is used in subjunctive and infinitive clauses: *I ask that the court excuse Mrs Williams's outburst; He demanded to see the emperor*. For all these cases where syntactic mood is represented by the invariable base form of the verb, the corresponding general sense is that of a mand.¹⁰

⁹ Here I employ a combination of operator symbols used by Searle (1969: 31) and Grice (1989: 118ff.). However, while Grice calls these "mood indicators," Searle considers them indicators of illocutionary force—a "pragmaticist" position I regard as mistaken.

¹⁰ There exist exceptions to this "mand" interpretation of infinitives: in *Amundsen was the first explorer to reach the South Pole*, the propositional element "reach the South Pole" is factual, not nonfactual and unfulfilled. Thus the semantic category of mand cannot be conflated with syntactic categories such as "infinitive" or "subjunctive".

Again, Searle failed to make this necessary generalization relating to mands. Instead, he made distinctions between illocutions such as commands, requests, offers, and the like, failing to point out some of the common ground in terms of semantics, and some of the variation in terms of pragmatics. Another aspect of this failure was his dividing of pragmatic space into distinct compartmentalized categories, a practice more appropriate to the categorial nature of syntax and semantics than to the often scalar nature of pragmatics.¹¹ To illustrate: if we consider the two speech act types Searle recognized as commands and requests (Searle 1969: 66), he compartmentalized them on the basis that in commands (or orders) *S* has authority over *H*. But in actuality, authority is a matter of degree: the point on the scale at which a directive ceases to be a command and becomes a request is fairly indeterminate.¹² In a military context, a senior officer may have absolute authority over a junior recruit: thus Captain Kirk can issue orders to the crew of the *Starship Enterprise* in the full confidence that they will be carried out. But what about the relation between parent and child, between teacher and pupil, or between elder and younger siblings: Does the parent or the teacher have the authority necessary to command? It is unclear, and the answer is likely to differ with the culture. Similar things can be said about many speech act verbs in English and other languages: the English language makes a terminological distinction between “*request*” and “*command*,” but this is no more referentially determinate in reality than the English language’s semantic distinction between a *hill* and a *mountain* or between *wood* and *forest*.

The example of mands in English shows that one semantic category (the mand) is so broad that it can function across a range of illocutionary meaning. The difference between speech events termed “directives” and those termed “offers,” for instance, is not to be found in any necessary formal difference of construction, but rather in whether the action is envisaged for the benefit of *S* or of *H*—a distinction that is not always clear. Similarly, the difference between a command and a request lies not so much in the extraneous matter of “authority” as in whether *S*’s utterance allows *H* the option of compliance or noncompliance—a judgment that is scalar rather than absolute. (Thus *Take a seat* in one context may be considered “an offer,” in another “a request,” and in another “an order.”) However, the imperative class of sentences is largely restricted to second-person subjects (where the subject is usually

¹¹ The impossibility of a clear-cut taxonomic analysis of illocutionary acts, as Searle envisages, has been maintained by a number of scholars: Bertuccelli Papi (2000), Kohnen (2000b), and Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000). Taavitsainen and Jucker (2008: 110) take a view close to the present one, in stressing that illocutionary acts should be analyzed in “a multi-dimensional pragmatic space, including several dimensions.”

¹² Austin and Searle, in their seminal thinking about speech acts, were prone to what I once called (Leech 1983: 174–175) the *illocutionary verb fallacy*: the assumption that if there is a verb in the English language that refers to some form of speech act behavior, there is a corresponding category of speech act. In real communication, speech act behavior is largely defined in terms of scales or gradients, and there is no determinate boundary between the kinds of behavior described (say) by such terms as *suggestion* and *offer* or *suggestion* and *advice* (see further 7.1 and 7.4.2).

omitted) and is clearly pragmatically specialized to utterances where *S* wants *H* to perform an action. In other words, the default interpretation of an imperative is (semantically) as a mand, and (pragmatically) as a directive.

3.2.2 TERMINOLOGY FOR ABSTRACTIONS ON SYNTACTIC, SEMANTIC, AND PRAGMATIC LEVELS

A major purpose of discussion up to now has been to demonstrate that, just as there is a widely accepted need for three interconnected levels of linguistic analysis (syntax, semantics, pragmatics) relating to communication,¹³ there is correspondingly a need to distinguish three levels of terminology relating to the three classes of sentence: declarative, interrogative, and imperative. Table 3.1 shows their relationship. Loose or inconsistent use of these terms can often lead to confusion, and so they need to be carefully distinguished. However, the classes represented in the table are not exhaustive: there are other categories (such as exclamations) on the syntactic level, and other categories (such as expressives) on the pragmatic level. What the table represents is a set of important terms for default realizations and default interpretations on the three levels.

The words on the right are terms that it is useful to reserve as a cover term for all three types on each level. Thus, just as a sentence is a syntactic unit, a propositional is a semantic unit, and an illocution is a pragmatic unit. The term *propositional* is here used as a cover term for propositions, questions, and mands, just as “illocution” is a cover term for assertives, rogatives, and directives.

There are a number of other things to say about this table. The terms at the top, on the syntactic level, are well known from traditional grammar. Of those on the bottom or pragmatic level, “assertive” and “directive” are familiar major classes from Searle’s taxonomy of illocutionary acts (1976), but “rogative”¹⁴ is a term I have pressed into service, to fill a gap in linguistic vocabulary. It means an illocution by which *S* seeks to elicit from *H* a reply filling a gap of information. Thus unlike a question (here seen as a semantic abstraction), a rogative definitely

TABLE 3.1
Terminology differentiating syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels.

				(Cover term)
SYNTACTIC	Declarative	Interrogative	Imperative	[Simple] sentence
SEMANTIC	Proposition	Question	Mand	Propositional
PRAGMATIC	Assertive	Rogative	Directive	Illocution

¹³ There are additional levels such as phonology (especially suprasegmental phonology) and lexis that are relevant to politeness phenomena but omitted from discussion here.

¹⁴ In Leech (1983: 206) I used “rogative” differently, for a class of speech act verbs.

involves interaction between a speaker and an addressee.¹⁵ The need for three levels is, I hope, clear enough. The syntactic classes (defined by formal characteristics such as syntactic order, occurrence of *wh*- words, initial imperative verbs, etc.) often closely correspond with the semantic classes, but do not necessarily do so. For example, not all *mands*¹⁶ are realized as imperative clauses; they can show up syntactically as subjunctives or infinitives, as we saw above. Similarly, not all questions are realized as interrogative clauses; they may be declarative (*I want to know if you still want that couch* [LCSAE 122201]); or imperative (*Just tell me what day it is* [LCSAE 120201]). There is also no direct correspondence between the semantic and pragmatic classes. For example, most obviously, the directive class (as discussed in A1.1) can be realized as a proposition (*You could entertain the kids while I'm away*) or as a question like *Could you open the door?* Also, an assertive can be realized as a question (*Isn't that the pits?* [LCSAE 119201] is more or less equivalent to *That's the pits*) or as an imperative (*Don't forget you're going to do a systems change today* [LCSAE 141802]). However, these are approximate equivalences, as the next paragraph will emphasize.

The horizontal line on Table 3.1 separating pragmatics from semantics aims to show that the connection between the pragmatic and the semantic levels allows for not only the default or canonical associations (rogative realized as question, assertive realized as proposition, etc.) but also for noncanonical, less direct connections that may be motivated by politeness and other factors (e.g., *Could you go get the clothes?* [LCSAE 123603]). And the point that was mentioned earlier needs to be repeated here: pragmatic meaning can to some degree involve a combination of different illocutionary forces. As an obvious case in point, consider tag questions (e.g., *It's delicious, isn't it?* [LCSAE 108203]), where the first part is assertive and the second rogative. Pragmatically, a tag question retrospectively modifies the force of the preceding statement, as *S* seeks to obtain from *H* an assent to what has been asserted. The whole utterance combines both assertive and rogative components. Mixed illocutions are also found among the examples just quoted: the example *Don't forget you're going to do a systems change today*, although its main function may seem to be assertive (to convey a piece of information about what is going to happen today), also has a directive element “Don't forget...,” and the two illocutions are associated respectively with the main clause and the subordinate clause

¹⁵ This is a simplification: I am passing over the great debate among Neo-Griceans (see Appendix, A2) and relevance theorists about how to refine the problematic boundary between (in Grice's terms) what *S* said and what *S* meant. It is generally agreed that there is considerable interpenetration between the elements of semantics and of pragmatics—and, in particular, an “intrusion” of pragmatics into semantics, for example in the existence in the semantic representation of deictic elements, which refer to elements in the context. These include first- and second-person pronouns, referring to *S* and *H*. Nevertheless, *S* and *H* are *part of* a pragmatic representation, whereas they are only *referred to* by elements of a semantic representation.

¹⁶ In fact, in connecting imperative sentences and directive illocutions, we are concerned only with *mands* having “you” as agent.

of the sentence. A similar point could be made about *Just tell me what day it is*, where the more important illocution is the rogative expressed in the subordinate clause, which however is combined with the directive force conveyed by the initial imperative.¹⁷ Any connection in Table 3.1 that involves horizontal as well as vertical linkage is a sign of an indirect illocution.

Speech acts as discrete Searlian categories are oversimplified and misleading constructs, as has been argued in this section. The main reason for this is that pragmatic reality often deals with *scales* of illocutionary force, rarely with all-or-nothing categories. So the question poses itself: What is the status of the three labels “assertive,” “rogative,” and “directive” at the bottom of Table 3.1? Do they actually represent anything real? My answer is, yes, they represent a general **default**, or normally expected interpretation (see 3.4).

3.3 Exclamations and Other Isolates (including Pragmatic Particles)

Before further consideration of defaults, we should briefly consider a fourth syntactic class sometimes included for completeness, that of **exclamations**. On first consideration, sentential exclamations might be regarded as a subcategory of statements—in fact, as statements that are emotionally charged. For example, consider these exclamations:

- (1) *What a wonderful mother-in-law* I have got. [BNC KCF]
- (2) The skits were *so funny* last night. [LCSAE 135202]

They have the same truth conditions as statements (cf. *I have got a wonderful mother-in-law*), but in addition to this, one element of their meaning (in italics) is intensified and emotively heightened.¹⁸ Another way to look at exclamations is to see them, like statements with tag questions, as a combination of two illocutions: with an assertive and an exclamative element.

In considering emotive language more generally, we need to go beyond exclamations as sentence classes representing a propositional structure—exclamations with a finite verb like (1) and (2)—and to include in our survey those nonsentential (or nonclausal) utterances that do not have a propositional structure. It can be argued that many exclamations that appear to be propositionally incomplete, such as *What a nightmare!* or *How wonderful!* are semantically elliptical versions of full sentential utterances like *What a nightmare that airport closure was!* or *How*

¹⁷ Strictly speaking, all rogatives are a subclass of directives; they are *ways of getting H to do something*, viz. give a reply. However, in linguistics there is a particularly crucial distinction to make between utterances intended to elicit a linguistic response and those intended to elicit a nonlinguistic response. This is what is represented here by the rogative-directive distinction.

¹⁸ Exclamations, it may be noted, have a role in (im)politeness; as an example, their intensifying effect makes them useful for pos-politeness purposes, as in the compliment-paying language illustrated by (1).

wonderful the sunset is! However, since there are arbitrarily many ways in which the wording or sense of such utterances could be completed, it is better to argue that the completion of the proposition in such cases is supplied pragmatically, rather than semantically or syntactically—that is, through contextually available information.

Apart from these, there are many utterances that lack propositional structure, and that enter into the sentential structures of syntax only peripherally. Grammatically speaking, they are *isolates*—also called “inserts” by Biber et al. (1999: 93–94), who have defined them as “stand-alone words which are characterized in general by their inability to enter into syntactic relations with other structures,” although they also “have a tendency to attach themselves prosodically to a larger structure” (1999: 1082). Various called interjections, pragmatic markers or particles, discourse markers, response signals, and the like, they are capable of standing alone as a turn, or else of combining with other sentential or nonsentential structures; they include interjections such as *Oh, Ooh, Wow, Hello, Hi, Bye, OK, Heck, Yeah, and No*. These forms deserve attention not only because of their frequency in everyday talk but also because of the role many of them play in (im)politeness: for example, *Ooh* and *Wow* have an emotively intensifying force, and as greetings *Hello* and *Hi* offer courteous recognition to another individual (see 7.5.3). They are a further reminder that pragmatics, and more particularly politeness, cannot be exclusively concerned with propositional phenomena—all too often a limitation of the philosophical tradition. Many of them might be characterized in Searle’s terms as illocutions consisting of an IFID (*F*) without any propositional content (*p*). Others, like *anyway*, can be associated with Gricean conventional implicatures (3.7). To these must also be added discourse markers like *well, you know, right, then, and I mean*, which tend to occur at the beginning or end of larger utterances, and among other things have an attitudinal or rapport-building function.¹⁹ Furthermore, there are also formulae such as *please, thank you, and sorry*, which are strongly associated with particular polite speech events but which, through pragmaticalization (3.7), in present-day English have lost their original sentential elaborations (“if you please,” “I thank you,” etc.) and often occur as pure isolates.²⁰

3.4 Default Interpretations and Default Decisions

It has become increasingly accepted, in one form or another, that *default* assumptions and interpretations play an important role in the natural, practical reasoning

¹⁹ An alternative pragmatic account of discourse markers, from the viewpoint of Relevance Theory, is that they are indicators of procedural, rather than conceptual, meaning; see Blakemore (2002).

²⁰ In the language of the nineteenth century, as exemplified in the works of Charles Dickens, *please* generally retained signs of its origin as a verb, in the conditional clause *if you please* and the imperative + infinitive *please to* + Verb formulae. At the same time, the evolution of *please* into a simple isolate was under way (cf. Wichmann 2005: 231).

and decision-making procedures used by humans, and are applicable to pragmatics and to cognitive processing in general.²¹ This conception of logic has been extending its influence over the decades since Grice put forward his CP. The concept of defeasibility or cancelability, as used by Grice, depended on that of default interpretation: we assume that a certain interpretation will apply *by default*, unless it is explicitly denied or overridden. Indeed, we can interpret implicature in this light, as a conclusion that one comes to using the CP as a set of default assumptions, but that can be canceled, for example, by *H*'s further clarification. To use an example illustrating the first Maxim of Quantity:

- (3) A: Can you tell me where the Sauls live?
B: Oh—somewhere up there [pointing up the street].

Here the default assumption—that B is following the first Maxim of Quantity—is likely to lead A to the conclusion (implicature) that B doesn't know precisely where the Sauls live. On the other hand, the default interpretation does not always apply, and would be overridden if B's reply were to continue: *It's at number 25, to be exact.*

Corresponding to default interpretations on the part of *H* are default *decisions* on the part of *S* in composing an utterance. In fact, it can be claimed that *H* makes default interpretations *because* he expects *S* to make default decisions, and *S* makes default decisions *because* she expects *H* to make default interpretations. To make a default decision in composing an utterance is normally to choose the easiest and most common option for expressing a particular meaning. For example, a default decision in asking a question is to choose a straightforward interrogative sentence (e.g., *What are you doing?*), rather than a declarative or imperative one (such as *I'm curious to know what you are doing*; *Please tell me what you are doing*). The latter two would be chosen (via the Maxim of Manner) only if there is some special reason for using a less direct and more complex formulation.

Crucial to the present modeling of politeness and of ISAs is another aspect of default thinking: the default interpretation of sentence classes. Just as interrogative sentences have a default interpretation as rogatives (information-seeking illocutions), so declarative sentences have their default interpretation as assertives, utterances whose purpose is to make *H* aware of something that *S* believes to be the case. This typically may be something that *H* did not know already, or was not so fully aware of, or needed to be reminded of, and so forth. However, there is not a 100 percent rule mapping sentences on to illocutions. Some "marked" statements appear to be violations of the first Maxim of Quantity, not being informative in this sense:

- (4) A: Hi Susan. B: You got your hair cut. A: Yeah. [LCSAE 112101]

²¹ On default logic, see Reiter (1980), Antoniou (1999); on defeasible logic, see Nute (1994, 2003).

The statement *You got your hair cut* in (4) presumably tells A nothing that she did not know before (apparently violating the first Maxim of Quantity), but it does convey to A the “meta-information” that the haircut has been noticed. This could therefore be a piece of dialogue with a *phatic* function simply designed to open up a topic in which *S* and *H* share an interest. There is also a mild element of politeness here, in that B shows she is empathetic enough toward B as an individual to be observant of her appearance. Even tautological statements (breaching the Maxim of Quantity) such as *We’re none of us getting any younger* (say, in answer to an inquiry about *S*’s health or well-being) may have such a function.

What about the third sentence class, the imperative? Semantically, this is a mand, which, as we have seen, is quite general in meaning: it expresses the desire/desirability that *X* (or not-*X*) be the case. However, it is a mand of which the (typically implicit) subject refers to *H*. Pragmatically, it has a default interpretation as a directive. Looking more at less at random through the imperatives with common verbs in the LCSAE, I came across these typical examples:

Be quiet.	Say that one more time.
Have a breakfast bun.	Get in the car.
Help yourself.	Make a little pattern out of it or something.
Go wash your hands.	Don’t do as I do—Do as I say.
See how big the lake is.	Think about it, Katie.
Come back tomorrow.	

Although out of context, it is difficult to determine the illocutionary force of all these utterances; most of them do appear to be directives. The nondefault exceptions are *Have a breakfast bun* and *Help yourself*, which are more like Searle’s commissives than his directives: they offer something for the benefit of the hearer.

3.5 The Representation of Pragmatic Meaning

Let us assume that a semantic representation in one of the propositional forms outlined in 3.2 ($\vdash X$, $? X$, or $! X$) is to be interpreted pragmatically by default. I have already suggested that the pragmatic representation formula $F(p)$ used by Searle (1969) is inadequate, as the *F* here identifies speech act categories such as “request,” “offer,” etc., which I have already argued are inappropriately categorical: they belong to the everyday metapragmatic vocabulary of English, but are not appropriate or theoretically sound as representations of illocutionary force.²² Instead, I propose that the illocutionary force of an utterance be represented by a set of statements of

²² However, this does not mean that metapragmatics (i.e., reference, in everyday discourse, to pragmatic phenomena) does not play a part in conveying illocutionary force. A familiar example is the use of hedged performatives, as in *I want to thank you...*, *Can I ask you...*? etc. On metapragmatics, see Verschueren (1995a, 1995b), Bublitz and Hübler (2007).

propositional attitude that are attributed to *S*. Searle's speech act category definitions, however, are helpful, as his felicity conditions provide a useful starting point. Recall that Searle defines speech acts by using these four types of "rules" or (to use Austin's term) *felicity conditions*; the illustrative example in the box is the speech act of "question" or (as I have called it) "rogative."

Propositional content condition: Any proposition or propositional function

Preparatory conditions: 1. *S* does not know "the answer," i.e., does not know if the proposition is true... [the rest of the explanation omitted]
 2. It is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* will provide the information at that time without being asked.

Sincerity condition: *S* wants this information.

Essential condition: Counts as an attempt to elicit this information from *H*.

Of these four kinds of condition, the *propositional content condition* is (in my understanding) not part of the illocutionary force specification; it is, in fact, a description of the logical/semantic representation of the utterance, which is to be interpreted pragmatically.

The *preparatory conditions* and the *sincerity condition*, however, clearly belong to pragmatics. The preparatory conditions are, in effect, default preconditions for the speech act to take place. If *S* knew the answer, there would be no point in asking a rogative; and if it was obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* would provide the information without being asked, then again there would be no point in asking. If we convert these into propositional attitudes on the part of *S*, they are in an appropriate form to represent part of the presumed force of the speech act as intended by *S*:

1. *S* does not know "the answer" to the question.
2. It is not obvious to *S* that *H* will provide the information without being asked.

These are not conditions that have to be separately learned and known by the language user; in fact, they can be seen as reasonable extensions of Grice's Maxims of Quantity (a) "Make your contribution as informative as is required" and (b) "Do not make your contribution more informative than is required." Or, simplified according to Levinson's Neo-Gricean formulation (2000; see Huang 2007: 41–46), (a) "Do not say less than is required" and (b) "Do not say more than is required." The point is that Grice's and Levinson's specifications of informativeness were formulated for propositions, and they need to be enlarged to include utterances in the nonproposition category of questions. For this, we can reformulate the Maxim of Quantity as "Do not give or seek more information than is required (for the presumed current conversational goals of *S* and *H*)."

Someone who asked a rogative that contravened conditions

1 or 2 above (where *S* knew the answer, or where it was obvious that *H* would provide the information without being asked) would simply be asking a “silly question,” a question that was not needed—unless there were a special reason for such questions, for example, where *S* is an examiner, testing the examinee *H*’s knowledge.

If we move on to the sincerity condition, this is again in the form of a propositional attitude:

3. *S* wants this information (i.e., has the goal of getting to know the answer to the rogative).

The sincerity condition is again assumed to be present because of the CP; in the default case, if *S* did not want the information, she would be misrepresenting her reason for asking the rogative. Notice, however, that we have to broaden the condition for the Maxim of Quality to apply; in Grice’s terms, this maxim says that one should not claim to be true that which is false, which, again, applies only to statements. A question cannot be either true or false, but it can carry a false implicature, and that is what is at issue here. Hence the Gricean CP can be extended from statements to implicatures, and hence can apply to the implicatures of nonpropositions, as well as of propositions. (Implicatures can belong to statements as well as to questions and mands. So the sincerity condition here and elsewhere is interpreted not as an entailment but as a default implicature by virtue of the Maxim of Quality.)

What I am now aiming to show is that the Gricean CP can apply to the meaning of both propositions and nonpropositions, and that part of demonstrating this is demonstrating how Searle’s standard preparatory and sincerity conditions can be reformulated as conversational implicatures on the basis of the Maxims of Quantity and Quality. Another part of this demonstration is to justify treating such felicity conditions as implicatures, rather than (say) as entailments or constitutive rules as proposed by Searle (1969).

To show this, we first remind ourselves that conversational implicatures are not always triggered by the *flouting* or *exploitation* of maxims of the CP. There are also implicatures that simply result from observance of the CP, as noted by Grice (1975: 51) and as elaborated by Huang (2007: 27–31). For example, the assertion

- (34) There’s a snowman on the front lawn.

carries the implicature (according to the Maxim of Quality)

- (34a) *S* believes that there’s a snowman on the front lawn.

which is precisely the kind of sincerity condition (“*S* believes *p*”) that Searle proposes for an assertion. However, the reconsideration of (34a) as an implicature loosens up the connection between (34) and (34a). By a default interpretation of the assertion, it is implicated that “*S* believes that *p*,” i.e., that (34a) is believed to be true by the speaker. But there are circumstances in which *S* might be violating the maxim (deliberately misleading *H*) or flouting the maxim (being hyperbolic, metaphorical, ironic, etc.) so that (34a) no longer holds. So (34), derived by default, is a

cancelable (defeasible) assumption, which will be the first port of call in deriving, if need be, a more indirect interpretation.

Similar default implicatures (as we may reasonably call them) apply to rogatives, directives, and other types of speech event. For example, a primary step in pragmatically interpreting the mand “Just pay me the money you owe me” is to derive the implicature that *S*’s communicative goal is to get *H* to pay the money—that is, to interpret the mand (by default) as a directive. Only if *H* judges that this implicature is false—that is, if the Maxim of Quality is judged to be violated—will *H* access other interpretations, such as that *S* is indulging in playful banter.²³

The last of Searle’s four types of felicity condition, the essential condition, specifies what kind of speech act an utterance “counts as.” For example, a request “counts as an attempt to get *H* to do *A*” (where *A* is a relevant future action), and an assertion “counts as an undertaking to the effect that *p* represents an actual state of affairs” (where *p* represents the proposition concerned; Searle 1969: 66). This condition, which is a hangover from Searle’s constitutive rule-based approach, does not add anything to the other conditions, except that it describes the performance of the particular category of speech act, whereas the preparatory and sincerity conditions already provide enough information to determine its illocutionary force. The essential condition can therefore be disregarded as a redundant part of the pragmatic account of utterances, and it can better be considered as metapragmatic, for example, in defining what such English-language terms as *request* and *assertion* mean.

My conclusion is that the definition of an illocutionary force is simply a brief list of felicity conditions (= Searle’s preparatory and sincerity rules) in the form of Gricean conversational implicatures. Thus, the definition of a rogative is:

1. *S* does not know “the answer” to the question. (by the first Maxim of Quantity)
2. It is not obvious to *S* that *H* will provide the information . . . (by the second Maxim of Quantity)
3. *S* wants this information (i.e., has the goal of getting to know the answer to the question). (by the Maxim of Quality)

3.6 Neo-Gricean Default Thinking

In the Neo-Gricean school of thought, which has worked toward the refinement and improvement of Gricean pragmatics, the boundary between Grice’s “what is said” (the truth-conditional territory of semantics) and “what is implicated” (the context-influenced inference-driven territory of pragmatics) has been extensively

²³ Notice that the presupposition “*H* owes *S* money” is similarly defeasible as a subordinate assertion of the whole mand, expressed by a relative clause. More obviously nonserious mands such as “Be an angel,” “Drop dead,” and “Get a life” are likely to be more readily treated as ISAs.

analyzed and debated. According to one prominent view, that of Levinson (2000: 11–21), there is an in-between level that is the domain of utterance types rather than utterance tokens, where generalizations about meaning preference obtain, and where (in the words of Jaszczolt 2002) “instead of going through the stage of an underspecified representation, the interlocutors go straight to the preferred, presumed, salient representation.” Levinson’s theory of *presumptive meaning* reworks Grice’s category of *generalized conversational implicature*, which comprises pragmatic inferences that, instead of being particular to individual contexts, are general and presumed to apply by default.²⁴ It is in tune with this thinking that the frontier between propositionals (in semantics) and illocutions (in pragmatics) is bridged, as in the present account, by the default interpretation of propositions, questions, and mands as direct speech acts, viz. as assertives, rogatives, directives, and so on. Levinson’s principles (2000) of “presumptive meaning” (a reworking of Grice’s Quantity and Manner Maxims; for a summary, see Huang 2007) amount to default “settings” for the creation and interpretation of utterances. The following simplified summary (due to Huang) presents the modified maxims of the CP both from *S*’s point of view and *H*’s point of view:

The Q-principle (simplified)

Speaker: Do not say less than is required (bearing I [see below] in mind).

Addressee: What is not said is not the case.

The I-principle (simplified)

Speaker: Do not say more than is required (bearing Q [see above] in mind).

Addressee: What is generally said is stereotypically and specifically exemplified.

The M-principle (simplified)

Speaker: Do not use a marked expression without reason.

Addressee: What is said in a marked way is not unmarked.

While the Q- and I-principles are mainly concerned with re-modeling Grice’s Maxims of Quantity, the M-Principle is a partial rethink of his Maxims of Manner.

Neo-Griceans like Levinson, focusing on a reworking of Grice’s Maxims of Quantity and Manner, have given rather less attention to his Maxims of Quality and Relation. Yet strangely, Quality and Relation are the maxims that play the most important role in explicating politeness in ISAs. The Maxim of Quality (“truthfulness”) is important for ISAs because it provides one of the main criteria whereby the explicit meaning is rejected, on the grounds that one or more of its felicity conditions is untenable, unbelievable. The Maxim of Relation (“relevance”) is

²⁴ Jaszczolt (2006/2010) provides a clear introduction to the role of default thinking in both semantics and pragmatics. She cites Bach (1984), Levinson (2000), Asher and Lascarides (2003) as among many who have advocated default interpretations, which from different viewpoints may be regarded as belonging to pragmatics, semantics, or a third component of meaning between the two.

important in constituting the bridge between the explicit and implicit meanings of an ISA. “Relevance” here means making a perceived contribution to the communicative goals of *S* or *H* (see Leech 1983: 94; Levinson 2000: 17). The rejection of the overt meaning of *Can you post a letter?* (“Are you capable of posting this letter?”) and the acceptance of the covert meaning (“I am requesting you to post this letter”) are largely due to the irrelevance of the former and the relevance of the latter in the context. See the Appendix, A1.3 for further discussion.

It is in the clarification of default/defeasibility logic that I find the Neo-Gricean contribution to politeness modeling most apparent.

This is an appropriate point to itemize some applications of default thinking in this politeness model:

- (1) The default decision for *S* is to express a meaning directly (e.g., expressing a statement by using a straightforward assertive), not as an ISA.
- (2) Consequently, on the part of *H*, default interpretations of statements are as assertives, of questions as rogatives, and of imperatives as directives.²⁵
- (3) In pragmatics, the CP is in operation as a default. Hence as interpreters, we look (unless the CP is suspended or obviously flouted) for informativeness, truthfulness, relevance, clarity, etc., and it is only if these qualities are judged to be lacking that we look for nondefault interpretations.
- (4) Defeasible (cancelable) reasoning works out the most appropriate interpretation for *H*, should a default solution (although usually correct) not apply in the current context.
- (5) It is a key feature of the present account of politeness that in pragmatics also, pragmalinguistically polite utterances are given polite interpretations by default. That is, a politeness implicature “*S* is being polite (in some way and to some extent)” is derived if there is a maxim of the PP that applies, such that the utterance is judged to give more value to *H* than to *S*. Nonpolite interpretations, such as sarcastic exploitations of the PP, require extra processing, and are implicated only where default polite interpretations are clearly inappropriate.²⁶

²⁵ This is true at the highest level of generality; however, we have to allow for the fact that, through pragmaticalization (3.7), certain semi-formulaic illocutions “short-circuit” the interpretative process, leading to a different, less general, default reading. For example, questions beginning with *Could you...* are no doubt construed as (polite) directives by default, since the probability that a question beginning *Could you* is a request (i.e., a directive) is very high; see 6.6 for evidence that *Could you...* is the most common conventionally indirect request in British English.

²⁶ This implies that there is not just a distinction between default and nondefault representations, but a hierarchy of defaults. For example, the lowest-level, or primary default, for a question beginning *Can...* is that it is a request for information: *Can he talk?* (of a parrot); *Can you smell burning?* The secondary default (especially in sentences beginning *Can you*) is that the utterance is a somewhat polite request (e.g., in a suitable context *Can you switch off the TV?*). A tertiary default would arise if the politeness of *Can you* is countermanded by the rudeness of what follows, in which case an ironic (sarcastic) interpretation will result: *Can you please shut up?* (see 8.3.2).

Many studies of politeness in recent years (e.g., Watts 2003 and Mills 2003; see 2.2.11) have assumed that, because it is possible to think of exceptional contexts in which seemingly (i.e., pragmalinguistically) polite utterances are interpreted as impolite and vice versa, politeness is entirely dependent on the situation and on the interpretation of the individual participants, so that there can be no such things as “polite expressions,” “polite meanings,” or “polite utterances” in or out of context. With defeasible reasoning²⁷ seen as a cardinal mechanism of interpretation, however, this argument no longer holds. This is a significant step, as without it, the pessimistic view that there can be no predictive or generalizable statements about politeness is difficult to challenge. The claim is not that we can tell, examining an utterance out of context, how polite or impolite it is. Rather, the claim is that, out of context, one can make a judgment that a speech event U_i is (to some degree) polite or impolite, and that (relatively speaking) one can judge whether U_i (say *I’m sorry*) is more or less polite than U_j (say *I’m extremely sorry*).

3.7 Conventional Implicature and Pragmaticalization

We now discuss one further Gricean theme: that of *conventional implicature*. Unlike conversational (or nonconventional) implicatures, which as previously noted depend on the operation of the CP and which can be “worked out” by defeasible, abductive reasoning, Grice’s conventional implicatures (Grice 1975: 44–45) depend on using particular expressions in particular structural positions, such as *but* as a conjunction, *therefore* as an adverb, and *manage* as a verb + *to* + infinitive. Conventional implicatures are short-circuiting implicatures, deriving a pragmatic meaning by convention rather than by inference. If someone says

(35) I love him_i, *but* he_i really annoys me sometimes.

the conventional implicature derived from the connective *but* is that the speaker sees the two propositions “I love A” and “A really annoys me sometimes” as expected to have contrasting truth values; that is, the assertion of the second proposition is surprising, in view of the first. The “meta-proposition” that “In P *but* Q there is a pre-existing expectation that P and Q have different truth values” is not among the truth conditions of sentence (35). However, it is a quite general rule that *but* placed between two propositions generates such an implicature.

In this respect, conventional implicatures, like generalized conversational implicatures, belong to Levinson’s in-between territory of utterance type, or “presumptive meaning,” already briefly described. Also, conventional implicatures, being dependent on the occurrence of particular words in particular contexts, show an affinity to the pragmatic meanings associated with isolates (e.g., words like *hi*

²⁷ For a worked-out system of defeasible logic, see Nute (1994).

and *yeah*, as discussed in 3.3). *Hi* has no propositional or referential content, but its meaning can be explicated by the metapragmatic proposition “*S* greets *H*.” *Yeah* has no propositional or referential content in itself, but its meaning can be expounded by the statement “*S* assents to what *H* has said.” These statements illustrate the pragmatic nature of such meanings, involving as they do illocutionary force communicated between speaker and addressee, but without propositional content. The meanings of polite formulae like *please* and *thanks* can be treated similarly, in terms of conventional implicature. For example, *please* as an isolate has a conventional meaning perhaps best expressed performatively: “*S* (hereby) utters a somewhat polite directive.” *Please* is a clear example (in Searle’s terms) of an IFID, a marker of illocutionary force. Even an utterance lacking other directive features can still be interpreted as a request by virtue of the presence of *please*:

- (2a) Is Colin in please? [LCSAE 124502]
- (2b) Cup of tea please.²⁸ [BNC KC8]

The first three words of (2a), part of a telephone message, indicate that this utterance is purely an information question—in pragmatic terms, a rogative. However, the addition of *please* marks it with the function of an indirect directive: *S* is requesting that *H* perform some action. This is clarified as the message continues with an indirect request to have the call returned:

- (3) If he could return my call at four oh five eight five eight fourteen hundred extension two nine four... Oklahoma News Network... [LCSAE 124502]

Polite expressions that can be explained in terms of conventional implicature bring us back to *pragmaticalization*. Like grammaticalization, pragmaticalization is a process that takes place gradually over time, sometimes over centuries, sometimes over decades, leading to an expression’s idiomaticization and eventual formal/phonetic reduction to a brief, often invariant or semi-invariant, formula. It can be assumed that pragmaticalization takes place through frequent usage in association with a given generic context (cf. the discussion of frames in 2.2.9). This has happened to *Please*, which comes from a medieval borrowing of an Old French verb meaning “give pleasure,” and has been attached to requesting utterances in a progressively reduced form from *if it please you*, *if you please*, etc., in which the politeness lies in deferring to the addressee’s wish. Eventually this ends up in present-day English as the single invariant pragmatic marker *please* (see further 6.4.1(b)). The politeness

²⁸ *Please* can be used nondirectively, as in a host’s invitation *Please help yourself*. In this case *please* disguises an offer as a request, suggesting that *H* will do *S* a favor in accepting the offer. I would argue that this is a polite gesture, eliminating all face threat for the addressee by suggesting that *H* would really do *S* a favor by accepting. Another exception is a nonpolite exasperated use of *please*, as in *Sit down. Please!* Again, there is a default use, and there are also nondefault uses in offers, entreaties, etc. Intonation has an important role in signaling the force associated with *please*, as has been shown by Wichmann (2004, 2005).

marker *please* has reached a formulaic extremity on the scale of pragmaticalization, so that any supposition that the present-day speaker or addressee inferentially “works out” its meaning from an antiquated expression such as “if it please you” would be absurd.²⁹ The link between *please* and its pragmatic force is now purely a matter of convention. In sum, pragmaticalization may lead ultimately to the conventionalized association of an expression with its pragmatic meaning—that is, to conventional implicature.³⁰

Something similar can be said about routinized semi-formulae such as *Could you V* or *Would you mind Ving*, which are virtually specialized to the pragmatic function of a directive, although their polite origin is still transparent (with a face-value force similar to “Would you be able to . . . ?” and “Would you object to . . . ?” respectively). For these requests, we can postulate two parallel paths of interpretation. On the one hand, they retain the quality of a particular kind of polite directive force (see 6.3.3), owing to the inferential path of indirectness that accounts for their ISA status. On the other hand, they have become so routinized that as a short-circuiting interpretative rule, a conventional implicature may be proposed: “*S hereby utters a politeⁱ request*” (the superscript ⁱ signaling the appropriate index of politeness—here linked to optionality). They have become part of a ready-made toolkit of politeness. As a conventional interpretation grows in frequency and idiomaticity, the inferential path is short-circuited and weakened, and eventually decays. Moreover, conventionalization is accompanied by a weakening of pragmatolinguistic politeness. Different ISA formulae have no doubt reached differing stages of this process.³¹ The concept of frame (see 2.2.9), as an explanation of politeness, comes into its own as a result of pragmaticalization, where a (semi-)formulaic utterance is conventionally associated with a generalized context.

3.8 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has in part presented a historical view. In this conclusion, I will try to bring together the important threads of the story, and present them “synchronically,”

²⁹ Note, however, the survival of *If it please the court* in courtroom language.

³⁰ The formulaicity associated with pragmaticalized expressions can be made sense of (see Aijmer 1996; Terkourafi 2002) in terms of the frame theory of politeness (see 2.2.9): that politeness is definable in terms of cognitively constructed frames retrieved from memory and applied to situations holistically. This does not mean, however, as Terkourafi acknowledges, that the inferential route for arriving at polite implicatures is invalidated. In fact, the inferential route to politeness is needed to explain the conventionalized interpretations associated with particular frames.

³¹ Authors have conceptualized this *pragmaticalization* in somewhat different ways, although there is much overlap of thinking if not of terminology. See discussion by Aijmer (1996: 6–27) of *conversational routines* and by Watts (2003: 186–199) of *semi-formulaic expressions of procedural meaning*. The short-circuiting of inferential paths is discussed by Morgan (1978), who proposes that a request such as *Can you pass the salt* is *calculable/analyzable* but not *calculated/analyzed* by the hearer, a view endorsed by Adolphs (2008: 28).

as it were, as part of the pragmatic foundation of a theory of politeness. This theory could be described as Neo-Searlo-Gricean, in that it applies (Neo-)Gricean thinking to the Searlian speech-act model, arriving (I argue) at a pragmatic model of illocutionary force that is more adequate than either, when measured against the variety of real-language manifestations of indirectness.

The insights of Searle and Grice were on somewhat different wavelengths, but they both converged on the problem: Why is what people say often at variance with what they mean, and how is it that (despite this) we humans can nevertheless more or less understand one another?

It is important that any model attempting to answer this question should be able to cover the whole gamut of human utterance, not just focusing on the propositions privileged by philosophical and logical tradition. Hence speech act theory, as developed principally by Austin and Searle, has been the key to showing how a principled study of meaning in use can apply not just to assertions but to questions, directives, and the like.

Another key component of the model has been Grice's seminal move in explaining the gap between "what is said" and "what is meant" by means of the CP, and the inferences that can be drawn on the default assumption that people are observing the CP. Grice's initial preoccupation, in devising the CP, was to solve problems of divergent interpretations (in propositional and existential logic) of operators such as "and," "or," and "not." Yet the argument I have put forward is that nonpropositional meaning can equally be served by the CP, through the application of implicature and default reasoning.

In the present Searlo-Gricean account, we think of the CP as applying to the felicity conditions of illocutions, not to the illocutions themselves. The Maxim of Quality (or truthfulness), for example, applies equally well to the sincerity conditions of assertions, questions, and mands. Thus in interpreting an overt question as an underlying directive (as in *Can you pass the salt?*), we find that a certain felicity condition based on the maxims of the CP does not apply (viz. that *S* does not know whether *H* can pass the salt), and that what can be applied in contrast is a certain implicature (that *S* has the goal of getting *H* to pass the salt), which is identified with the sincerity condition of a directive.

In addition to the CP, a Politeness Principle (PP) is brought into play as an explanation of why indirect directives are used. The argument runs as follows. The PP brings the assumption that *S* (in circumstances where politeness is in play) will try to avoid generating meanings unfavorable to *H*. Therefore according to the PP, a direct directive, because of its explicit imposition of a cost burden on *H*, will be dispreferred, and an indirect directive (mitigating the imposition) will be preferred. Indirect requests incorporate various strategies of mitigation or distancing, for example, asking about the ability of *H* to perform the imposed action or asking whether *H* would (in some hypothetical situation) object to performing it (see further 6.3.3, 6.4). The interpretative strategy for such ISAs accepts nonobservance of the CP as a reason for regarding the face-value (rogative) meaning as insufficient to

motivate the utterance. However, a more positive reason is needed for acceptance of the alternative polite-directive meaning. This is provided by the Maxim of Relation or relevance (which leads to the formation of a hypothesis, taking account of what has been said and the context, as to the likely communicative goals of *S*) together with the knowledge (shared by *S* and *H*) of the functioning of the PP. In this sense the PP rescues the CP, by providing a good reason for *S* departing from the default interpretation and producing an indirect directive. Grice suggested (1975: 47) that additional maxims such as “Be polite” could also generate nonconventional (i.e., conversational) implicatures. Given that I have regarded the politeness maxim as a principle parallel to the CP, this is very much the account I propose. Exploiting the CP in ISAs invokes the PP and the implicature that *S* is being polite.

This account, once again, is based on the assumption that *H* can “work out” the underlying meaning inferentially. But it has to be recognized that by the historical process of pragmaticalization, ISAs may become progressively routinized, such that a direct association between the indirect meaning and the formulaic overt form of the utterance becomes established, as a conventional implicature. Such a conventional implicature, for example, might be roughly of the form “The utterance *Could you X* means that *S* is politely^{*i*} requesting *H* to do *A*.” (The superscript *i* represents a specific degree of pragmalinguistic politeness, such that, for example, *Could you X* is more polite than *Will you X* and is less polite than *I wonder if you could possibly X*.)

The explanation above of how *H* figures out the ISA’s meaning by abduction is one type of pragmatic problem solving—that associated with *H*’s interpretation. Another problem-solving task is the one associated with *S*: the problem of how to match one’s linguistic output with one’s communicative goals. Hence pragmatics is conceived of as two kinds of problem solving in terms of the goal orientation of pragmatics that is assumed here. In engaging in linguistic interaction, we may broadly claim that speakers seek to achieve two kinds of goals. On the one hand, they pursue what I called in 1983 *illocutionary goals*, associated with the illocutionary force of their utterances (seeking to influence the thought-processes and behavior of others in pursuing individual goals). And on the other hand, they pursue *social goals*, particularly protecting and enhancing social relations. Neg-polite ISAs arise from the need to pursue both these goal types at the same time.

It is important to realize that problem solving in the sense of “working out” of the meaning of polite ISAs is not based on deductive or inductive logic (the two kinds of logic that are most familiar), but on *abduction* (see Hobbs 2004), which can be roughly characterized as using evidence and world knowledge to arrive at the most likely explanation for what has been observed. This is essentially the same explanatory process as underlies scientific theorizing. According to Hobbs (730) the working out of meaning based on implicature and Grice’s CP is an early example of the postulation of abduction in language understanding.

The notion of “default,” as the interpretation/decision that takes place in the absence of evidence to the contrary, is an important component of abduction,

and has been developed prominently especially in artificial intelligence (AI; Hobbs 2004). The opposite side of the coin of default reasoning is defeasibility, the fact that the default solution can be exceptionally overridden. Defaults and defeasible reasoning provide an efficient way to deal with the probabilistic phenomena that are pervasive in our cognitive processing of the environmental experience—including linguistic experience—that we encounter. In both the productive and the receptive phases of language processing, default logic provides relatively immediate access to the most likely solution.

The default logic approach, moreover, achieves the right degree of definitiveness and efficiency combined with the right degree of indeterminacy, to explain how linguistic communication takes place in everyday practice. For *S*, the default meaning is the most direct, requiring the least processing. For *H*, it is the most accessible interpretation, selected unless it is judged inappropriate to the circumstances, in which case another, less accessible but more appropriate, interpretation is to be chosen. By this means, it is possible to maintain that human communication, although subject to misunderstanding, is more likely to be successful than unsuccessful in conveying *S*'s intended illocutionary force to *H*.

In this framework, politeness is an implicated meaning, conveyed through conversational implicature or conventional implicature, or a combination of the two. Politeness is also a matter of degree: pragmalinguistically, some expressions implicate a higher degree of politeness than others. There are also *kinds* of politeness—for example, those distinguished by a number of politeness maxims (or constraints) such as Tact, Generosity, and Modesty. These will be explored in the next chapter, which presents in a more developed form the model of politeness put forward in this book.

Politeness

THE MODEL

In this chapter I will at last present the model, or theory, of politeness I propose to adopt. It is a reworking of the model put forward in my earlier book on pragmatics, Leech (1983: chapters 5 and 6), and latterly updated in Leech (2005, 2007). To illustrate it, I will use examples not only from English but also from other languages, chiefly the languages of the culturally and geographically distant countries of China, Japan and Korea.¹ A model of politeness that worked for English but not for other languages would be very limiting. Surely politeness is a phenomenon of English speakers and of speakers of other languages as well. And if so, then presumably the same ideas of politeness, at least to some extent, should apply to different languages. However, as we see below, the topic of universal characteristics of politeness has been controversial.

With the aim of stating concisely a model of politeness, this chapter will sometimes repeat (in different words) material that was given introductory treatment in earlier chapters, particularly Chapter 1.

¹ The articles of which this chapter is a reworking (Leech 2005, 2007) both had the title “Politeness: Is There an East-West Divide?” arguing, contrary to the view of many writers, that Eastern politeness (as represented, for instance, in Ide 1989 and Matsumoto 1989) could be comprehended by the same model of politeness as Western politeness (as represented, for instance, by B&L and Leech 1983). Hence, my concentration on the comparison of English politeness phenomena with those of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. For Chinese data, I am indebted to Richard Zhonghua Xiao, Liu Hongyan, Fu Pei, and Luo Qing; for Japanese, to Noriko Tanaka and Toshihiko Suzuki; and for Korean, to Soo-kyung Kim and Hyeon Oak. Since 2005–2007, I have also discussed these issues with, and obtained feedback from, speakers of other languages in other parts of the world: Nadeh Ghazzol and Hela Armi (on Arabic), Tatiana Larina (on Russian), and Baramée Kheovichai (on Thai). I am more than usually grateful for the help I have received from informants on the Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and other languages and cultures. They provided not only rich examples but some detailed discussion on matters of linguistic and cultural interest. At the same time, I would like to exonerate them from any errors and misinterpretations I have made.

4.1 Criticisms of Brown and Levinson (1978/1987) and also of Leech's *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983)

Brown and Levinson's (B&L's) seminal exposition of politeness is still, in spite of heavy criticism, the most commonly discussed account of language and politeness. My own model of politeness in *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983) has also often been bracketed with B&L's as a pioneering, essentially Gricean treatment of politeness, and it has been criticized in a similar way.

B&L have been criticized on many grounds, and this is itself something of a tribute to them: if they did not have the virtue of providing a rather explicit and detailed model of linguistic politeness, it could not be attacked so readily. One line of criticism has been directed at the "universal" claim of their politeness theory, highlighted in their subtitle *Some Universals in Language Usage*. It has been objected that B&L's model has a Western, if not anglophone, bias and therefore cannot claim to present a universal theory applicable to all languages and cultures. This Western bias has been argued on a number of grounds. On one front, it has been claimed that B&L's definition of politeness in terms of negative and positive face reflects an Anglo-Western individualist and egalitarian focus on the supremacy of the individual's desires and right to freedom (cf. Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). Here is their definition of negative and positive face:

Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition

Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or "personality" (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants

—B&L (1987: 61)

In contrast, it has been strongly maintained that B&L's focus on the individual, however appropriate to the West, is quite inappropriate to the collectivism or group orientation of Eastern cultures, such as those of China and Japan (Gu 1990, Mao 1994, Ide 1993, Matsumoto 1988, Wierzbicka 2003 [1991]). On another front, closely related to this, B&L have been criticized for their definition of *face* given above (subdivided into negative and positive face), which is at variance with Goffman's "face," claimed as the source of B&L's concept, and more importantly with the Chinese conceptions of face (*miànzi* and *liǎn*) from which the Western conception of face historically derives. On a third level, B&L are criticized for their explanation of the whole of politeness as a mitigation of face-threatening acts (FTAs), for the performance of which B&L famously specify five superstrategies, ranging from "bald on-record" performance of the FTA through indirect strategies to its nonperformance (see 2.2.2). This emphasis on FTAs not only seems to reinforce the Western orientation of B&L's model and hence its restriction to a particular cultural milieu but also strikes one commentator as putting forward a "paranoid"

view of Western society (Schmidt, 1980: 104, cited in Mao 1994: 456). By rejecting the universalist claim of B&L, the “Eastern” critique of B&L as biased toward Western values has appeared to align itself with cultural relativism, as most forcibly championed by Wierzbicka (2003). For example, in her introduction to her second edition, Wierzbicka says:

... since this book was first published the field of cross-cultural pragmatics has advanced enormously ... this progress has not only not made my 1991 *Cross-Cultural Pragmatics* dated, ... on the contrary, its tenets and its overall approach have been essentially vindicated. A decade ago, the “pragmatic” scene was still largely dominated by the search for the “universals of politeness” and for the “universal maxims of conversation.” The widely accepted paradigms were those of Brown and Levinson’s “pan-cultural interpretability of politeness phenomena” (1978: 288), and Grice’s (1975) theory of conversation. ... It is heartening to see to what extent the situation has now changed

(Wierzbicka 2003: v).

Against the previous Gricean orthodoxy, Wierzbicka backs “the idea that interpersonal interaction is governed, to a large extent, by norms which are culture-specific and which reflect cultural values cherished by a particular society.” Later, she paints me in the same universalist colors as B&L, referring to

the once popular assumption that the “principles of politeness” are essentially the same everywhere and can be described in terms of “universal maxims” such as those listed in Leech (1983: 132)...

Actually, I never used the words in quotes in this passage: “principles of politeness” (in the plural) and “universal maxims.” In fact, I never made any claim for the universality of my model of politeness, although I did in the conclusion of the book express the expectation “that the general paradigm presented in these chapters will provide a framework in which contrastive studies of pragmalinguistic strategies can be undertaken.”

The problem with writing a “pioneering” work can be that it is cited by people who have not read it (at least not recently) but have read citations and discussions of it by other people. The result can be that the work becomes caricatured as representing a particular oversimplified position in the debate. In the worst cases you become an “Aunt Sally” —and Wierzbicka is not the only offender in this respect.² To be fair to B&L, they have also been caricatured to some extent: although they did commit themselves to a universalist position, they also emphasised the dimensions of cross-cultural/linguistic variation.

² For a further example (as I see it) of an unjustified criticism, this time by B&L themselves, see note 7 below.

The essential idea is this: interactional systematics are based largely on universal principles. But the application of the principles differs systematically across cultures, and within cultures across subcultures, categories and groups.

—B&L (1987: 283)

My own position is not very different from this: although I would not press for “universal principles” (see 4.8), I would still argue that a model of politeness should be generalizable to various cultures, and should provide the basis for studying (im)-politeness in different languages and societies.

Is there, as some have argued, a great divide between politeness in Anglo societies (where English is the main native language) and other societies? At this stage, as a preview of what is discussed later in the chapter, I will simply say no. Consider the concepts of “collective, group culture” (East) and “individualist, egalitarian culture” (West). These are not absolutes; they are positions on a scale. All polite communication implies that the speaker is taking account of both individual and group values. It is likely that in the East the group values are more powerful, whereas in the West individual values are.

Consider, as another false dichotomy, the distinction between “universalism” (the position espoused by B&L) and “relativism” (the position adopted by Wierzbicka). An absolute universalist position is clearly untenable: it is obvious, from common experience as well as from studies over the past twenty or thirty years, that politeness manifests itself in numerous guises according to the language and culture. On the other hand, a completely relativist position is equally untenable. If there were not a common pattern shared by many languages or cultures, it would be meaningless to apply a word like “politeness” or “face” to those cultures, and there would be no point, for example, in having an international *Journal of Politeness Research*, such as now exists.

Here are some of the criticisms that have been leveled against the “pioneers” (B&L, and Leech 1983).

- (a) These treatments of politeness have a Western bias: they emphasise an individualist ethos versus group orientation (Ide 1989, Matsumoto 1989, Wierzbicka 1991, Koutlaki 2002). Thus the cornerstone of politeness theorizing, for B&L, has been their individual-wants concept of *face*: B&L restate the components of face as seen in the box.

Negative face: “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ [of a society] that his actions be unimpeded by others.”

Positive face: “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.”

—Brown and Levinson (1987: 62)

This fits a Western bias toward individualism: the individual has rights and wants that need to be respected and indulged, and the individual is entitled to assert those rights and wants, unless they interfere too much with others'. This concept does not fit the traditional Eastern (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean) ethos of identifying with the group, in which each person has a place defined by obligations and rights in relation to superiors and inferiors, in-group and out-group members.

- (b) Thus, according to Mao (1994), B&L's concept of "face" is quite unlike the Chinese concepts of *miànzi* and *liǎn*, and B&L's concept of politeness does not match the Chinese concept of *lǐmào*, explained by Gu (1990). Similarly, according to Ide (1993), the Japanese concept of *wakimae* or "discernment," neglected by B&L, is needed to explain Japanese socially constrained politeness or *teineisa* (or the related Korean concept of *gongsonham*).
- (c) Because of their focus on face as just defined, B&L give undue prominence, as just noted, to *face-threatening acts* (FTAs), and indeed their whole understanding of politeness concerns the strategies for dealing with FTAs.
- (d) B&L distinguish three factors that determine the strength of the FTA, and hence the politeness strategy needed: P (power), D (social distance), and R (ranked size of the imposition). However, interpretations of the axes of vertical and horizontal distance (P and D) differ between Eastern and Western cultures, such that "power" is a less appropriate term. For example, Spencer-Oatey (1993) shows that in interpreting their relation to their tutors Chinese postgraduate students, compared with British postgraduates, see their tutors as closer socially, but more superordinate in terms of respectfulness on the P axis than do British postgraduate students. They expect to show deference to their teachers, and yet to have a close, friendly relation with them—somewhat like a parent or uncle.³

There have also been criticisms of B&L's formula for calculating the strength of an FTA:

$$W_x = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

in terms of the three factors D (distance), P (power), and R (rank of imposition). The formula treats these factors as cumulative: "The greater the social distance, the greater the power of *h* over *s*, the greater the imposition upon *h*, the more polite one needs to be." However, as B&L themselves discuss (1987: 16), other findings suggest that this formula is too simple.⁴

³ It may be significant that, as Richard Zhonghua Xiao has pointed out to me, in old times teachers in China were called *shifu* (*shi*—teacher; *fu*—father).

⁴ For example, Wolfson's bulge theory (1990) maintains that in a middle-class American speech community, distant and intimate interlocutors are treated similarly regarding apologies and compliments, as contrasted with interlocutors of middling distance. Similarly, Tanaka (2000) reports that Japanese students show a stronger disposition to apologize to their fellow students than to professors.

4.1.1 CRITICISMS OF MY *PRINCIPLES OF PRAGMATICS* BY BROWN AND LEVINSON AND OTHERS

Besides the attack on “absolute politeness” discussed in the preceding section, criticisms of my own model of politeness have included the following:

- (a) Leech (1983) takes a maxim-based approach following the maxims of Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP). Many will consider this approach dated: the four Maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner have been criticized for being unclear, overlapping, or of differing statuses (see e.g., Thomas 1995: 168). The term *maxim* itself is sometimes criticized because of its suggestion of a prescriptive approach.⁵
- (b) Leech has too many politeness maxims: the Maxim of Tact, Maxim of Generosity, Maxim of Modesty, the Maxim of Approbation, the Maxim of Agreement, and the Maxim of Sympathy. B&L complain:
 “If we are permitted to invent a maxim for every regularity in language use, not only will we have an infinite number of maxims, but pragmatic theory will be too unconstrained to permit the recognition of any counterexamples (1987: 4).”⁶

However, as I will explain in 4.3.1, this criticism could have been avoided if I had made it clear that all these maxims represent variants of the same overarching constraint, which I here describe under the heading “the General Strategy of Politeness.”

- (c) Also Leech's account is like B&L's in being Gricean and biased toward Western values. Most of its examples are from English, and it gives too much attention to the Tact Maxim, which chiefly concerns the minimizing of the imposition made on others in directives—corresponding to B&L's canonical case of FTAs.
- (d) Criticisms (a) and (b) above amount to a claim that Leech (1983) takes an “expansionist” approach—i.e., introducing more maxims—as contrasted with the reductionist approach of Relevance Theory, which claims to reduce all four of Grice's maxims to one (the Principle of Relevance). My expansionist approach is criticized by Huang (2007: 37) on the grounds that it is inconsistent with the spirit of “Occam's razor” . . . , namely the doctrine that theoretical entities are not

⁵ “Maxim” used in the Gricean sense (see 3.1.3) has no prescriptive implications, but there has been such temptation to misunderstanding that in Leech (2005, 2007) I felt it was best to avoid it. However, I have now come to the conclusion that “maxim” can be defended as a meaningful term in pragmatics and cannot easily be replaced by some other term; see 4.3. On the word *maxim* in pragmatics, see de Lima (1995).

⁶ Surely this is a case of the pot calling the kettle black. B&L themselves put forward large, apparently open-ended lists of regularities; for example, they enumerate fifteen positive politeness strategies and ten negative politeness strategies for redressing FTAs (1987: 102, 131).

to be multiplied beyond necessity.” This argument would hold water if it could be shown that the addition of the PP to the CP added no further explanatory power. However, it is obvious that the PP and its constituent maxims account for more than the CP: viz. the PP provides a theory of politeness, which the CP does not. Elsewhere Huang (2007: 115–119) gives an account of B&L’s politeness theory, which is explained with apparent approval as something pragmatics should be concerned with. But if B&L’s politeness theory adds new explanatory power to Gricean pragmatics, the same can be claimed for Leech’s theory. Therefore Huang’s claim that the PP maxims are superfluous and offend against Occam’s Razor cannot be sustained. An “expansionist” approach is justified if it sufficiently expands the territory of what a theory is to explain, as well as the theoretical entities required to explain it.

- (e) Huang (2007: 37) makes another objection to Leech (1983). He points out that the occurrence of politeness is socially controlled, whereas principles of the Gricean sort (i.e., the CP) are of a “totally different status,” being “unmarked” and “asocial,” and concerned with no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason. It is true that the CP and the PP are of rather different natures, but there is plenty in common between them. They are both regulative principles, which can be violated, observed to varying degrees of strength, and used to generate implicatures. Moreover, the PP, like the CP, has constituent maxims that can clash with one another. The maxims of the PP can also clash with those of the CP.
- (f) Yet another objection of Huang’s (*ibid.*) is that “the assumption of co-operative behaviour is hard to undermine: tokens of apparent unco-operative behaviour tend to get interpreted as in fact co-operative at a ‘deeper level’. Now, if politeness principles had maxim-like status, we would expect the same robustness: it should be hard to be impolite.” In claiming this difference, I believe Huang is too much influenced by the textbook examples of dialogue provided by philosophical traditions in pragmatics, where the tendency is for interactants to behave rationally and co-operatively like Oxford dons in a Senior Common Room. Just as we can readily find circumstances where politeness is in abeyance (see 1.1, 8.2), so we can readily find occasions where interactants are unco-operative in making irrelevant remarks, giving insufficient information, telling untruths or exaggerations of the truth, or failing to be clear, unambiguous, and concise in what they say. Just as it is not hard to be impolite, it is not hard to be uncooperative (in terms of the CP).
- (f) A final objection, from Spencer-Oatey et al. (2009: 111) is that Leech’s framework, like B&L’s, “has a bias towards ‘concern for others’,” whereas “self-presentation is another interactional concern that needs to be incorporated into any explanatory account of the management

of relations/rapport.” Spencer-Oatey et al. have a point here—a point I would restate as follows: Spencer-Oatey’s concept of rapport management is wider than Leech’s concept of politeness, in that it includes self-presentation as well as attributing value to *O* (*O* = other person(s), mainly the addressee). This does not in any way invalidate the Leech politeness framework. However, I will also argue that my account of politeness will reflect positively on self-presentation, which I see here as *S*’s face maintenance and enhancement, rather than maintenance and enhancement of *O*’s face (see 4.4.6). If *S*, for example by paying a compliment, behaves with appropriate politeness, this means that a positive value is attributed to *S*, as well as the positive value attributed to *O*.⁷

4.2 Restatement of the Treatment of Politeness in *Principles of Pragmatics* (Leech 1983)

As thirty years have passed since *Principles of Pragmatics* was published, I will now undertake a restatement, taking account of research on politeness that has taken place in the mean time.

4.2.1 THE PRINCIPLE OF POLITENESS

The Principle of Politeness (PP)—analogous to Grice’s CP—is a constraint observed in human communicative behavior, influencing us to avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain or enhance communicative concord or comity. What I mean by “communicative discord” is a situation in which two people, *x* and *y*, can be assumed, on the basis of what meanings have been communicated, to entertain mutually incompatible goals. (Such discord can spill over into more threatening forms of discord, such as verbal aggression and physical conflict.) For example, interlocutor *x* has a state of affairs *E* as a goal, and interlocutor *y* has a state of affairs not-*E* as a goal. Concord is the opposite of discord: both participants explicitly or implicitly purport to pursue each other’s goals. But both discord and concord are scalar phenomena, in terms of their degree and significance. Politeness itself is scalar. Politeness is also an aspect of goal-oriented behavior; to say that *S* is being “polite” in using a particular utterance is to say that *S*’s goal

⁷ Part of Spencer-Oatey et al.’s argument is based on experiments in which compliments and disagreements are evaluated by Chinese and British respondents. The evaluations sometimes give rise to critical comments that utterances are insincere or not in keeping with the truth, which Spencer-Oatey et al. consider a matter of self-presentation. However, I would consider such cases as demonstrations of the conflict or competition that often arises between the CP and the PP (see 4.4.4).

in using that utterance is, in some degree, to convey an impression of politeness toward *O*. However, politeness is concerned with avoiding discord and fostering concord, only insofar as these are manifested through communication, especially through what meanings are expressed or implicated.

4.2.2 TWO KINDS OF POLITENESS SCALE

There are two ways of looking at politeness:

- (i) *Pragmalinguistic (formerly “absolute”) politeness scale*: We can order utterances on a scale of politeness while keeping context invariant. For example, out of context, on the pragmalinguistic scale of politeness, we can judge that *Can I borrow your camera?* is more polite, as a request, than *Lend me your camera*, and is less polite than *Could I possibly borrow your camera?* There is a semantic reason for this: in a default⁸ sense, the more a request offers choice to *H*, the more polite it is. Similarly, *Thank you very much* is more polite than *Thanks*, because it intensifies an expression of gratitude, rather than expressing gratitude in a minimal way.⁹ This scale is unidirectional and registers degrees of politeness in terms of the lexigrammatical form and semantic interpretation of the utterance.
- (ii) *Sociopragmatic (formerly “relative”) politeness scale*: This is politeness relative to norms in a given society, group, or situation. Unlike the absolute or semantic scale, it is sensitive to context and is a bidirectional scale. Hence it is possible that a form considered more polite on the *pragmalinguistic politeness* scale is judged less polite relative to the norms for the situation. For example, *Could I possibly interrupt?* could be understood as “too polite,” say, if spoken to family members monopolizing the conversation; it would probably be interpreted as sarcastic and hence offensive (see 4.4.3). The sociopragmatic politeness scale registers “overpoliteness” and “underpoliteness,” as well as “politeness appropriate to the situation.”

⁸ The common view (e.g., Watts 2003: 172; Locher 2004: 86, 91; Mills 2003: 2) that “politeness” cannot be applied to utterances except in their discoursal context is, in my view, an unhelpful restriction. On default interpretations, see 3.4, 3.6. On an elicitation test supporting the meaningfulness of a scale of politeness out of context, see 9.2.

⁹ I now avoid the term *absolute politeness* as it has been misunderstood; for example, Spencer-Oatey (2005: 97) claims that “Leech (1983) ... takes an ‘absolute’ approach to politeness. He identifies a number of politeness maxims, such as the Tact Maxim ... and implies that the more a maxim is upheld, the more polite the person will be. Numerous authors have challenged this perspective.” In fact, Leech (1983) never adopted this perspective in the first place and carefully distinguished between “absolute politeness” and “relative politeness” (ibid.: 83–84), termed “pragmalinguistic” and “sociopragmatic” politeness in this book. I am indebted to Toshihiko Suzuki for discussion of this issue.

4.2.3 ILLOCUTIONARY GOALS AND SOCIAL GOALS

According to Leech (1983), certain maxims (such as Tact and Modesty) represented the goals people pursue in order to maintain communicative concord. This approach (which I still broadly adhere to) is goal-oriented. It is assumed that we have some illocutionary goals, that is, the illocutionary goals we want to achieve in linguistic communication (in asking permission, giving advice, etc). We also have social goals, that is, maintaining good communicative relations with people.¹⁰ But illocutionary goals may either support or compete with social goals, especially the goal of being (to some degree) polite. Thus in paying a compliment, one's illocutionary goal is to communicate to *H* one's high evaluation of *H* or of some attribute of *H*. Here the illocutionary goal supports a social goal (saying something polite, in order to maintain good relations). But in a request, or a criticism of *H*, the illocutionary goal competes, or is at odds, with that social goal.

Both these kinds of utterance involve politeness, and I have distinguished them by calling them respectively *pos-politeness* and *neg-politeness* (1.2.2). These abbreviations are meant to alert the reader that these are not quite the same as what B&L understand by "positive politeness" and "negative politeness" —terms now widely used in the literature. The kind of politeness involved in paying a compliment is *pos-politeness* (with the positive purpose of placing a high value on the other person's qualities). But the kind of politeness involved in making a request has a negative purpose because it is intended to avoid offense: this is *neg-politeness*, which means mitigating or lessening the degree to which *S*'s goals are imposed on *H*.

In Leech (1983), I divided speech events by their illocutionary function into four categories, and I still find these categories useful, although, as is usual with categories, they are not so watertight as they appear. They are:

- (a) COMPETITIVE: The illocutionary goal competes with the social goal, e.g., ordering, asking, demanding, begging.
- (b) CONVIVIAL: The illocutionary goal coincides with the social goal, e.g., offering, inviting, greeting, thanking, congratulating.
- (c) COLLABORATIVE: The illocutionary goal is indifferent to the social goal, e.g., asserting, reporting, announcing, instructing.
- (d) CONFLICTIVE: The illocutionary goal conflicts with the social goal, e.g., threatening, accusing, cursing, reprimanding (ibid: 104).

I went on to say that "the first two types are the ones which chiefly involve politeness." (a) Competitive speech events are subject to *neg-politeness* (see 1.2.2), as *S* does her best to reconcile the competing illocutionary and social goals; (b) convivial speech events are subject to *pos-politeness*, since the illocutionary and social

¹⁰ This distinction between illocutionary and social goals is captured somewhat differently by Jary (1998: 11), who sees politeness as a product of a speaker's short-term aims ("to get an addressee to do or believe something") and long-term aims ("becoming/remaining a liked and respected member of a certain group"), quoted by Deutschmann (2003).

goals are identical. (c) Collaborative speech events have no particular reason to involve politeness, as the goals of the interactants do not either compete with or contribute to the social goal. (d) Conflictive speech events do not normally involve politeness (except perhaps ironically), as there is no reason to be polite when the nature of the speech event is to cause deliberate offense.

4.3 Rethinking the Maxims of Politeness in *Principles of Pragmatics*

I now attempt to reformulate the maxims of politeness in Leech (1983). Six maxims of the PP were discussed there: the Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. I believe that although the term *maxim* can be easily misconstrued (cf. Thomas 1995: 168), it can be used with a fairly precise meaning, as encapsulated in these four propositions:

- (a) A maxim is a constraint influencing speakers' communicative behavior.
- (b) The constraint is aimed at achieving a particular goal.
- (c) The goal can be achieved to a greater or lesser degree, being associated with a scale of value that extends from a neutral or negative pole to a positive pole.
- (d) Maxims can conflict or compete with one another in context.

Let me begin with a single superconstraint, which comprehends all these maxims, and which I call the *General Strategy of Politeness* (or *GSP*):

General Strategy of Politeness: In order to be polite, *S* expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to *O* or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to *S* (*S* = self, speaker).

Although *O* typically refers to the addressee, there is also third-person politeness (i.e., being polite to a person or a group of people distinct from *S* or *H*); see 1.2.4. So *O* may be a third person, but in present-day English, at least, politeness is normally applied to a third-person referent *O* generally only where *O* is present or is in some way associated with *H*.

By employing the GSP, *S* attempts to ensure that offense is avoided, because both participants are, as it were, “leaning over backwards” to avoid the discord that would arise if each pursued their own agenda selfishly through language. They are also “leaning forward,” in an opposite direction, to propitiate *O* through pos-politeness. Remember that we are talking about the communication of meanings. So people speaking politely may secretly, or even overtly, pursue selfish agendas. But psychological motivations are of no concern to the pragmatics of politeness. Pragmatics is interested only in *communicative* behavior, and politeness in a pragmatic sense is a matter of conveying *meanings* in accord with the GSP.

The list in 4.3.1 reformulates the Maxims of Politeness presented in Leech (1983). The maxims as expressed there in such words as “Maximize the cost to

S,” “Minimize the cost to *H*,” etc., could easily be misconstrued, but we can still think of maxims in the sense described above as factors influencing communicative behavior and bringing about default interpretations—that is, unless overridden by some other maxim(s) or contextual factor(s). There is less risk of misunderstanding if we conceive of pragmatic maxims¹¹ of politeness just as more specific realizations of the GSP. Although I label and define these constraints in Table 4.1 below, using such terms as “Tact Maxim” and “Modesty Maxim,” they are just variant manifestations of the same supermaxim or superstrategy, the GSP. In this, although I am increasing the number of maxims in Leech (1983) from six to ten, I am not indulging in the uncontrolled maxim proliferation of which B&L (1987: 4) accused me.

Here I will list the five constraint pairs that display the asymmetry between *S* and *O* noted in 1.1 and 2.1.2. *Pos-politeness* maxims (with odd numbers) are *S*-oriented, and *neg-politeness* maxims (with even numbers) are *H*-oriented. It is useful to note that the hearer-oriented maxims are generally more powerful than the speaker-oriented ones, with one important exception: the Tact Maxim (M2) is generally felt, at least in anglophone societies, to be more powerful than the Generosity Maxim (M1). I will introduce the list with the crucial words seen in the next head.

TABLE 4.1

The component maxims of the General Strategy of Politeness

Maxims (expressed in an imperative mood)	Related pair of maxims	Label for this maxim	Typical speech-event type(s)
(M1) give a high value to <i>O</i> 's wants	<i>Generosity, Tact</i>	Generosity	Commissives
(M2) give a low value to <i>S</i> 's wants		Tact	Directives
(M3) give a high value to <i>O</i> 's qualities	<i>Approbation, Modesty</i>	Approbation	Compliments
(M4) give a low value to <i>S</i> 's qualities		Modesty	Self-devaluation
(M5) give a high value to <i>S</i> 's obligation to <i>O</i>	<i>Obligation</i>	Obligation (of <i>S</i> to <i>O</i>)	Apologizing, thanking
(M6) give a low value to <i>O</i> 's obligation to <i>S</i>		Obligation (of <i>O</i> to <i>S</i>)	Responses to thanks and apologies
(M7) give a high value to <i>O</i> 's opinions	<i>Opinion</i>	Agreement	Agreeing, disagreeing
(M8) give a low value to <i>S</i> 's opinions		Opinion reticence	Giving opinions
(M9) give a high value to <i>O</i> 's feelings	<i>Feeling</i>	Sympathy	Congratulating, commiserating
(M10) give a low value to <i>S</i> 's feelings		Feeling reticence	Suppressing feelings

¹¹ Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003) use a more general designation for such constraints: “socio-pragmatic interaction principles,” or “SIPs.”

4.3.1 IN PURSUING THE GSP, S WILL EXPRESS/IMPLY THE EVALUATIVE MEANINGS OF (M1)–(M10) IN TABLE 4.1

In the left-hand column, the expressions “high value” and “low value” could be alternatively expressed in a number of ways. We might say that the *O*-oriented maxims *give value* to *O*, whereas the *S*-oriented maxims *take away value from S*. We might also say that the *O*-oriented maxims place a *higher weighting* on what pertains to *O*, and the *S*-oriented maxims place a *lower weighting* on what pertains to *S*. Think of the maxims as action-motivating, or less commonly action-inhibiting (in this case, the actions are verbal). Think of the weighting as a numerical scale, such that a higher number will outbid a lower number. This seems to justly represent how humans as goal-seeking agents weigh up the value of one foreseen action in comparison with another, and judge which action to follow. But now attach numerical values to the individual actions themselves. It is not just a question of preferring one action to another, but of choosing a higher-valued variant over a lower-valued variant of the same action—for example, (here) choosing *how* polite to be, not just whether to be polite.

In the right-hand column, the uppermost categories of speech act (*directives, commissives*) are taken from Searle’s taxonomy (1975b).¹² The lower labels (*compliments, apologizing* etc.) are mostly examples of the speech acts Searle calls *expressives*.

The middle two columns are the labels given to the maxims, which, as can be seen, divide themselves into matching pairs of *O*-oriented and *S*-oriented maxims. The *O*-oriented maxims illustrate *pos-politeness*, and the *S*-oriented maxims (whose cells are tinted gray) *neg-politeness*. Still within the overarching constraint of the GSP, I have added four constraints not present in Leech (1983): two *pos-politeness* Maxims of Obligation (accounting for thanks, apologies, and the responses to them), and two *neg-politeness* maxims: those of opinion reticence and feeling reticence.

Now we look at some brief illustrations of each of these constraints.

(M1) Give a high value to *O*’s wants (GENEROSITY MAXIM)

For example, offers, invitations, and promises are (in default terms) “generous” and, in English, can be direct or even impositioning. In (1)–(3), insistent directive features are underlined:

- (1) You must come and stay with us next time. I won’t take “no” for an answer!
- (2) Come on! Sit down and have a nice cup of coffee.
- (3) No you don’t! I’ll pay for this. I insist.

¹² The major categories of Searle’s taxonomy relevant here are (1) Assertives, the point or purpose of which is “to commit the speaker . . . to the truth of the expressed proposition” (Searle 1979: 12); (2) Directives, “attempts . . . by the speaker to get the hearer to do something” (ibid.: 13); (3) Commissives, whose illocutionary point is “to commit the speaker . . . to some future course of action” (ibid.: 14); and (4) Expressives, whose illocutionary point is “to express some psychological state specified in the sincerity condition” (ibid.: 15). The page references here are to the 1979 republication of Searle (1975b). The fifth category of *declarations* is omitted, as irrelevant to politeness.

Comparable examples in Chinese are¹³:

- (4) *Nǐ xiàcì yídìng lái' (a). Bùzhǔn shuō bù' (a)!*
你下次一定来啊。不准说不啊!
'Please do come and stay with us next time. Please do not give me "no" for an answer.'
- (5) *Lái, lái, lái, hēbēi chá! 来, 来, 来, 喝杯茶!*
'Come, come, come, have a cup of tea!'
- (6) *Bié, bié, bié, zhèhuí wǒmǎidān! Bié héwǒ qiǎng!*
别, 别, 别, 这回我买单!别和我抢!
'No, no, no, it's my treat. I insist.'

The Generosity Maxim can also be seen at work in positive, compliant replies to requests, which can show intensified equivalents of *yes*, as in *Yes, of course; Certainly; Sure*; etc. But refusals of requests are "ungenerous" and often have to be very indirect or even unspoken.

(M2) Give a low value to S's wants (TACT MAXIM)

For example, requests are often indirect, tentative, giving an opportunity to refuse, and also softening, or mitigating, S's imposition on H. This is such a familiar aspect of politeness that it scarcely needs exemplification here; see the many examples in Chapter 6. But here is one rather extreme example of a polite request and a polite reply (actually illustrating the Generosity Maxim):

- (7) A: Could I help myself to a tiny sip of sherry?
B: Of course you can! Have as much as you like.

(M3) Give a high value to O's qualities (APPROBATION MAXIM)

For example, we like to pay (and be paid) compliments, if it seems appropriate to do so. (Insincere or excessive compliments count as flattery and receive a more mixed reception; here the CP clashes with the PP.) Run-of-the-mill compliments like *Your garden looks so lovely* and *What a pretty dress!* are familiar occurrences. In some activity types complimentary language is a virtual necessity, as when guests praise a host(ess)'s meal, or an academic introduces the lecture of a visiting senior professor:

- (8) *Tài hǎochī (le)! Nǐde chúyì hé dàfàndiàn chúshī yǒude bǐ (le)!*
太好吃了! 你的厨艺和大饭店厨师有得比了!
'They are so delicious! Your cuisine is as good as that of a chef at any big restaurant!'
- (9) *Hěn róngxìng yāoqīngdào zài * língyù zuòchū jiéchū gòngxiànde **
jiàoshòu láigěi wǒmén zuòbàogào.

¹³ I am indebted to Liu Hongyan for the Chinese versions of (4)–(6).

很荣幸邀请到在 * 领域做出杰出贡献的* 教授来给我们做报告。
 ‘It’s a great honour for us to have invited Professor * who has made great contribution to the * field to give us a lecture.’

On the other hand, criticisms of *O* are hedged and muted: *You could have done better. It wasn’t terribly good.* These criticisms would hardly take place at all, of course, in the host-guest situations mentioned above. But they would be more likely where the requirement of politeness is lessened: either where *S* had a dominant social role, or where *O* was a third party, not the hearer.

(M4) Give a low value to *S*’s qualities (MODESTY MAXIM)

Self-deprecation (if sincere, even if exaggerated) is often felt to be polite:

(10) A: ... I’m so dumb, I don’t even know it. hhh! heh

B: Y-no, y- you’re not du:mb

(Pomerantz, 1975: 93; quoted in Levinson 1983: 338)

In this example, the modesty of *S*’s utterance elicits a denial from *H*, in accordance with Approbation. This kind of gratuitous self-deprecation is sometimes called “fishing for compliments,” and the PP predicts that it is likely to be followed by an (implied) denial or an (implied) compliment:

(11) A: *Wǒ tài bèn(le), zhème jiǎndānde wèntí háixiǎngle bàntiān.*

我太笨了, 这么简单的问题还想了半天!

‘I’m so dumb. I can’t believe it has taken me so long to figure out such a simple question!’

B: *Nǐ hái bèn(na)? Nà zhèshìshàng jiù méiyǒu cōngmíng rén(le).*

你还笨哪? 那这世上就没有聪明人了!

‘Come on! If you were dumb, there wouldn’t exist any smart guy in the world!’

In keeping with Modesty, it is disfavored to agree with compliments, but *H* may pay a compliment in return: *Gee, it’s nice of you to say that.* Or *H* may respond with apparent disbelief: *Oh, do you really think so?* Or *H* may thank the complimenter: *Thank you. It’s nice of you to say so, but...* (This is a kind of metapragmatic response showing appreciation for the politeness of the other person.) Another strategy is to “deflect” the compliment by making an evasive reply.¹⁴ These are favored as ways of showing that you appreciate a compliment, while at the same time you are suitably modest about it. Another strategy is to “deflect” a compliment by reducing its power, neither agreeing or

¹⁴ On strategies of replying to compliments in Chinese and English, see Spencer-Oatey, Ng, and Dong (2008). See also 7.2.1.

disagreeing with it, but making a remark that downgrades the attribution of value to oneself:

- (12) A: I really like your outfit.
B: Oh, it's just something I picked up in a sale.

In China as in Japan, it is said that traditionally a hearer will disagree with a compliment. Here is a Chinese M.A. student complimenting another M.A. student on her high grades in the examination:

- (13) A: *Nǐ kě zhēnbàng!* 你可真棒!
'You did really well!'
B: *Bù, bù, bù, dōu méishénmeyòng...* 不, 不, 不, 都没什么用...
'No, no, no, they don't mean much...'

Here is a Japanese example from Tanaka (2001: 248):

- (14) A: *totemo oniai desu ne* ('That suits you very well')
B: *sonna koto nia-n-desu kedo* ('Well, not really...').

Such denials can also occur in English:

- (15) Kate: Steven is a terrific chef.
Steven: nah.

(Locher and Watts 2004: 24, omitting prosodic marks)

Another way to mitigate the attribution of value to *S* is to attribute the success to luck: *Well, yeah, somehow I was lucky enough to win the first prize*. This still seems a little like boasting, and is probably less acceptable in Eastern societies than in Western societies.¹⁵ Self-praise is immodest, and so often has to be reluctant. In this example, the hedging expressions diminishing self-assertiveness are underlined:

- (16) I mean I think I'm a pretty straight sort of a guy.¹⁶

This is particularly noticeable, for example, on TV, in interviews with victorious sportsmen and -women, politicians who have won elections, or winners of prestigious prizes or awards. Victory speeches often contain *we* rather than *I*, to emphasize collective rather than individual merit. This helps to reduce the impression that *S* is being boastful, attributing achievements to herself:

- (17) Well, we did a pretty good job, thanks to tremendous efforts by all the folks here.

¹⁵ However, Fu Pei and Luo Qin (personal communication) point out that such "traditional" forms of polite behavior may no longer be observed among the younger generation in China. A similar comment has been made by Noriko Tanaka about Japan.

¹⁶ Spoken by Tony Blair, British prime minister, in a BBC interview with John Humphrys, November 15, 1997. All the underlined expressions can be seen as hedges weakening the claim to plain speaking.

These utterances were from a Chinese table tennis player after she won a championship, which my informants thought was a very typical Chinese example:

- (18) *Gǎnxiè língdǎo gěile wǒ hěnduō bǐsàide jīhuì, gǎnxiè jiàoliàn wèi wǒ fùchūde hōnshuǐ, gǎnxiè zhōngguó pīngpāngduì zhègè guāngróngde jítǐ.*
感谢领导给了我很多比赛锻炼的机会，感谢教练为我付出的汗水，感谢中国乒乓队这个光荣的集体。
'Thanks to the leaders who provided me with many chances of taking part in the competitions; thanks to the coach who has done so much for me; thanks to the China Table Tennis Team, this glorious collective.'

(M5) Give a high value to S's obligation to O (OBLIGATION of S to O MAXIM)

Apologies for some offense by S to H are examples of polite speech acts giving high prominence to S's fault and obligation to O. Here are some typical brief examples, with the overtly apology forms underlined:

- (19) I'm (terribly) sorry. | Please excuse me. | I'm afraid I'll have to leave early.

A similar case is the expression of gratitude for some favor H has done to S:

- (20) Thanks. | Thank you very much. | Thank you very much indeed.

These can be intensified to express greater obligation. Compare in Chinese:

- (21) *Xie-xie*. | *Xie-xie ni*. | *Hēicháng gǎnxiè*.

(M6) Give a low value to O's obligation to S (OBLIGATION of O to S MAXIM)

On the other hand, responses to apologies often minimize the fault: *It's OK. Don't worry. It was nothing*. Similarly, responses to thanks often minimize the debt: *That's all right. You're welcome. No problem. Glad to be of help. It was a pleasure*. In Chinese:

- (22) A: *Duì-bu-qǐ* 'Sorry' B: *Mei-guàn-xi* 'It's all right'.

(M7) Give a high value to O's opinions (AGREEMENT MAXIM)

In responding to others' opinions or judgments, agreement is the *preferred* response and disagreement is *dispreferred*:¹⁷

- (23) A: *It's a beautiful view, isn't it?* B: *Yeah, absolutely gorgeous*.

Intensification (as in *gorgeous* above, or more stereotypically in answers like *Absolutely!* which are used almost routinely in TV interviews), enhance the polite

¹⁷ On preference organization in discourse, including the preference for agreement, see Levinson (1983: 332–345). See also 2.1c.

effect of agreement, whereas mitigated agreement has the opposite effect (as in *Yeah, it's not bad. I suppose it's okay*). On the other hand, disagreement, as a dispreferred response, is frequently preceded by delay, hesitation, or the use of temporizing expressions such as *Well...* Instead of intensifying disagreement, English speakers tend to opt for mitigation—for partial, hedged, or indirect disagreement: *Do you really think so? I would have thought... Yes, but don't you think...? I agree, but...* In Japanese:

- (24) Old lady: *Saikin-no-koto-nanka-de-mo, Koizumi-san-wa hontooni yoku-yatteiru wa yo ne.*
 ‘Mr Koizumi has been doing a really good job dealing with recent issues, hasn’t he?’
 Male student: *Soo-da-ne, o-baa-chan. Koizumi-san-wa jieitai-o haken-shitari, iroiro-yatte-kureteru-to-omou-yo. Taihenna-koto-da-to omou-ne.*
 ‘Yes, grandma. I think Mr Koizumi has done various things like sending the Self-Defense Force and so on. They seem to be serious issues.’¹⁸

Here the student (who, it seems, actually disagreed with the old lady’s approval of the current Japanese prime minister) avoided outright disagreement, but at the same time avoided agreeing with her, which would have violated Grice’s Quality Maxim.

(M8) Give a low value to S’s opinions (OPINION-RETICENCE MAXIM)

As shown in the last example, people frequently soften the force of their own opinions, by using propositional hedges such as *I think, I guess, I don’t suppose, It might be that...* In other cases, *S* consults *H*’s opinion, deferring to *H*’s supposed greater understanding, wisdom, or experience. In contrast, there is a low tolerance of opinionated behavior, where people express themselves forcefully, as if their opinions matter more than others’. Expressing an opinion in Japanese society may be seen as potentially offensive, especially to superiors, in that an opinion may imply a criticism. For example, in Western countries it is felt to be positively helpful to ask questions and express opinions in the discussion period following a lecture: if no such interaction takes place, the visiting speaker may feel the presentation was a “flop.” However, in Japan (and I am told to some extent in China) it may be felt impolite to present a different opinion from that of an “honored speaker.”

(M9) Give a high value on O’s feelings (SYMPATHY MAXIM)

A constraint of Sympathy (or emotive concern) is needed to explain why we give a high value to other people’s feelings in such speech acts as congratulations and condolences. It is polite to show others that you share their feelings: feeling sad when they have suffered misfortune, and feeling joyful when they have cause for rejoicing. Congratulations, good wishes, and condolences are all intrinsically courteous

¹⁸ This example is from Suzuki (2005: 232, 236–237), recorded when Mr. Koizumi was prime minister.

speech acts and need no mitigation: *Congratulations! Well done. Have a good time! Enjoy your meal.* Or on a sadder note: *I was so sorry to hear about your father...* Similar to condolences are inquiries about people's health, showing sympathy and concern: *How's your mother? I hope she's feeling better...* Since these are all courteous speech acts, they can be made more pragmalinguistically polite by intensification. That is, it is easy to make them more extreme, by heightening the degree of gradable expressions they contain (intensifying expressions are underlined):

- (25) Warmest congratulations!
- (26) I was so terribly sorry to hear about...
- (27) I do hope she's feeling much better...
- (28) Have a wonderful time!

(M10) Give a low value to S's feelings (FEELING-RETICENCE MAXIM)

The corresponding negative-politeness constraint places a low value on one's own feelings. For example, B&L (1978: 240) say "it appears that in English one shouldn't admit that one is feeling too bad," and quote the following:

- (29) A: Hi, how are you?
B: Oh, fine. Actually though...

The first response to questions like *How are you?* is likely to suppress any bad news, even though speaker B may be tempted to share his or her troubles.

4.3.2 WHERE FURTHER INVESTIGATION IS NEEDED

In concluding the section, it should be noted that the ten constraints are of differing degrees of importance and have variable constraining power. On the whole, it seems (as already noted) that neg-politeness maxims are more powerful than the pos-politeness maxims, and that the maxims higher up the list are more powerful than those lower down. But this is likely to be culturally variable and needs further investigation.

The list of constraints M1–M10 above may be incomplete. These are simply the most observable manifestations of the GSP. But the essential point is that these are not separate, independent constraints; they are instances of the operation of the GSP as a "supermaxim." Other instances, such as manifestations of the GSP in turn-taking behavior and further aspects of discourse management, could be elaborated but will not be mentioned further here.

4.4 Important Disclaimers and Caveats

It is easy to oversimplify or misinterpret the workings of the PP. For example, some have imagined it as some kind of absolute rule of conduct—which, as everyday

experience shows, is false. In practice, politeness is always a matter of degree, and it can be affected by several factors yet to be properly discussed. It is therefore important to bear in mind a number of caveats (4.4.1–4.4.5).

4.4.1 PEOPLE ARE IMPOLITE AS WELL AS POLITE

Of course, the PP is not always observed. The degree to which it is observed is sensitive to (i) the vertical distance (upward), (ii) the horizontal distance between *S* and *O*, and (iii) the “weightiness” (in terms of cost or benefit) of the transaction (B&L’s *P*, *D*, and *R* factors, though not restricting *R* to impositions), as well as other factors; see 4.4.3. When horizontal distance is reduced (e.g., in communication with familiars or intimates) the need for politeness is also reduced. In addition, like Grice’s CP, the PP can be violated, exploited, or suspended. Although this book so far has focused particularly on politeness, impolite communicative behavior will be the most important focus of Chapter 8 (especially 8.2).

4.4.2 POSITIVE POLITENESS AND POS-POLITENESS

I have already signaled (in 1.2.2) the difference between B&L’s “positive politeness” and mine, terminologically distinguished as “pos-politeness.” B&L (1987: 101–129) define positive politeness so broadly as to include any claim of common ground or solidarity.¹⁹ I would say that strategies of this sort, such as the use of familiar forms of address, are directed toward reduction of social distance, so that when the factors *P* and *D* are very small the PP applies minimally if at all. This assertion of familiarity or camaraderie is likely to have one effect that resembles pos-politeness: it promotes concord or cordiality. But the reasoning behind it is different: instead of showing *asymmetry* (high evaluation of *H*, low evaluation of *S*), *S* claims solidarity with *H*, the implication being that closeness makes politeness between *S* and *H* unnecessary. Hence I am defining *pos-politeness* more narrowly than B&L’s positive politeness, to exclude the solidarity strategy that Robin Lakoff called *camaraderie* (Lakoff 1990: 38; see 4.7 below).

On the other hand, I am giving pos-politeness a bigger role than is allowed for by B&L. For them, positive politeness is just one means of redress for an FTA. In this sense, then, positive politeness acts in the service of a negative avoidance principle. For me, however, pos-politeness aims at an enhancement of face: by attributing value to *H*, for example in offering, complimenting, or extending sympathy, *S* is primarily performing a *face-enhancing act* (sometimes better described as a face-maintaining act) or *FEA* (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997, Suzuki 2007), not a face-threatening act.

¹⁹ Perhaps the most extreme case is B&L’s claim that *God you’re farty tonight* (1978: 109) is an instance of positive politeness. There has been much discussion of the flexible meaning of “politeness” and similar terms in other languages (see 2.2.11), but this example seems to stretch it beyond the breaking point.

The reciprocal asymmetry (2.1b) between *S* and *H* in the expression of politeness can be explained as follows. A polite utterance expresses or implies a *polite belief*, where “polite belief” means one in favor of *O* (including *H*, of course) and not in favor of *S*. (Whether the belief is sincerely held is not relevant here.) The polite belief affiliates to neg-politeness if it disfavors *S*, while it affiliates to pos-politeness if it favors *H*. If we replace the context-shifting variables *S* and *H* by context-free variables speaker-*X* and speaker-*Y*, then a belief that is polite when expressed by speaker-*X* is clearly impolite when expressed by speaker-*Y*, while a belief that is polite when expressed by speaker-*Y* is impolite when expressed by speaker-*X*.

4.4.3 CONVERSATIONAL IRONY AND BANTER

Conversation irony (or sarcasm) and banter are two apparent exceptions to the PP, but they are actually exploitations of the PP. I argue that the “Irony strategy” and the “Banter strategy” are second-order strategies²⁰ rooted in violations of the CP or the PP, and working in contrary directions.

Conversational irony (also called sarcasm) is *mock politeness*. For example, one person may say to another, who should be working, *That’s right—have a good rest*. Banter is *mock impoliteness*. During a card game in the student common room, one student may say to another:

- (1) What a mean, cowardly trick!

Later, passing round snacks over a drink in the bar, one of the students remarks affably:

- (2) Hey, don’t take all of it, you greedy bastard!

B&L (1987: 124) give the example

- (3) How about lending me this old heap of junk?

referring to *H*’s new Cadillac (regarding the joke, however, as a strategy of positive politeness rather than of banter). These are not treated seriously, and addressees probably smile or laugh when they are said.

Irony maintains courtesy on the surface level of *what is said*, but at a deeper level is calculated to imply a negative evaluation. Banter is offensive on the surface but at a deeper level is intended to maintain comity. Chinese examples of irony and banter are shown respectively in (40) and (41):

- (4) (A has got up very late)
B (A’s father): *Nǐ qǐde tàiǎo(le)*, *tiān dōu hái méiliàng(ne)*!

²⁰ In Leech (1983) I described irony and banter as “principles,” and therefore of the same general nature as the CP and the PP. However, they do not have the same generality of application as the CP and the PP, and I now think they are best considered strategies, rather like the GSP, although they exploit the GSP for contrasting purposes and effect.

你起得太早了，天都还没亮呢！

‘You got up so early! It’s still dark outside.’

- (5) (A shows off her new shoes)

B (A’s close friend) with a smile: *Chòuměi!* 臭美！

‘Stinky beauty!’, ‘Showy!’

With irony, the “reversal” of interpretation occurs because the courteous remark is made in a context where it is clear that the remark is not intended to be serious. As an example, *That’s right—have a good rest* is a polite thing to say where *H* has worked hard and is exhausted. But in a situation where *S* has been working hard, and *H* is taking it easy, this could not possibly be the intended meaning. To avoid any misunderstanding, of course, irony (like banter) is often associated with a special demeanor or tone of voice. Irony is associated with an unfriendly demeanor, whereas banter is associated with a friendly demeanor, including laughter, prosodic markedness, etc.

With banter, again, the reversal of interpretation occurs because the discourteous remark cannot be treated as serious. Banter is a way of reinforcing or achieving in-group solidarity; it is a way of saying “We do not need to be polite to one another: I can insult you, and you will respond to it as a joke. This proves what good buddies we are.”

Banter can offend against either pos- or neg-politeness. The following example (occurring in answer to a compliment praising *S*’s skirt) is a mock boast, offending against Modesty (neg-politeness)—boastfulness being a form of immodesty:

- (6) *Nàshì! Yě bùxiǎngxiāng wǒ shì shénmerén?*

那是！也不想我是什么人？

‘Of course it is! You know what taste I always have!’

On the other hand, (5) above is a mock criticism offending against Approbation (pos-politeness), since polite criticisms of *O* are likely to be muted or indirect.

The mechanisms of conversational irony and banter will be explored further in 8.3–8.4.

4.4.4 THE CONSTRAINTS MAY COMPETE OR CLASH WITH ONE ANOTHER

There are also situations in which different maxims of the PP clash:

- (i) *Arguing over who should pay the bill in a restaurant*: Here Generosity competes with Agreement. Unless there is a clear understanding that one person is being treated by the other, the Generosity Maxim motivates each of the two people having a meal to offer to pay the bill. Although in general arguments are not considered “polite” events, in this case the anti-disagreement motive is outweighed by the

pro-generosity motive. Hence arguing about the bill may be considered a polite ritual, and in certain situations it may continue for some time.

- (ii) *Giving advice*: Generosity can compete with Agreement and Modesty: giving advice means offering the benefit of your opinion to *O*, but it can also imply that you are valuing your own opinion above that of *O*. Hence advice is a double-edged sword and is commonly introduced with markers of unreality, conditionality, tentativeness: *If I were you, I'd...* ; *Wouldn't it be better if...* ; *Could I suggest...* Examples in Chinese:

- (1) *Nǐ kàn zhèyàng shìbúshì xíngdétōng, ...?*
 你看这样是不是行得通, ?
 'Would you please see whether it would be okay to ...?'
 (2) *Yǒuméiyǒu kěnéng...?* 有没有可能. ?
 'Would it be feasible if ...?'

- (iii) *Offering, inviting*: Generosity can compete with Modesty. Thus after preparing abundant food, a Japanese hostess may say:

- (3) *Nani mo arimasen ga, dōzo.*
 'There's nothing [special / to eat], but please ...'

This is almost paradoxical. The speaker simultaneously has to imply Generosity and Modesty. She has to recommend the food, and not recommend it. There is also a possible conflict between Generosity and Tact. These two constraints often work hand in hand: a well-judged offer will be both clearly generous in sacrificing *S*'s interests and tactful in serving the assumed wants of *H*. However, a tentative offer such as the following seems to arise from a conflict of constraints:

- (4) I don't know if you'd like this dress. I just picked it up in a junk shop the other day. It's really nothing.

If this is an offer, then its tentativeness (disparaging the gift) might make it seem ungenerous. But this impression may occur because Tact is winning out over Generosity: *S* may be genuinely uncertain whether the gift will please, and to "force" an unwanted gift on someone would be tactless. In addition, *S* may be exaggerating the worthlessness of the offer, partly as a way of thwarting *O*'s expected polite reluctance to accept (see 4.4.6).

- (iv) *Clash with the CP*: It is assumed that there can be competition between the maxims of the PP and the maxims of the Cooperative Principle. For example, an exaggerated compliment, apparently intensifying Approbation, may be rejected as "flattery" because it conflicts with the Maxim of Quality (= truthfulness). Approbation, to be valued, has to be perceived as sincere. Other speech acts of pos-politeness may also be considered insincere if they are overdone. Hence, although such speech acts as compliments,

apologies, and offers lend themselves to intensification or exaggeration, the CP puts a limit on the degree of exaggeration that is acceptable. A more complex case of conflict with the CP arises with exchanges such as:

- (5) A: I'm getting fat hh.
 B: [silence]: [implying Agreement, hence breaching Approbation]
 (Levinson 1983: 339)

The lack of response here implicates that B agrees that A is getting fat but is too polite to voice agreement. B can overtly uphold the PP either by telling a lie (breach of Quality) or by a zero response (breach of Quantity); here B chooses the latter alternative. Potential breach of politeness may be masked by not speaking the truth, or giving less information than is to be expected, that is, by leaving something unsaid.

These clashes mean that to some extent *S*, in pursuing the PP, has to weigh up the relative importance of competing goals. Unbridled pursuit of the PP can lead to gross flattery and the like, unless "restrained" by Quality and Quantity. Being polite is a more complex form of behavior than simply following the set of maxims listed in Table 4.1 (p. 91).

4.4.5 WE USE (SOCIOPRAGMATIC) SCALES TO ASSESS THE APPROPRIATE DEGREE OF POLITENESS

Politeness is itself a matter of degree, and determining the appropriate degree of (sociopragmatic) politeness depends on other scales of value. Among the most important of these:

- (i) *Vertical distance* between *S* and *O* (in terms of status, power, role, age, etc.); cf. B&L's P factor.
- (ii) *Horizontal distance* between *S* and *O* (intimate, familiar, acquaintance, stranger, etc.); cf. B&L's D factor.
- (iii) *Cost/benefit*: how large is the benefit, the cost, the favor, the obligation, etc. (cf. B&L's R factor), i.e., the real socially defined value of what is being transacted.
- (iv) *Strength* of socially defined rights and obligations, e.g., a teacher's obligations to a student, a host's obligations to a guest, service providers' obligations to their clients or customers. (See 6.2.1 for an example, from Thomas 1995, of how *O*'s obligation or lack of obligation affects the indirectness of a request.)
- (v) "*Self-territory*" and "*other-territory*" (in-group membership vs. out-group). There are degrees of membership of 'self-territory' and 'other territory'.

This last factor determines who belongs to the domain of *S* and who to the domain of *O* for the purposes of the GSP. An illustration of in-group membership

is the strong group association, in some non-Western cultures, between members of a family. One result of this is that the Modesty requirement may lead one to be humble not only about oneself (in addressing out-groupers) but about other members of one's family. Hence in Korean and Japanese, and traditionally in Chinese, different terms are used for 'my wife' and 'your wife', the former being to varying degrees uncomplimentary and the latter to varying degrees complimentary (honorific). For example:

- (1) *anaeljipsaram/lansaram* v. *buin/samonim* in Korean
아내/집사람/안사람 v. 부인/사모님
- (2) *nyōbō/kanailtsuma* v. *okusana/okusama* in Japanese.

This conventionalized denigration of one's nearest and dearest is quite alien to Anglo societies.

4.4.6 ATTRIBUTING POLITENESS TO *H*

One added complexity to the account of politeness relates to the asymmetry between *S* and *H*, discussed in 2.1b and 4.4.2. What is polite from *S*'s viewpoint is impolite from *H*'s viewpoint, so that to be effectively polite *S* sometimes needs to override an anticipated polite response from *H*. After all, "politeness" is evaluated favorably in most people's behavior, so to attribute politeness to *H* is a manifestation of the Approbation Maxim. An example of awareness for one another's politeness is seen in this negotiation over an offer of a lift, quoted by Gu (1990)²¹:

- (1) A: I can drop you in town if you like.
B: It's very kind of you, but it will cause you some inconvenience, won't it?
A: No, not at all. I'm going in that direction.

After A's offer has been explored, and its degree of Generosity ascertained as not being excessive, B can then go ahead and accept it without offending against Tact. The interesting point is that A's reassurance *I'm going in that direction*, even though it reduces A's claim to Generosity (i.e., A is not offering so much), is not felt to reduce A's politeness in that it shows consideration for B's politeness and so prepares the way for B to accept. That is, Generosity, as a politeness constraint, does not mean overtly claiming generosity for oneself—which indeed would be a form of boasting (immodesty). It means, rather, acting verbally in a way that attends to the anticipated wants of *H*.

²¹ Gu (1990: 243–244), following a somewhat similar proposal by Liu (1986), argues from this example that there are really two variants of the Generosity Maxim used in invitations or offers. One is a "content-regulating maximization" and the other is "speech regulating minimization." He observes (244) that "If *S* offers *H* something, *S* will usually minimize by means of speech the cost which the offer incurs to him, and *H* will in turn maximize, also by means of speech, the benefit he receives from *S*'s offer."

4.5 Interlinguistic and Cross-cultural Variation in Politeness

The use of politeness in communication is dependent on two major domains: (a) the *language*, and (b) the *social or cultural milieu*. Hence there are (a) linguistically oriented and (b) socioculturally oriented aspects of politeness. In this book these are termed (a) *pragmalinguistic*, and (b) *sociopragmatic* facets (1.2.3–4). In general, the linguistic resources for politeness and the cultural values they allow *S* to express reinforce one another, although there can be some mismatch (see further 10.6–10.7).

4.5.1 THE PRAGMALINGUISTIC FACET OF POLITENESS

The values of politeness are *encoded* linguistically mainly through the differing morphological, syntactic, and lexical resources of languages. The following list gives a few illustrations from languages including English (English resources will be more fully illustrated in Chapters 6–8):

- ❑ Honorific forms, sentence final pragmatic markers, fading voice, and utterance incompleteness in Chinese and Japanese (Ohta 1991)
- ❑ Modal verbs (including hypothetical forms *would*, *could*, etc.), various hedges, downgraders (e.g., *a tiny bit*), and intensifiers (e.g., *really*, *terribly*) in Chinese and English
- ❑ Varied “Self”-reference forms and “Other”-reference forms in many languages, e.g., *nǐ* 你 and *nín* 您 in Chinese; *tu* and *vous* in French; *du* and *Sie* in German
- ❑ Omission of first- and second-person reference in Japanese and Korean; use, instead (also in Chinese), of respectful nouns for second-person reference, e.g., *zhǔrèn* 主任 (‘section chief’), (*wáng*) *lǎoshī* 王老师 (‘teacher Wang’), in Chinese; *kacho* (‘section chief’), *sensei* (‘teacher’) in Japanese; and *Sajangnim*, *Seonsaengnim* in Korean.
- ❑ Diminutives in many European languages, as in this example from Spanish: *Espere un momentito* ‘Wait just a second’ (Mendoza 2005, *momentito* being a diminutive form of *momento* ‘moment’).

Also relevant as a pragmalinguistic factor is the *frequency* of various linguistic forms and strategies of politeness. As already discussed in 3.7, the forms frequently encoding politeness have often become highly conventionalized or *pragmaticalized* and thereby can come to have a weakened pragmatic force.

4.5.2 THE SOCIOPRAGMATIC FACET OF POLITENESS

The sociopragmatic factors that determine the strength of the values to be communicated are, as noted earlier, scalar. It seems likely that the scales are fairly general to human societies, but the values considered norms vary from culture to culture. The

variation is both *quantitative* (i.e., in degree or position on a scale) and *qualitative* (in the actual social content of the scales themselves).

4.5.2.1 *Quantitative Differences in the Scales Influencing Norms of Politeness*

Although all statements of quantitative difference in the present state of knowledge have to be provisional, this politeness framework enables us to state hypotheses such as that Modesty has a higher rating in Japanese or Korean than in “Anglo” societies, where Tact has a high rating. (Notice we are still talking about communicative behavior; no claim is made about whether Japanese people, as a character trait, are generally more modest than Westerners, and such a claim is probably impossible to measure.) Such claims gain support from certain pragmalinguistic features, such as the use of humiliating forms—now in decline—in Korean (*jolgo* ‘my paper’), *nuchuhan jip* ‘my home’), the use of humiliating forms in Japanese (e.g., using the verb *mairu* instead of *kuru*, ‘to come’), and the exotic range of tactful indirect request forms in English (*I was just wondering if you'd mind...*) Of course such stereotypic generalizations at best are oversimplifications, but the model does provide a framework for cross-cultural comparisons of politeness pragmatics on this level (see further 10.6–10.7).

4.5.2.2 *Qualitative Differences in the Scales Influencing Norms of Politeness*

Social distance is interpreted differently for different cultures. Vertical distance (B&L's P) involves a number of different—albeit correlated—factors, such as power, age, and social status. As mentioned above in 2.1, Spencer-Oatey (1993) investigated the vertical distance relation between Chinese graduate students and their tutors and found it different from that between British students and their tutors. It is widely reported that in Chinese, Korean, and Japanese culture, and also in the Arab world, age is particularly important as an index of superiority on the P scale. Hence I prefer to use “Vertical Distance” rather than “P” to refer to this scale, as “P” = Power seems to give undue significance to one aspect of relations of socially defined superiority and inferiority between *S* and *O*.

Differences between in-group and out-group (e.g., Japanese vs. inner-circle English-speaking countries such as the United States and the UK). In Japan spouses do not normally praise their spouses or their children in talking to people of other families. In fact, there is a tradition of being “modest” in denigrating one's family members. Similar considerations apply traditionally in China. But in American culture many spouses do this without embarrassment. In fact it might be considered a polite thing to do—polite, that is, to one's spouse.

Differences between socially defined rights and obligations. There are rights and obligations between parents and children, between teachers and students, between hosts and guests, between bus drivers and bus passengers, etc. In requesting an action, which *H* has a socially sanctioned obligation to do, one needs to show less politeness than in requesting an action for which *H* has no obligation. In

Japanese society, there is a well-known high degree of deference and obligation-to-serve shown by service staff toward customers (e.g., in hotels, cafes, and stores),²² although, like other politeness traditions in Japan, this is beginning to undergo change under the influence of “youth culture.”

Differences in the evaluation of cost-benefit. I have suggested that the evaluation of politeness (more particularly trivalent politeness) depends partly on the weightiness of the *transaction* that passes between *S* and *O*. In a very general sense, this can be measured on a cost-benefit scale. But the assessment of cost versus benefit may differ from culture to culture. As an example, some goods may be considered more valuable in one society than in another. It has been claimed, for instance, that (comparatively speaking) umbrellas in Japan, cigarettes in Russia, and cars in the United States may be easily borrowed or given.

4.5.3 TRIVALENT POLITENESS: ARE THERE THREE DIMENSIONS OR MORE?

Although I have based my sociopragmatic conception of trivalent politeness on the three dimensions of vertical distance, horizontal distance, and weightiness of the transaction (corresponding to the P, D, and R of B&L), I have mentioned two extra factors that might make politeness into a four-dimensional or five-dimensional phenomenon. In 4.5.2.2 I mentioned one factor that appears to have an important role in some societies: the difference between in-group and out-group relations. However, if we think about this in relation to P, D, and R, it can be seen as a particular manifestation of distance versus intimacy on the horizontal (D) axis. In traditional Japanese society, for example, in addressing an out-group member there is a big lowering in politeness reference toward those who are regarded as in one's own “self-territory.” The gap between in-group and out-group is especially clearly defined, so that the modesty due to self-reference is expanded to include in-group reference. However, arguably this is not a separate dimension, but a particular aspect of horizontal distance.

Another factor mentioned in 4.5.2.2 is the strength of the obligation *S* has toward *O* or *O* has toward *S* to perform or not perform a particular action. But again, this could be regarded as accounted for by one of the major dimensions of P, D, and R, viz. the weightiness of the transaction. For example, consider the example of the bus driver whose job obliges him or her to drop a passenger at an official bus stop, but not elsewhere. There is an added cost, in psychological and moral terms, to the driver who is requested to stop at a private house, especially if he or she would be breaking the rules of the bus company. In this sense, the rights-and-obligations factor can be considered part of R, and cost-benefit scale can be usefully augmented to include the cost of the driver's reputation for time-keeping, the extra cost of stopping the bus, the moral cost of doing something

²² As Tanaka et al. put it (2000: 75), in Japan “customers are gods.”

unauthorized, etc. Hence understood in a more general way, P, D, and R can still remain the essential three dimensions of the trivalent model.

4.6 Postscript on Politeness in Relation to Honorifics

Honorifics are found widely among human languages, but languages such as Japanese and Korean have particularly rich and complex honorific systems. Honorifics in modern societies concern relations between *S* and *O*, and how these are grammatically encoded taking account of the relative deference or familiarity appropriate to these relations. Crucial here are B&L's two axes of P and D (earlier termed "power" and "solidarity" by Brown and Gilman 1960, for discussing *T* and *V* pronouns in European languages) or, as I prefer to call them, vertical and horizontal distance.

As B&L have noted, three major scales (or axes) are involved in measuring the appropriate degree of politeness required for a given utterance: the axes of vertical and horizontal distance (P and D), and the axis R representing the rank of imposition, which (as I have explained in 1.2) I would like to extend beyond B&L's R to a general scale of cost-benefit, including any other value transacted.²³

Hence in trivalent politeness communication there is also a third scale, representing the ranking in terms of cost-benefit (B&L's R) of what is transacted in any given speech act. Thus, unlike honorifics, which in Japanese, for example, need to be used appropriately even in transactionally neutral situations such as weather reporting, this concept of politeness is relevant only to certain speech acts, those involving a *value transaction*.²⁴ Another difference between honorific usage and transactional politeness is that, arguably, the use of honorifics is not specifically goal-oriented in the way that trivalent (transactional) politeness is, but it is more dependent on convention and constrained by relatively constant social factors.²⁵

These factors seem to make trivalent politeness different from bivalent politeness (= honorific usage). This is a major reason for disagreements between B&L and Ide, Matsumoto, and others. It can be noted, however, that these two kinds

²³ The simple additive relation between P, D, and R proposed by B&L has been more or less discredited (see 2.1). However, it remains clear that these three factors play an important role in the functioning of politeness. B&L (in their reconsideration of the P, D, and R factors in the introduction to their 1987 reissue: 16–17), while admitting their formula may have been too precise, maintain that these three factors seem to "do a remarkably adequate job in predicting politeness assessments."

²⁴ Some support is given to this distinction by the observation that B&L (1987: 18) admit that a given address form may occur with an imposition of any R-value. In other words, the bivalent scale (registering the honorific values of vocatives such as *madam* and *sir*) can operate independently of the trivalent scale (registering R-values on the cost-benefit scale).

²⁵ The distinction between bivalent and trivalent politeness may be associated with the distinction Argyle and Kendon (1972: 25) make between *standing features* that "change little throughout a given encounter" and *dynamic features*.

of politeness cannot be totally separated, because honorific usage is one of the pragmalinguistic resources in Korean, Japanese, and other languages for expressing transactional politeness. So trivalent politeness often involves or requires appropriate honorification (Byon 2006, Okamoto 1999). On the other hand, it can be argued that bivalent politeness is not totally independent of trivalent politeness: it can be seen as a conventionalized implementation of the constraints of Approbation and Modesty, giving high value to others, and low value to oneself.

Whether we extend the use of “politeness” to cover honorification is partly a terminological decision. But it is also a question of whether the two “politenesses” are close enough to be comprehended by the same theory. My provisional conclusion is this: “politeness” (and similar terms in other languages) can cover the two related and overlapping kinds of communicative phenomena. To keep these distinct, we could follow Ide (1993) in calling the honorific and transactional kinds of politeness *first-order politeness* and *second-order politeness* respectively. But as explained in 1.2.1, I find *bivalent politeness* and *trivalent politeness* more appropriate terms.²⁶ Honorific politeness is the upper end of the bivalent politeness scale, the other end of which is “familiarity” or (using Lakoff’s term, 1990) *camaraderie*. We can illustrate them from English vocatives: *sir* and *madam* are honorific, implying that the P and D factors are nontrivial and large. At the other end of the scale, vocatives of camaraderie such as *buddy*, *guys*, *dude*, *man*, and *mate* imply that the P and D factors are trivially small. As an alternative to the GSP, there is a “general strategy of camaraderie,” a solidarity strategy that, according to Lakoff (1990), made its way into American usage roughly from about 1970 onward, spreading from the western states of the United States. This strategy achieves rapport by taking steps to minimize social distance, and combining this with attitudinal warmth.

In very broad terms, trivalent politeness is three-dimensional, concerned with the three dimensions corresponding to B&L’s P, D, and R, although of course each of the dimensions itself could be considered multifactorial. Bivalent politeness, on the other hand, is two-dimensional, concerned with only the two B&L dimensions of P and D. However, the GSP applies to them both, and to this extent they can be comprehended within the same theoretical approach.

4.7 Postscript on Face

B&L’s treatment of face has been criticized, and yet the concept of face is widely assumed to be the basis of politeness. One of the problems with B&L’s concept of face is the lack of correspondence between their definitions of negative face and

²⁶ Another terminology: while Ide makes a distinction between “volition” and *wakimae* or “discernment,” Kasper and House (1990) also make a somewhat comparable distinction between politeness as conflict avoidance (in transactions) and as social indexing (honorification ↔ camaraderie).

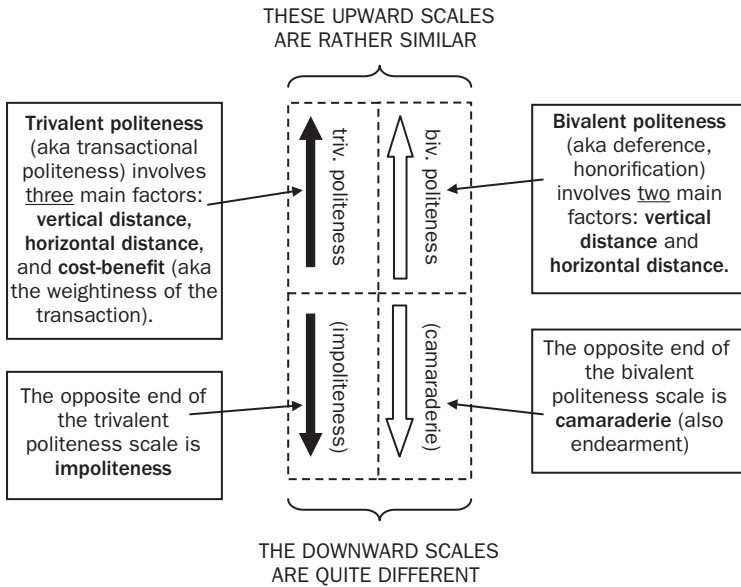


FIGURE 4.1 Trivalent and bivalent types of politeness as previously discussed in 1.2.1.

positive face.²⁷ I prefer to define *face* more straightforwardly and symmetrically as explained in 1.2.6.2.

The constraints of politeness as presented in section 4.4.1 above can be reinterpreted as motivated by these negative and positive face goals. Put simply: neg-politeness serves the negative face goal, and pos-politeness serves a positive face goal. Thus a request is an FTA because it means making demands on *H*: if *H* refuses the request, this shows (to an extent) *H*'s low evaluation of *S*'s wants (therefore of *S*), and hence *S* will lose face by being "turned down." Secondly, *H* will probably go down in *S*'s estimation, which entails risk of face loss to *H*. So the politeness required here is neg-politeness, intended to avoid loss of face, by reducing the assessment of imposition. By contrast, an offer is primarily a face-enhancing act (FEA) because it implies *S*'s high estimation of *H*'s needs and therefore heightens *H*'s own self-esteem. This is a case of pos-politeness. Secondly, as a result of an offer, *S* is likely to go up in *H*'s estimation, so that *S*'s face is enhanced.²⁸ Because "being polite" is a positive value attributed to a person who appropriately and successfully performs a polite speech act, any speech act that attributes a high value to *H* (serving *H*'s face need) has a secondary effect of serving *S*'s face need.

²⁷ On this mismatch, Spencer-Oatey (2000: 12–16) argues that B&L's concept of face should be separated into two distinct concerns: face needs and sociality rights, both subsumed under the heading of "rapport management." See also 2.2.10.

²⁸ On the other hand, I would argue that B&L (1978: 71–73) go too far in extending the use of "face-threatening act" not only to orders, requests, and the like but also to such face-enhancing acts as thanking, complimenting, inviting, and promising (see Koutlaki 2002: 1737–1738).

In this way, the GSP can be reformulated in psychological terms as serving the mutually dependent face needs of both participants.²⁹ It can be said that there is a social function (serving concord) and a psychological function (serving face) of politeness. They are closely interconnected, and there is no need to choose one rather than the other. As always in linguistics, and particularly in pragmatics, there is a need for both psychological and societal explanations (see 1.2.6).

4.8 A tentative Conclusion on Universals of Politeness

B&L have been heavily criticized for elevating a culturally biased theory into one claiming universals of politeness. Consequently, much of the criticism of B&L has had an anti-universalist or relativist bias. Although I do not want to underestimate the large differences among societies in polite linguistic behavior, I tend to agree with B&L that there is a common pragmatic and behavioral basis for them, so that (for example) when Chinese speakers talk of *lǐmào* and English speakers talk of *politeness* they are not talking about totally unrelated phenomena. I have tried to present evidence supporting this view in this chapter—but the decision for or against must be decided by those who know both Chinese and English and their associated societies. It is premature to talk of universals of politeness, but here is my position. Probably the scales of value in 4.4.5 above are very widespread in human societies, but their interpretation differs from society to society, just as their encoding differs from language to language. I suggest this is the basis on which a well-founded cross-cultural pragmatic research should proceed. The question to ask is, Given these scales of value, what sociocultural variants of them are found in particular cultures, and what pragmalinguistic variants in terms of linguistic form are used to encode these variants? Cross-cultural variation in politeness is discussed further in 10.6–10.7.

²⁹ In this respect my conception of “face” finds more resonance in the formulations of more recent “face theorists” (such as Bargiela-Chiappini 2003 and Arundale 2006) than in that of B&L.

PART TWO

Politeness and Impoliteness in the Use of English

A Case Study

APOLOGIES

Research on politeness has tended to concentrate on particular types of speech events or social encounters that are “politeness-sensitive,” and there is an advantage in focusing on these in accounting for a wide range of politeness behavior, much of it highly conventionalized. The next three chapters will focus on these speech events. We concentrate in this chapter on apologies, in Chapter 6 on requests, and in Chapter 7 on other speech events, such as offers, compliments, and thanks, as well as on responses to these speech events.

I refer to these as *speech events* rather than as *speech acts*, because the latter term has typically been used in the study of single utterances, a particular limitation of Searle’s speech act theory (1969, 1975a). However, when we study such phenomena as requests and apologies in context, we often find that they are more complex than this. For example, Blum-Kulka and her associates in the CCSARP project¹ find that apologies are part of a complex of individual acts or moves. These are listed below as (a)–(e) in order of their frequency in and centrality to apologies. Although apologies are frequently single-move and even single-word events like *Sorry!* (in which case we can still call them speech acts), the term more generally can apply to a whole complex of IFIDs (illocutionary force indicating devices) and accompanying “satellite” moves.

This chapter and the next focus on two speech events—apologies and requests—that offer particularly salient demonstrations of politeness in English-speaking societies and therefore deserve close attention in themselves. An additional reason for

¹ This chapter owes much to previous schemes of speech act analysis, such as have been provided by the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP; see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989 and 2.2.6) and other researchers the field, such as (on requests and apologies) Trosborg (1995) and Schauer (2009). Specifically, on the CCSARP treatment of apologies, see Olshtain (1989). Other studies of apologies include Holmes (1990), Bergman and Kasper (1993), Jaworski (1994), and Ogiermann (2009). The original CCSARP team collected their data by using discourse completion tasks (DCTs; see 9.3), which tended to produce longer pieces of speech than the single-utterance examples in the speech-act writings of Searle and others, but are apt to encourage briefer apologies (or other speech events) than, say, role plays (see 9.4, and Chapter 9 in general on these and other data collection methods).

focusing on them is to supply exemplary “case studies” illustrating a more detailed plan of analysis than will be possible for other speech events.

5.1 Apologies: Speech Events Seen as Prototype Categories

The most important of Blum-Kulka et al.’s potential components of an apology is known as a *head act*, which is more essential than other components, and contains the nub or nucleus of the speech event:

- (a) **head act**: the apology itself (IFID), e.g.: (*I’m*) (*so*) *sorry*...

Another component of speech act realizations, in CCSARP, is the occurrence of *modifiers* (see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989, Trosborg 1995), which qualify the meaning of the speech event especially by intensifying or softening its force in some degree. An adverb like *very* or *terribly* can obviously act as a modifier intensifying the apology, as in *I’m very sorry*; *I’m terribly sorry*. This is an example of pos-politeness (see 1.2.2). But in speech events of neg-politeness, such as requests, the modifier is more likely to be a hedge or downgrader: *Could I just have a little slice?*

These intensifiers, downgraders, and the like are known as *internal modifiers* because they are syntactically incorporated into the main components of the apology.² There are also *external modifiers*: CCSARP applies this term, for example, to exclamatory elements such as *Oh dear!* (preceding apologies) or (in requests) alerters such as *Excuse me* or vocatives such as *Barry, love*. These usually stand apart from the head act, either preceding or following it, being syntactically describable as isolates (see 3.3). However, they can still contribute to the politeness of the speech event, by adding attitudinal or emotive meaning.

In addition, an apology may be accompanied by satellite speech events:

- (b) **a confession, or admission of responsibility** for the fault, such as (*I’m sorry*,) *I lied*. [LCSAE 094501]
- (c) **an explanation** of why or how the fault occurred: (*Well I’m sorry it’s been such a mess.*) *It’s just, this, this whole magazine this year, I mean we’ve had to rely on so many other folks, you know* [LCSAE 125202]. (Goffman 1971: 109–115 refers to such explanations or excuses as “accounts”).
- (d) **an offer of repair** (or making amends): making sure the fault is to be corrected or a remedy applied; e.g., (after spilling something) (*Rachel, I’m sorry I’m leaving this here.*) *I’ll tidy it up*. [BNC KNR]
- (e) **promise of forbearance** (making amends in the longer term by undertaking to do better on future occasions): (*Right, right, so I’m very*

² Modifiers as discussed here are not necessarily modifiers in the standard grammatical sense, although in the case of adverbs such as *very*, *really*, etc., they clearly are.

sorry.) *I won't do it again next year.* [BNC HE2] (spoken by a lecturer apologizing to students for lack of book availability)

These five moves are subdivided by the CCSARP team into the head act (a), and the *supporting moves* (b)–(e). Also, CCSARP calls (a) and (b) *general* components of an apology, and (c), (d), and (e) *specific* components more associated with particular types of apology. How far (c)–(e) are likely to occur depends very much on the situation. For example, if you have just spilled coffee on someone's new jacket, the promise not to do it again (e) is unlikely to be mollifying. However, an offer of repair (d), such as undertaking to have the garment cleaned immediately, would be more acceptable, and more in keeping with the goal of propitiating the victim. As for (c), if *S* has done something to inconvenience *H*, such as missing an appointment, then it will be felt *S* “owes” *H* an explanation. It will be felt insufficient if *S* says *I'm sorry I didn't meet you at three o'clock* without saying why the mishap occurred.

As this CCSARP analysis already hints, speech events such as apologies and requests do not constitute clear-cut categories. They are more like prototype categories (Rosch 1977, 1978; Ungerer and Schmid 2006: 7–63). A proper on-the-record apology can be recognized as the prototype, at the top end of a scale of typicality, as distinct from a more peripheral example of an apology such as (1)³:

- (1) Oh ooh, I kept you waiting.
- (2) I'm sorry I kept you waiting. . . [BNC JXW]

Let us recognize that (2) is obviously a more forthright apology than (1), which lacks the IFID *I'm sorry*, and so might almost be considered a nonapology, merely mentioning that a fault has occurred. But even *I'm sorry* does not signal an apology unambiguously; it has to be placed in a suitable context, linguistic or extralinguistic. For example, in another example (3), component (b) above, the “self-blame” element of an apology, is not present at all, or is only questionably present.

- (3) **I'm sorry** that our time is up, but many thanks to my three guests today . . . [BNC KRL]

The speaker is the anchor in a local BBC radio program, expressing regret that the program has to come to an end. There is surely no reason for the speaker to accept blame for the BBC timetabling that resulted in the end of the program. (It could be, admittedly, that the speaker is considering herself to be the mouthpiece of the BBC, which has committed a fault in bringing the program to a premature end. But this seems implausible.) Rather, *S* is expressing regret that she has to do something that may cause some disappointment to the listener, without imputing self-blame.

The prototype view of the apology is championed by Deutschmann (2003: 46), who links it to a semantic frame consisting of four components.

³ On apology as a prototype category, see Jaworski (1994) and Deutschmann (2003).

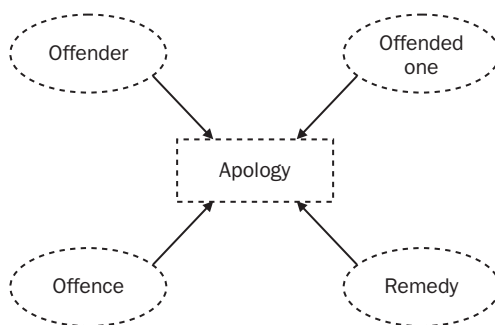


FIGURE 5.1 The four components included in a prototypical apology.

Note: Roughly based on Figure 2.2 in Deutschmann (2003: 46).

According to Deutschmann, the components can be expanded on as follows:

1. The *offender*, who takes responsibility for the offense but did not necessarily cause it
2. The *offended*, who is perceived to have suffered as a result of the offense
3. The *offense*—real, potential, or perceived as such by the offender or the offended
4. The *remedy*—recognition of the offense, acceptance of responsibility, and a display of regret

Deutschmann then goes on to mention three kinds of apology that are nonprototypical, “which fall partly outside this prototypical view of the speech act” (ibid.):

- (a) “Formulaic apologies” where the “offense is minimal,” and where apologizing is more or less a matter of routine, e.g., saying sorry for “social gaffes such as coughing, slips of the tongue.”
- (b) “Formulaic apologies” with added functions, where the offense “is minimal and has other functions in addition to repair work,” e.g., cueing a request, or calling for attention: “*Sorry?*” “*Excuse me—could you pass that microphone?*”
- (c) “Face attack apologies,” as Deutschmann calls them (cf. also Culpeper 2011a: 174–178). These typically preface a speech event that is likely to be seen as impolite, such as a directive or a refusal (violating the Tact Maxim) or a complaint or criticism (violating the Approbation Maxim), as in:

- (4) I’m sorry but I just think that’s outrageous. [BNC KPU]
- (5) Your mum is mad, I’m sorry but she is. [BNC KPH]

Arguably, as Deutschmann points out, these apologies have rather little, if any, remedial effect, as *S*, having apologized in advance, goes on to commit the face-threatening act.

I'm sorry is often used as a preface to an FTA in this way, and *S*'s justification for her own behavior may be signaled by a following *but*. However, *but* may also indicate that an FTA follows:

- (6) Well **I'm sorry** but my Daily Mirror divi—[was] delivered this morning without the television supplement... [BNC KB8]

The *I'm sorry* could be elaborated as follows: "I'm sorry that I'm going to say something unpleasant to you..." and its effect at most is to slightly mitigate the impoliteness of the FTA. The *but* is also significant, and can be explicated as follows: "I'm sorry, but despite that, I'm going to say the unwelcome thing that I have to say." The oddity in (6) is that a "real" offense has been committed by *H* (or *H*'s co-workers), who failed to ensure that *S* got her TV supplement; but *S* feels it necessary to apologize for making the complaint.

Another reason for nonpoliteness in apologies is that one of the supporting moves to an apology, (c), the explanation of the offense, often serves a self-excusing purpose, making the offense seem smaller. In this sense, explanations may help to save *S*'s face:

- (7) Yes, look **I'm sorry we've got to** raise rents by nine and a half percent. Unfortunately the government is assuming that's all we are doing so they're cutting housing subsidy accordingly and we would have been left with no choice... [BNC JT8]

Nevertheless it can be argued that the explanation (here beginning with *Unfortunately...*) contributes to the mitigation of the offense, as without it the offense would seem far more blameworthy, and the apology, even though it may be judged insufficient, can do something to make the bad news more acceptable. Notice that many of these self-excuses, as in (7), make use of deontic modality (*must*, *have to*, *'ve got to*, etc.), making the offense seem beyond *S*'s control.

This discussion has shown that the most common means of expressing an apology, (*I'm*) *sorry*, is actually more of a variable signal, not always signifying an apology, and not always conducive to politeness. Searle's IFIDs are not always as watertight, as might be supposed. This underlines the need to consider categories like "apology" as prototypes rather than rule-governed categories as in classic speech act definitions.

5.2 A Digression: Apologies and Other Speech Events

So, rather than thinking of speech events such as apologies as forming a clear-cut illocutionary type, it is helpful to think of them as covering a particular "*illocutionary territory*" with internal variations as well as contrastive relations with other speech events. To help us to think in these terms, I am presenting Table 5.1, based on the same grid as was seen in Table 4.1 in the last chapter, in which apologies are located

TABLE 5.1

The territorial relations of various politeness-sensitive speech events.

Maxims of the GSP	Typical speech event types	Pos- or neg-politeness	Typically S- or O-oriented
M1. Generosity	Offering, inviting, promising	Pos-politeness	S-oriented
M2. Tact	Requesting, ordering, entreating	Neg-politeness	O-oriented
M3. Approbation	Complimenting, praising	Pos-politeness	O-oriented
M4. Modesty	Responding to compliments, etc.	Neg-politeness	S-oriented
M5a. Obligation (S to O)	Thanking	Pos-politeness	O-oriented
M6a. Obligation (O to S)	Responding to thanks	Neg-politeness	S-oriented
M5b. Obligation (S to O)	Apologizing	Pos-politeness	S-oriented
M6b. Obligation (O to S)	Responding to apologies	Neg-politeness	O-oriented
M7. Agreement	Agreeing	Pos-politeness	O-oriented
M8. Opinion reticence	Disagreeing, advising	Neg-politeness	S-oriented
M9. Sympathy	Congratulating, comforting, well-wishing	Pos-politeness	O-oriented
M10. Feeling reticence	Responding to congratulations, etc	Neg-politeness	S-oriented

in relation to the maxims of the GSP, but adding two other parameters: indicating whether the speech event exemplifies pos-politeness or neg-politeness, and whether it is *S(peaker)-oriented* or *O(ther)-oriented*.

The right side of this table (highlighted in bold) indicates the two factors just mentioned: first, the distinction between pos- and neg-politeness discussed in 1.2.2, and second, the distinction between *S*-oriented and *O*-oriented speech events.

Briefly, the best clue to pos-politeness is to test whether intensifying modifiers can be added or further intensified to increase the degree of (pragmalinguistic) politeness. As exemplified below, in (i) paying a compliment, (ii) thanking someone for a favor,⁴ (iii) expressing agreement, or (iv) expressing sympathy, such intensification is the most obvious way to make one's speech act more polite:

- (i) Thanks **a lot**. | I'm **extremely** grateful. | Thank you **very much indeed**.
- (ii) That suits you **perfectly**. | Thanks for a **wonderful** meal.
- (iii) I **totally** agree with you. | **Absolutely**. | I **couldn't have put it better** myself.
- (iv) I was **so** sorry to hear about your ... | **Many many** congratulations. | Have a **great** time.

In contrast, neg-politeness becomes (pragmalinguistically) more polite through the use of hedges or downgraders. This applies, for example, to requests (see 7.3.3) such as *Would you mind just being quiet for a moment?* to negating responses to thanks (*It was nothing*), to apologies (*No problem, It doesn't matter a bit*), to disagreements, etc.

⁴ Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2006: 84) observes, with reference to French, that thanks are often upgraded (*Merci beaucoup / mille fois / infiniment* 'Thank you very much / a thousand times / infinitely') but never downgraded, except, significantly, when referring to thanks addressed by *O* to *S*: *Tu pourrais me dire un petit merci* 'You could say a little thank you [to me]'. Similar observations could be made about English.

What about apologies? By this criterion, they are examples of pos-politeness. To increase the (pragmalinguistic) politeness of an apology we intensify, making the apology appear more genuine, and the regret more profound:

- (8) I'm **really very, very** sorry.
- (9) We **most sincerely** apologize...

But if the question is asked, "What kind of speech event is an apology: pos-polite or neg-polite?" then instinctively we might feel it must be neg-polite—since its main function is one of repair: to repay the debt, to redeem *S*'s loss of face. However, it is the intended effect of a speech act on *H* that is crucial: an apology is meant to be face-enhancing to *H* rather than face-threatening.⁵ Harking back to Table 4.1 (p. 91), an apology is a transaction that *gives value* to *O*. That is, by apologizing, *S* not only acknowledges a fault but pays a debt to the face of *O*.

The right-hand column in Table 5.1 marks each speech event as either *S*-oriented or *O*-oriented. This again is a fairly clear criterion to operate with. First, we recall (from 1.2.1) that each of the speech events listed embodies or refers to some kind of *transaction*, that is, some social action carried out between *S* and *O*. The question here is whether the action is carried out by (or whether the event involves) the speaker or the other person—here *H*. And again, speech events tend to group themselves into pairs of opposites, for example, offer versus request, thanks versus apology. Thus an offer is *S*-oriented because it envisages a favor to be performed by the speaker; whereas a request is *O*-oriented as it envisages a favor to be performed by *O*, the other person. A thank-you is *O*-oriented, presupposing a (usually previous) action by the other person; whereas an apology is *S*-oriented, presupposing a (usually previous) action by the speaker. Notice, however, that *S*- and *O*-orientation can be manipulated in the way a speech event is presented. This can be done, for example, by disguising an *O*-oriented speech event as if it were *S*-oriented: thus a request can be presented in the form *Can I borrow this printer?* in contrast to *Can you lend me this printer?* A further step in disguise is to avoid personal references to "I" and "you" entirely, using a strategy of impersonality: *Is it OK to borrow this lamp?* A significant observation is that in the BNC *Can I borrow...?* is seven times more frequent than *Can you lend...?* This may be a sign that by avoiding direct reference to *O*, *S* disguises the demand imposed on *O* and hence makes the request appear less face-threatening. A somewhat similar switch from *S*-orientation to *O*-orientation can take place with apologies:

- (10) Oh I'm sorry I forgot about that other class. [LCSAE141701] (*S*-oriented)
- (11) I'm sorry you had to wait [LCSAE145502] (apparently *O*-oriented)

In (11) the speaker, apparently a teller, is apologizing for a delay at the bank, but focusing on the inconvenience for *H* rather than on whose fault it is.

⁵ But some polite speech acts, such as apologies, have a mixture of face threat and face enhancement. By acknowledging a fault, the apologizer admits to some loss of face to himself or herself. See 5.7.

5.3 Prototypical and Less Prototypical Apologies

Searle’s classic definitions of speech acts in terms of felicity conditions, however, cannot be entirely discarded. They neatly summarize what is central, in semantic terms, to an apology. Table 5.2 presents a blueprint for an apology, using Searle’s four kinds of conditions, and modeling them on his definition (1969: 67) of the related speech act of thanking.

Regarding this as a prototype definition, though, it is possible for each of the conditions to be waived under particular circumstances. Let’s consider each condition in turn.

The condition that is most likely to be waived is the *sincerity condition*, since, as we know, people sometimes speak insincerely: violations of the Maxim of Quality do occur. In fact, an apology is a speech event that is very easy to perform insincerely. It is easy for me to say *I apologize* without anyone knowing whether I feel any twinge of regret (whereas, for example, if I make an insincere promise, it will be found out when the promised action is not performed).

Moving on to the *propositional content condition*: this can be partially waived by locating the offending act *A* in the future or present, rather than in the past. *I’m sorry to interrupt*, spoken in the very act of interrupting, is an instance of an apology where *A* takes place at the same time as the apology—indeed, where *A* and the apology are the same event. Many everyday apologies for mild offenses take the form of an *Excuse me...* or *Pardon me...* where the directness of the imperative may be an overt sign that no serious offense or face threat is being admitted. Anticipatory (future-pointing) apologies are usually for minor offenses, where *S* does not expect any objection to hinder the performance of the act. *Excuse me* can be used as an “alerter”⁶ to catch the attention of a stranger whom *S* wants to engage in conversation, or to give warning that *S* is going to intrude on *H*’s physical or mental space in some way. It is noticeable that the force of these imperatives is so

TABLE 5.2
A definition of an apology modeled on Searle (1969)

Propositional content condition	Past act A by S
Preparatory condition	H is harmed by A and S believes H is harmed by A
Sincerity condition	S acknowledges responsibility to A and feels regret for A
Essential condition	Counts as an expression of contrition for A

⁶ Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 277) in the CCSARP coding scheme define alerters as “element[s] whose function is to alert the Hearer’s attention to the ensuing speech act,” and they place *Excuse me* alongside *Hey* in this function. However, it is clear that the politeness function of *Excuse me* is not totally eclipsed by its attention-getting function. Eliciting the attention of someone in order to engage them in conversation is making a demand on them that often requires an apologetic stance, as shown in *Excuse me* or more elaborate apologies: *Sorry to bother you, but...* By contrast, *Hey* (as in *Hey, what’s the name of this street?*) can seem rude and intrusive.

low-key that *please* is either not added at all (in the case of *Pardon me*) or is added only very rarely (in the case of *Excuse me*).⁷ Notice that if a more polite request formula is used, as in *Would you excuse me (please)?* the meaning of *excuse me* implies a more serious offense:

- (12) I don't wish to be rude, would you excuse me I have a bus to get to
[BNC KRX]

This kind of utterance is typically used when *S* is about to break off from some on-going social activity, such as a meeting, a conversation, or a meal, so the meaning in (12) is roughly 'Would you allow me to leave?' Another partial waiver of the propositional content condition occurs where the offending act *A* is conditional, and presented in an *if*-clause, which, in contrast to a *that*-clause, is nonfactive:

- (13) I'm sorry **if** it wasn't clear. [LCSAE125301]
(14) I'm sorry **if** my behavior wasn't up to scratch. [FLOB P06]

As *S* does not definitely admit the fault, this could be considered a qualified or less-than-complete apology. It can be somewhat offensive to put an apology in this conditional form, especially if *O* thinks *S* is at fault; compare (14) with the factivity of *I'm sorry (that) my behaviour wasn't up to scratch*, where *S* definitely confesses the fault.

As we have already seen, the preparatory condition is also waived, where *S* does not acknowledge culpability but merely expresses regret. There is no doubt that *S* in (15) both expresses regret and implies an offense:

- (15) I'm sorry to bother you [LCSAE 163001]

But in (16) *S* expresses regret with no likely imputation of guilt:

- (16) I'm sorry it's raining. [BNC KRM]

Yet notice that (16) can still serve as an apology of a kind: *S* can still reasonably apologize for bad weather where *H*'s exposure to bad weather is due to some act by *S*, such as making arrangements for an outdoor event, or inviting *H* to visit *S*'s home on a rainy day. There is a kind of "guilt by association," where *S* does not commit any offense but nevertheless accepts some responsibility for what happened. One kind of apology that is interesting in this respect is a *mutual apology*, where both parties apologize for the same mishap. It quite often happens, for example, in British society, where the people jostle each another in the street, that a quick "Sorry"—"Sorry" is exchanged. Although this is in the category that Deutschmann calls "formulaic apologies . . . where the offence is minimal," a significant thing is that

⁷ In the spoken BNC, there are only twelve examples of *Excuse me(,) please*, and no examples of *Pardon me(,) please*. An example of the former is: *Excuse me please, I'm trying to cook*. Another pointer to the relative mildness of *Excuse me* is that, unlike *I'm sorry*, it cannot be intensified: there is no **Excuse me very much* comparable to *I'm very sorry*.

both interlocutors seem to assume guilt, however small. This is a striking example of the reciprocal asymmetry of politeness (2.1b): in line with the PP (Maxim of Obligation), each person claims the fault to be theirs, rather than the other person's.

The *essential condition* (“*A* counts as an expression of contrition”) is so closely bound up with the preparatory condition in this case⁸ that the examples I have given in (15) and (16) can also be used to illustrate waiver of the essential condition; (16) in particular hardly counts as an expression of contrition.

5.4 Apologies: The Pragmalinguistic Facet

In analyzing the nature of apology as a speech event, we have to pay attention to both the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic facets of analysis (1.2.3 and 1.2.4). But first let's concentrate on a level that interacts with both these: the level of speech event *strategies*, which, as the term suggests, concerns what techniques (semantically speaking) are adopted for conveying an apology. A great deal of apologizing is done by means of syntactically condensed formulaic devices; the formulae (*I'm sorry*, *pardon*, *excuse me* often occur alone. Here a high degree of pragmaticalization has taken place, which means that these formulae have acquired “bleached”⁹ (or weakened) meanings, and reduction through ellipsis is very common—for example *Sorry* is much more common than *I'm sorry* in the BNC spoken material. Similarly, *Pardon* is much more common than (*I*) *beg your pardon* or *Pardon me* in both the LCSAE and the BNC. One of the surest signs of pragmaticalization is that an expression loses its grammatical status as (say) a verb or a noun and becomes a mere pragmatic particle, as has already been noted (1.2.3) regarding *please*. This seems to have happened with *Pardon*, which in present-day English could be regarded as a noun (a reduced version of *I beg your pardon*) or as a verb (a reduced version of *Pardon me*). Forms like this seem to be canonical cases of what Watts (2003) calls “politic behavior,” which is neither polite nor impolite but simply follows convention. Yet the apologetic meaning of such formulae is easy to recover from their form, and they still retain some of the pragmatic value of politeness markers, as we see by comparing their interrogative use as requests for repetition (*Sorry?* *Excuse me?* *Pardon?*) with such functional equivalents as *What?* *Huh?* or *Eh?* which are often felt to be impolite.¹⁰

⁸ Compare Searle's remark, in dealing with the related speech act of thanking, that “sincerity and essential rules overlap.”

⁹ Bleaching in the sense of semantic generalization or weakening is characteristic of both grammaticalization and pragmaticalization as historical processes (see Hopper and Traugott 2003).

¹⁰ Nevertheless, *What?* is by far the most common request for repetition in the conversational corpora BNCdemog and LCSAE. In the context-governed subcorpus of the BNC, containing more public and formal speech, *Pardon?* is commoner than *What?* reflecting its association with more polite usage. As requests for repetition, *Pardon?* is less common in AmE than in BrE, whereas *Excuse me?* is more common in AmE than in BrE (where, indeed, it is scarcely used).

Apologetic formulae used as requests for repetition, such as *Sorry?* are another example of “guilt by association.” That is, by apologizing for failure to hear what *H* said, one is taking on oneself the guilt that could equally well be attributed to *H*, for failing to speak clearly or loud enough.

Bearing in mind that a large majority of apologies are routine and formulaic, it can still be said that English uses three main (semantic) strategies of apology, listed here in order of frequency of use:

- (A) EXPRESSION OF *s*'S REGRET: e.g., (*I'm*) *sorry*, *I regret* . . . , *I'm afraid* . . .
- (B) ASKING *H*'S PARDON (OR FORGIVENESS): e.g., *Excuse me*, *Pardon (me)*
- (C) USING A PERFORMATIVE UTTERANCE: e.g., *If/We apologize*, *I beg your pardon*

(Less common reduced formulae, such as the noun phrase (*My*) *apologies*, sometimes intensified as in (*My*) *deepest apologies*, are rare enough to be ignored here.) We now briefly examine the various lexicogrammatical forms of apology, as listed in (A)–(C) above.

5.4.1 SORRY

We begin with strategy (A). *Sorry* (whether or not preceded by *I'm*) is by far the most common expression for apology in English, and of the various structural possibilities of *sorry* the use of it as an isolate (with no syntactic connection with other elements) is the most common. Two frequent usages are (a) declarative (typically followed by a full stop in the BNC transcription) and (b) interrogative (typically followed by a question mark). The intonation for (a) is typically a low rise or a fall rise, and for (b) typically a high rise. These variants are respectively illustrated in (17) and (18).

- (17) ‘You don’t have a lighter by any chance, do you?’
‘I’m afraid I don’t smoke. *Sorry*.’ [BNC JJS]
- (18) ‘Do you wanna drink while we’re here?’
‘*Sorry?*’¹¹
‘Would you care for a drink?’ [BNC K71]

Example (19) shows another common variant, similar to (17) except that the order is different: here *sorry* is followed, rather than preceded, by a closely linked utterance that gives the reason for the apology:

- (19) ‘*Sorry*, I didn’t ask if you wanted any more tea.’ [BNC KPV]

¹¹ *Sorry?* is much less common as a repetition request in AmE, where in contrast *Excuse me?* has higher frequency.

Examples (20) to (22) illustrate the most common structurally linked patterns in which *Sorry* occurs.

- (20) *Sorry about* your orange juice. <laugh> Got a little thirsty... [LCSAE 147402]
- (21) *I'm sorry* I'm so disorganized. [LCSAE 141902]
- (22) *Sorry to keep* bothering you. [LCSAE 138403]

Sorry about... as in (20) identifies an offense in the reduced form of a noun phrase—often leaving much to what can be inferred from the context (the inexplicit phrase *Sorry about that* being the most common realization of this pattern). In (21) *sorry* is followed by a *that*-clause specifying the offense (in this case with ellipsis of *that*). The *to*-infinitive construction following *Sorry* in (22) is a typical way of apologizing for *S*'s current behavior (examples such as *Sorry to be a nuisance* and *Sorry to interrupt* are typical). But with the perfect infinitive, it can also be a way of apologizing for a past offense, as in this example from a parish meeting:

- (23) Thank you chairman. *Sorry to have laboured* the point. [BNC H49]

In contrast to *sorry*, *I/we regret* introduces a formal apology, which is more likely to occur in a written text rather than in speech:

- (24) PI Associates, sole manufacturers of PolyPads, wish it to be known that Bridlesuite of Lanarkshire have never been supplied with or ever stocked genuine PolyPads. *We regret* any inconvenience this may have caused. [BNC ASH]

Like *I'm sorry*, however, *I/we regret* does not necessarily signal an apology. The self-blame element is clearly absent from an example like (25):

- (25) If you produce a proposal, the first thing a lot of British engineers will do is tell you what's wrong with it. That, *I regret*, is a British characteristic. [BNC A6L]

I'm sorry and *I'm afraid* can both be followed by a content clause, which however has a rather different function in the two constructions. *I'm afraid* is more like an apologetic preface to a statement presented as new information; an example is found in (17) above—*I'm afraid I don't smoke*—where it is clear that “I don't smoke” is treated as a fact previously unknown to *H*. In contrast, consider the clause following *I'm sorry* in (21), *I'm sorry I'm so disorganized*. Here the exclamatory statement *I'm so disorganized* expresses a presupposition, conveying information already available to both *S* and *H*. Notice that replacing *I'm sorry* by *I'm afraid* here would produce a barely acceptable utterance: *?I'm afraid I'm so disorganized*.

5.4.2 EXCUSE ME / PARDON (ME)

Moving on to strategy (B), we first observe that these imperative formulae *Excuse me* and *Pardon (me)* are largely restricted to routine apologies. The imperative verb *excuse*,

compared with the verb *forgive* or *pardon*, seems to mean that *H* is enjoined not so much to forgive as to make allowances for *S*'s less-than-acceptable conduct. *Excuse me* is therefore largely concerned with mild offenses. It can apply to physical misdemeanors like sneezing, coughing, belching, and yawning, or infringements of conversational proprieties such as interrupting another speaker's turn, or interrupting a piece of conversation in order to do something else, as in answering the phone in (26):

- (26) *Excuse me* a wee second, Charlie [answering the phone] [BNC G5E]
- (27) *Excuse me* while I find our papers... [BNC FM2]
- (28) *Excuse me* for being a bit thick... [BNC HUV]

In (28) *S* is apologizing (probably ironically) for her inability to understand what *O* has said. In AmE (American English) *Excuse me* and *Pardon me* can have additional functions such as signaling a speech error or disfluency (29) or—in the interrogative—asking for repetition (30):

- (29) ... it was due the day after the spring break, or *excuse me*, Christmas break. [LCSAE 127402]
- (30) 'That's wild.' '*Excuse me?*' 'That's wild'. [LCSAE 094501]

Pardon (me) has similar functions to *Excuse me*, as in asking for repetition:

- (31) *Pardon*, I didn't hear the question? [LCSAE 153602]

5.4.3 I APOLOGIZE, I BEG YOUR PARDON

Strategy (C), the performative strategy, is infrequent compared with the other two. *I apologize* occurs mainly as a formal on-record apology, which (perhaps because there is no mention of regret or any other emotive involvement) can carry an air of "apology for formality's sake only," or (as in the case of (32)) of humor:

- (32) And here I apologize for the rather poor sound quality, but he refused to shut his parrot and dogs in another room during the interview.
[BNC KRH]
- (33) erm I know there are many familiar faces around so I apologize to those of you that may know some of this information already.
[BNC J3W]

A common manifestation of this performative apology is the conditional apology (comparable to *I'm sorry if...*; see (13) in 5.3), which is a stock formula on public road signs and the like:

- (34) We apologize for any inconvenience this may (have) cause(d).

Because of the nonfactivity of *any*, as well as the modal *may*, such notices cost little and admit to no offense.

(*I*) *Beg your pardon* is chiefly a British form (in the United States it is mainly used for mock indignation). Like *Pardon*, it is often used in asking for repetition, as in this example from an interview:

- (35) A: Have you ever had a job?
 B: *Beg your pardon*?
 A: Have you ever had a job? [BNC J8F]

The performative *I/we apologize* can be softened by turning it into a hedged performative (see 6.4.1(e)), using a modal expression:

- (36) *I should apologize* for canned soup, but I spent so long talking to Stanley this morning. [BNC KC0]

This is no longer an on-record apology, and it could in fact be considered a nonapology, as the modal auxiliary converts the apology into an aspiration (what I *should* do) rather than a fact. Other hedged performatives have the declarative form with *must* or *have to* (e.g., *I must apologize for...*, expressing an obligation) or the interrogative form with *can* or *may* (e.g., *Can I apologize...?* asking permission). Each conveys the implication that *S* is willing and ready to apologize, but they do not actually enact an apology. Another version of a hedged apology is illustrated in (36), a quotation from a newspaper:

- (37) ‘Once again I *can only apologise* on behalf of my clients for events that occurred.’ [BNC K54]

5.5 Apologies: The Sociopragmatic Facet

The sociopragmatic facet relates the various kinds and degrees of apologies to the social circumstances in which they occur. We can look at these both from the viewpoint of various factors within English-speaking societies and from the external point of view—examining the incidence of apologies in English-speaking societies as compared with other language communities. This section can only touch on the subject.

Holmes’s study of apologies among New Zealand speakers of English (1990, 1995) found a great difference between females and males. Females apologized to others much more, and also received more apologies from others. Holmes (1995: 1) comes to the conclusion that women are more polite than men, in apologies as well as other speech events (however, this analysis has been challenged by others such as Mills 2003: 213–214). Holmes’s analysis of the four dyadic types—women apologizing to women, men to men, women to men, and men to women—shows a pleasing systematicity: woman-to-woman apologies are the most frequent, men-to-men apologies the least frequent, with women-to-men and men-to-women apologies showing an intermediate frequency. The tendency for women to give more tokens of politeness than men is illustrated by these studies.

However, Deutschmann, pointing out that Holmes's studies use only small samples, analyzes apologies in a large corpus—the BNC—and reaches the unexpected conclusion that males apologize more than females! He also finds, less surprisingly, that working-class speakers apologize less, not being in the “politeness culture” of the middle classes.

Another surprising finding of Deutschmann's study, obviously connected with his finding that men apologize more than women, is that more powerful people apologize more to less powerful people than vice versa. This is at odds with Brown and Levinson's well-known claim that politeness increases in proportion to three factors: the power and social distance of *H* relative to *S*, and the weight of the imposition (or what is transacted).

Turning to sociopragmatic differences between nationalities or regional groups, we find it useful to consider the five sociopragmatic parameters mentioned in 4.4.5: vertical distance, horizontal distance, and cost-benefit (corresponding to B&L's P, D, and R factors), supplemented by the two extra factors of “strength of obligations/rights” and “self-territory vs. other territory.” Tanaka (1991) recalls—shortly after her arrival in Australia—going into a store to return a faulty desk lamp just purchased, and being shocked by the storekeeper's response *I see. Do you want to exchange it?* rather than the profuse, embarrassed apology that would have greeted such a complaint in Japan. The sense of obligation and deference of the service provider to the customer in Japan is famously much greater than in English-speaking countries, which explains the very different norms of polite behavior in Japan and in Australia in this kind of situation. Another anecdote recounted by Tanaka (*ibid.*) is of a Japanese visitor to Australia whose car was damaged by an accident caused by a young Australian driver. Visiting the driver's home to seek compensation, he was appalled that the driver's parents did not find it necessary to apologize. Here the variable factor of “self-territory vs. other-territory” seems to be at issue: for the Japanese, the child is part of the extended “self-territory” of the parents, so the debt or fault of the child naturally belongs also to the parent. These are rather extreme cases of different apology norms; but the contrast between English-speaking and Japanese society is more typically a matter of degree; for example, Tanaka (*ibid.*) found that vertical and horizontal distance had more influence on Japanese students' apologizing behavior than on Australian (English-speaking) students.

These differences between Japanese and Australian apology behavior can more generally be attributed to the distinction—or rather the cline—between individualist and collectivist societies. The former—typically “Anglo” or Western societies—prize the independence of the individual, whereas the latter—of which Japan is an example—give importance to the mutual dependence of members of a hierarchically organized social group. This can explain, in part, how the Japanese service provider shows great deference to the customer's needs, as the service provider or storekeeper is seen less as an individual than as a representative of the trading firm.

Perhaps the variation in the differences of apologetic behavior among language communities can be overestimated. This was certainly the conclusion of Olshtain (1989) in her study of apologies within the CCSARP research group. She found that her subjects representing speakers of four language communities behaved very similarly in apologizing (or not apologizing) for a set of offenses. However, the four languages concerned (English, French, German, and Hebrew) are all associated with Europe or a European cultural heritage. Also, as Olshtain pointed out, the various situations tested were limited, because of the need for comparability, to a student's life in a Western society, where we might expect differences between one national group and another to be minimized.

5.6 Responses to Apologies

While polite speech events tend to come in contrasting pairs paradigmatically—as in the case of requests and offers or thanks and apologies (see Table 5.1)—they also tend to come in pairs syntagmatically; that is, one speech event typically evokes, or is followed by, another kind of speech event as response. The two events constitute an *adjacency pair* (Schegloff 2007). Here there is an enactment of the asymmetry of politeness (see 2.1b). A serious apology, in expressing *S*'s guilt and regret, by implication invites *H* to reply by either accepting or rejecting the apology. As with other politeness-sensitive speech acts, there is a preference for the polite option: an absolving speech event by which *S* is excused, or pardoned, for the offense. This can be done by denying the reality of the offense—*No offense taken*, *No problem*, *It was nothing*—or by implying that the fault was trivial enough to be ignored—*It doesn't matter*, *Think nothing of it*, *Don't mention it*, *Forget it*; etc. Another common forgiving response, *That's/It's all right/OK*, seems to accept the apology as sufficient recompense for the fault.

- (38) A [lecturer]: Hello.
 B: Hello I'm sorry I'm late.
 A: *That's all right*. [BNC FUE]

Of course, other, non-exonerating responses are possible but dispreferred (see 2.1e):

- (39) A [pupil]: I'm sorry I'm late
 B [teacher]: You don't look as if you mean it, sit down please because my lesson started ten minutes ago. [BNC F7R]

It is no doubt significant that the forgiving reply in (38) is addressed by the lecturer of the introductory lecture of a preretirement course to a new arrival—who is likely to be of relatively advanced years and not previously known to the speaker (factors tending to increase politeness), whereas the unforgiving response in (39) is spoken by a teacher to a child, where the vertical distance in favor of the speaker

is great. Both of these replies, preferred and dispreferred, are however marked in comparison with the normal situation, where the apology is routine and highly conventionalized, and no response to it is felt necessary:

- (40) Welcome to the Archaeological Resource Centre. *Sorry about the delay,*
 <pause> but the school in front of you were nearly half an hour late.
 Thank you very much for turning up on time. Now so welcome to
 the ARC.

Notice that the speaker pauses after the apology in this speech, but no one takes the opportunity to register any kind of verbal response (although smiles and nods might have hinted to him that he was forgiven).

5.7 Public Apologies

This is a suitable point to mention a genre of “political apologies” in public life that has become prominent in the media in recent decades. “The Art of the Public Grovel,” as Wise Bauer (2009) calls it in her book of that name, has been extensively analyzed and commented on in academic publications; for pragmatic treatments relevant to politeness, see Abadi (1990), Brooks (1999), Liebersohn et al. (2004) and Harris et al. (2006). The sequence of events is usually this: a public scandal breaks in the media, whereby some public figure is accused of a previously concealed offense, which may be against an individual or a large community. As an example, I quote here short snippets from a transcript of Tiger Woods’s public apology (on February 19, 2010) for marital unfaithfulness, addressed to his wife, his family, his friends, and his fans, which has been available on his website (<http://web.tigerwoods.com/news/article/201002198096934/news/>).

The head act, saying sorry, is clear: *For all that I have done, I am so sorry...* There is also an admission of responsibility, *I recognize I have brought this on myself...*, and also an offer, or promise, of repair: *I owe it to those closest to me to become a better man. That’s where the focus will be.* In fact, the full transcript contains several examples of such moves. The one supporting move that is not easy to identify is an explanation of why the offense occurred: the “account.” The nearest thing to such an explanation was his confession that his fame and fortune had led him astray: *I stopped living by the core values I was taught to believe in... I thought I could get away with whatever I wanted to...* This is the nearest one is likely to get to a full, thoroughgoing apology in public. Even so, some commentators were critical of it and dubbed it a “semi-apology.” Perhaps this simply illustrates the prototype nature of speech events like apologies (as discussed in 5.1): the criteria for judging what is and what is not an apology, a promise, and so on, are rarely clear-cut.

Four curious features of the public apology, as a genre, are that first it takes place in the full glare of the media (although it may be written or spoken). Second, both *S* and *O* can be a large number of people. Third, the actual deliverer of the

apology may not be directly involved in the offense but may be in some sense representative of the body that was responsible for it (an oil company apologizing for pollution; Catholic bishops apologizing for abuse of children by priests, or for failing to deal severely enough with such offenders). In extreme cases, the apologizer may not have been alive at the time of the offense (e.g., the Japanese prime minister apologizing for use of women of other countries as sex slaves in World War II). And fourth, the apology is usually in response to public (including media) complaints and is designed to assuage public outrage, especially bearing in mind that more severe consequences, such as resignations, lawsuits, or criminal proceedings might be incurred. When the apologizer is speaking on behalf of a public body, however, a full-blooded apology (including the use of the A word itself) is often avoided, as it implies liability in a legal sense and could lead to untold financial loss. In expressing “regret,” on the other hand, *S* does not himself or herself necessarily admit to the offense. In this respect the apology may be an incomplete one. It is worth remembering that considerations of politeness are not the main motivations governing the public use of apologies. Usually there is a political, social, or financial motivation too. The admission of guilt that accompanies a full apology can have negative legal, political, or financial consequences, as well as leading, in certain circumstances, to severe loss of face.

What public apologies bring to the fore is that apologizing, more strongly than other politeness-sensitive speech events, is *face-threatening for the speaker*. Following Ruhi (2006), Spencer-Oatey et al. (2008: 111) point out a limitation of my politeness framework, as well as that of B&L, in that it has a “bias towards ‘concern for other’,” whereas “self-presentation is another important interactional concern that needs to be incorporated into any explanatory account of the management of relations/rapport.” In other words, speech events like compliments, requests, and apologies have to take into account regard for *S*—what Spencer-Oatey et al. call *self-presentation*—as well as regard for *O*. I admit that this cannot be handled in my politeness model, which explicitly deals with communicative altruism, and is therefore inevitably focused on “concern for other.” But I have also recognized that this politeness model is not meant to be an account of the totality of what Spencer-Oatey called “rapport management.” I have in addition noted that politeness cannot only be face-saving and face-enhancing for *O*, but as a secondary effect can be so for *S*. However, what we find with apologies, especially public apologies, is that they can involve (severe) loss of face for the speaker, and they may be avoided or toned down for that reason. The positive reason for apologizing in order to restore a balance of good relations has to be weighed against the negative reason for avoiding apology in order to avoid face loss or humiliation.

5.8 Conclusion

In conclusion, taking the apology as an example of a speech event, it may be useful to list the various factors we have noticed as defining the nature of what we may call “apology territory,” and the topography of that territory, in terms of what variations occur.

Apology territory

Politeness characteristics (as listed in Table 5.1): Maxim of Obligation (of S to O); pos-politeness; S-oriented

An apology speech event consists of: a head act (IFID) (a)
 and possible supporting moves: an expression of responsibility (b)
 an explanation of why the fault occurred (c)
 an offer of repair (d)
 a promise of forbearance (e)

Sincerity conditions: S accepts responsibility for the fault, and feels regret for it

Related speech event(s): Thanking

Head act formulae and expressions: (I'm) sorry; (I'm) sorry about... / to... / (that) ...; I beg your pardon; I apologize; pardon me; excuse me; forgive me; pardon; (my) apologies

Internal modifications: intensifying: **very/so/really** etc. sorry; I apologize **profusely**; **please** excuse me; etc.

External modifications: discourse markers, names, etc. *Oh; Oh dear; John* (etc.)

Polite adjacency pair: apology followed by acceptance/exoneration.

Variation of strength: mild apologies (*excuse me*, etc.); deep apologies (... *really* sorry, etc.)

Other variations: retrospective, simultaneous, anticipatory apologies; conditional vs. actual apologies; personal vs. public (e.g., political) apologies

Apologies typically refer to past events; naturally, one might think, only an offense that has already been committed can be excused. However, we have already seen that *Excuse me* can be used to apologize for an offense *S* is committing at the time of speech (e.g., interrupting), or even for a future offense *S* plans to commit:

(42) I'm sorry I can't make it to the meeting tonight.

The failure to attend the meeting is in the future, but *S* already has made plans to commit the "offense." The excuse, however, is that *S* will not do this deliberately; the use of *can't* in (42) implies that her absence is unavoidable. Another nonprototypical type of apology is the conditional apology represented by the semi-formulae *I'm sorry if...* and *We apologize for any...*, which could be said not to be "real" apologies, as *S* does not own up to committing an offense. The implication is that *S* does not know whether an offense was committed or not.

After Chapter 6 on requests, Chapter 7 will deal in outline with a range of speech events, including thanks (7.3), which are closely related to apologies; and commiserations or condolences (7.5.3), which overlap to some extent with apologies, since *I'm sorry* can denote *S*'s regretful feeling for reasons of sympathy rather than guilt. Both emotions, of course, can be simultaneously involved.

Requests and Other Directives

This chapter focuses on speech events with a competitive function: directives, and within that category, requests. Of all the utterance types sensitive to politeness, requests are arguably of the most abiding interest and have been most studied, particularly with reference to the English language. English has an amazing range of ways of conveying requests, and it exhibits a tendency to favor indirectness of requests more than most other languages,¹ indirectness here being closely connected with politeness. A likely sociopragmatic reason for this is that English-speaking cultures give prominence to neg-politeness (1.2.2) associated with the Tact Maxim (4.3.1)—which means that speakers tend to be chary of imposing on, or coercing, the behavior of others, and options tend to be offered to *O* as to whether to comply with *S*’s wishes or not.

Such is the variety of request forms and strategies used in English that, to keep this chapter within reasonable bounds, I am concentrating, even more than in other chapters, on the pragmalinguistic rather than the sociopragmatic facet of requests. When I talk of “politeness” in this chapter, it will be pragmalinguistic politeness that is chiefly in mind.

6.1 What is a Request? Requests and Related Speech Events

Before going further, let’s consider what a request is. Searle (1969: 66) defines it as a speech act with felicity conditions as follows:

<i>Propositional Content condition:</i>	Future act <i>A</i> of <i>H</i>
<i>Preparatory conditions:</i>	1. <i>H</i> is able to do <i>A</i> . 2. It is not obvious to both <i>S</i> and <i>H</i> that <i>H</i> will do <i>A</i> in the normal course of events of his own accord.
<i>Sincerity condition:</i>	<i>S</i> wants <i>H</i> to do <i>A</i> .
<i>Essential condition:</i>	Counts as an attempt to get <i>H</i> to do <i>A</i> .

¹ I am tempted to say “more, perhaps, than any other language,” as I have yet to come across, or read about, a language that is more extreme in the use of indirectness in requests than English.

However, this definition could easily apply to the related directive speech act of *ordering* or *commanding* (such as *Peel these potatoes!*), as well as a request like *Could you peel these potatoes, please?* So Searle adds a note on the difference, stipulating that orders or commands “have the additional preparatory rule that *S* must be in a position of authority over *H*.” Other writers have seen this distinction somewhat differently: Tracy et al. (1984) say that someone making a request, “while seeking compliance, recognizes the hearer’s right not to comply,” whereas someone giving an order does not recognize such a right. Another way to see this is to formulate the distinction primarily in terms of optionality: that is, a request is normally considered a speech event that gives *H* a choice as to whether to perform the desired act or not. People giving orders or commands, on the other hand, allow *H* no right to choose; *S* tells *H* to do (or not to do) something without countenancing disobedience. Thus, in the case of Kalashnikov-wielding hijackers ordering the pilot of an aircraft to fly to a certain destination, it is the lack of choice that is crucial, rather than the status of the hijacker, who is acting illegally and, almost everyone would agree (*pace* Searle), has no authority.

However, following a now-familiar argument, I will also maintain that there is no clear-cut boundary between orders/commands and requests, but rather a continuous scale of optionality, leading from the “no option given” of a pure command toward progressively greater and greater choice allowed to *H*. Some requests, in this formulation, are close to commands (*Please² eat up your dinner, Matthew*) whereas others are fairly extreme in the other direction (*I wonder if you’d mind terribly lending me £5?*), with average requests such as *Could you lend me a fiver, love?* occupying the middle ground. English has a large number of lexicogrammatical means that *S* can use, offering varying degrees of opportunity for noncompliance. The favorite device is that of rendering a request in the form of a yes-no question *Could / Can / Would / Will you...* which of course in principle allows *H* the opportunity to say “No” as well as “Yes,” even though *S*’s main goal in making the request is to gain compliance. We will consider such devices and their implications in 6.3 below. We will also keep in mind how far these request devices or frames have become pragmaticalized and rendered formulaic, such that the extent to which they offer optionality is more apparent than real. Although linguistically an utterance allows both compliance and refusal, there may be little or no intention of offering a choice in practice. In this sense, many polite requests uttered by powerful speakers are hypocritical.

In the framework presented in Chapter 4 (4.3.1), a request, as a kind of directive, has a competitive illocutionary function. It seeks an accommodation between competing goals: the goal of benefiting *S* or some third party, and the goal

² In her corpus study, Wichmann (2005: 1534–1535) notes that the initial placing of *please* is associated with commands and with public discourse, whereas its final placing is associated with more indirect types of directive, the rarer medial use (as in *Would you please...*) being associated with public discourse only.

of placating *O*. In this, it is a typical realization of neg-politeness and is a principal means by which the Tact Maxim is observed. It is generally *O*-oriented, in that the speech event proposes a future act by *O*. (In this chapter I use *O* in preference to *H* from now on, because there are requests where the action is performed by a third person rather than by *H*: for example, *Could Marvin collect the kids from school tomorrow?*—say, where Marvin is the addressee's husband.)

As with apologies, it is useful to think of a *request territory* occupied not only by speech events we can describe as “requests” but also, in appropriate circumstances, as demands, entreaties, pleas, etc., which are not far from being equivalent to requests. The unclear boundaries of request territory are in its blurry borderlines not only with orders/commands as just noted but with other varieties of speech events, such as suggestions, instructions and offers/invitations. The defining characteristic of requests, and more generally of directives, is that they propose actions to be performed by *O* at a cost to *O*—and normally, for the benefit of *S*. *Offers*, on the other hand, belong to the class of speech acts Searle called commissives, and propose actions to be performed by *S* for the benefit of *O* and at a cost to *S*. (Incidentally, here and elsewhere, when I talk about “cost,” “benefit,” and the “cost-benefit scale,” I find it helpful to think of “cost” and “benefit” in terms of goals. That is, “for the benefit of *O*” can be interpreted as “in pursuit of what *S* considers to be *O*'s goals.” On the other hand, “at a cost to *O*” can be interpreted as “to what *S* considers the detriment of *O*'s goals.”) Requests and offers appear to be totally different speech events, respectively belonging to the domains of neg- and pos-politeness. However, it is perhaps not surprising that there are speech events that hover between the two. The normal use of *Would you like . . . ?* is to make an offer, as in *Would you like a coffee?* But this is not invariable:

- (1) Dorothy: Tim *would you like to* come and do your teeth. <pause>
Please.
Tim: Not <-|-> yet. [BNC KBW]

Dorothy, the mother, is asking her son to clean his teeth, but she presents it as if offering him the chance to do something he might really like to do. However, the word *Please*, added when no action results, makes it clear that she intends it to be taken as a directive.

Such requests camouflaged as offers are often used, for example, by teachers and carers talking to children. Here are examples of the similar formula *Do you wanna . . . ?* typical of AmE:

- (2) Leticia *do you wanna* open your book to page sixty four and read the second paragraph . . . ? [LCSAE 137602]
(3) Eli *do you wanna* pick up your juice please? Your juice see your juice pick it up please. [LCSAE 155801]

It is interesting to note how the speaker in (3) falls back on an imperative (backed up with *please*) when the *do you wanna...* tactic apparently fails to produce compliance.³

Other types of speech event bordering on request territory are *suggestions* and *instructions*. One subtype of *suggestion* is a speech event where the proposed action *A* is to be performed by both *S* and *H*, to the assumed benefit of both. Examples are *Let's go to the movies* [LCSAE 163801] or *Shall we go have some tea?* [LCSAE 133901]. There is also a kind of *S*-focused suggestion that is more like a tentative offer (since the action is to be performed by *S*):

- (4) *Shall I* do those drinks then mum? [BNC KBL]

and an *O*-oriented suggestion that is more like a tentative piece of advice (see 7.4.2):

- (5) A: Hopefully I can go and hook up with her.
 B: *You could* spend the night at her house.
 A: She has a house? [LCSAE 158401]

Instructions tend to have a collaborative illocutionary function, and therefore they lie outside the realm of (im)polite behavior, as they involve two parties who are working toward a common goal, usually for the particular benefit of *H*, where it is recognized by both parties that *S* is entitled to tell *H* to do something, usually on account of *S*'s special competence. For example, a vet may instruct a client to change a pet's diet, or a tennis coach may instruct an amateur player to return the ball waist-high. As both instructor and instructee are assumed to share the same goals, instructions are not generally face-threatening in the way commands or requests often are, so there is no need to avoid using the bald-on-record imperative, as in these street directions: *Go on to the second set of traffic lights, and then turn left, OK?*

What should be reiterated, in all this discussion, is that speech-act verbs like *command*, *suggest*, and *instruct* do not strictly refer to speech act categories, of the Searlian type, but refer largely to a range of scalar phenomena. For example, as we have seen, there is an optionality scale defining the relation between commands and requests; there is also a cost-benefit scale, such that requests imply a cost to *H* and a benefit to *S*. The size of the cost and the size of the benefit vary from minimal to very large.

³ Another case of a camouflaged request in AmE was brought to my attention by Julia Youst MacRae:

“A parent often makes very indirect requests of the partner to help out with taking care of the children by directing comments at the children, but the comment is really for the partner who will hear and interpret it as something she/he has to act on. There is a speaker with two people being addressed, but for different purposes. An example is ‘Oh, sweetie. Your diaper is dirty. I can't change you now so you'll have to be uncomfortable for a while.’ The husband, overhearing this, (*one hopes* [comment by GL]) jumps in to lend a hand.”



FIGURE 6.1 The cost-benefit scale.

These scales interact with scales introduced in 1.2.1: the scales of vertical and horizontal distance. Speakers can use these scales tactically, and especially in the democratic ethos of “Anglo” society today it sometimes pays to exploit the ambivalence of speech events. For example, a boss may say to an employee *You might want to collect those documents before the banks close*. Here the semi-formula *You might want to X* appears have the force of a tentative suggestion (for *O*’s benefit as well as, possibly, *S*’s), but the superior position of *S* on the vertical distance scale may well lead *O* to interpret it as an order.

Another example of a semi-formula hovering between different speech-event territories is *Why don’t you X?* which, although primarily used to introduce suggestions or advice (see 7.4.2), can also be used for offers or (disguised) requests:

Why don’t you just sit down and relax? [LCSAE133002]

Why don’t you let me pay the tip? [LCSAE112601]

Why don’t you shut up. [BNC D91]

The first of these utterances looks like a suggestion or a piece of advice, serving the interests of *O*; the second is an offer serving the interests of *O* at a cost to *S*, and the third looks very much like a directive, serving the interests of *S* rather than *O*.⁴

6.2 The Parameters of Request Territory

Requests are the canonical exemplification of B&L’s well-known model of politeness (see 2.2.2) as a way of reducing the face threat of an FTA (a face-threatening act). B&L’s three parameters (or scales) of Power (P), Distance (D), and Rank of Imposition (R) correspond, in my model, to the differently termed parameters of *vertical distance*, *horizontal distance*, and *cost-benefit*. Like B&L, I made an error in my original formulation, assuming there was a simply summative relation between these factors:

- (i) The more power *O* holds over *S*, and
- (ii) the most socially distant *O* is from *S*, and
- (iii) the more costly *E* is to *O*, [where *E* = the event or action proposed]

⁴ One of the strategies for requesting in the CCSARP coding manual (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 280) and Trosborg’s classification (1995: 201) is a “suggestory formula,” where the request is made in the guise of a suggestion. Semi-formulae to be included here are *What/How about X?* *Why don’t you/we X?* as well as two semi-formulae not included by CCSARP: *Why not X?* *Let’s X*, where *X* is something of benefit to *S* rather than *O*, e.g., *Let’s go home in your car*. This tactic, by implying that *O*’s interests as well as *S*’s will be served, appears to lower the imposition on *O*. But in practice it probably does not. It can hardly be classified as polite; it is more like an illocutionary confidence trick.

the more *tact* [i.e., imposition-mitigating politeness] is required by the situation.

[from Leech (1977: 24), reprinted in Leech (1980: 116), with a change of symbols from *s* to *S* and from *a* (= addressee) to *O* (= other person)].

This is represented in B&L's (1978: 76) account by the now-familiar formula:

$$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$$

where the weightiness of the imposition is arrived at by adding the *D* factor (horizontal social distance between *S* and *H*), the *P* factor (vertical distance factor), and the *R* factor (size of the imposition). But it has been a popular exercise in recent years to discover ways in which B&L's formula fails. One well-known kind of counterevidence is provided by the "bulge theory" of Wolfson (1988), who demonstrated that among middle-class Americans the contrasting close and distant positions on the *D* scale were associated with lesser politeness behavior, with a "bulge" of greater politeness in the middle, relating to people neither intimate nor distant. A possible explanation for this is that between close friends or between distant acquaintances (or strangers), there is little threat of face loss or social instability, whereas in the in-between area of the bulge there is less stability, and consequently more need for careful rapport management. Other studies have called into question the *P* and *R* factors, as well. For example, Baxter (1984) found that weight of imposition (*R*) did not predict relative politeness in gaining compliance in requests, and Cherry (1988) found evidence that power did not correlate with levels of politeness (as shown in the particular situation of academics writing to the president of an American university). Nevertheless, yet other studies have supported the B&L model, and it can be assumed that these factors, despite doubts about the summative formula, are the most important factors affecting the application of the Tact Maxim. (See Fukushima 2000: 77–84 for discussion of assessments of *P*, *D*, and *R* in requests.)

Other studies have questioned the qualitative nature of the variables of power and distance constituting the *P*, *D*, and *R* factors. It has been argued (see Fukushima 2000: 79–84) that "power," for example, power to control, is not the right concept for all cultures. Certainly, social rank, age, and authority can be just as relevant particularly in many non-Western cultures. This is why I prefer to avoid "power" here and use the more neutral term "vertical distance," where *S* has a higher or lower position than *H*. Further, it has been argued that the variable of horizontal distance subsumes two rather different variables: not only *familiarity* but *affect* (i.e., like or dislike; Holtgraves and Yang 1992: 246). Distance/solidarity between individuals can also be composed of a number of subvariables, such as (1) social similarity (in terms of age, gender, social class, etc.), (2) frequency of contact, (3) length of acquaintance, (4) how well the people know one another, and (5) their sense of like-mindedness, as well as affect (Spencer-Oatey 1996: 7). All these subvariables make it more difficult to know whether one is measuring the same values in different situations.

Regarding cost-benefit (B&L's *R* factor), there is a further issue of whether rights and obligations (mentioned in 4.4.5, 4.5.3) are just an additional aspect of *R*

or constitute a distinct, fourth variable. Thomas (1995: 131) gives a nice example of the big difference that rights and obligations can make to indirectness:

The first time I observed this was in an interaction involving two elderly women travelling on a country bus service. On country routes the driver stops only when requested to do so. The first woman wanted to get off at a scheduled stopping place, and as the bus approached it she simply called out: “Next stop, driver!” Her companion wanted to get off where there was no official bus stop, and asked the driver, “Do you think you could possibly let me out just beyond the traffic lights, please?”

But for Fukushima (2000: 88) the absence of obligation can be just an additional element adding to the size of the “cost” on the cost-benefit scale. In other words, the size of proposed imposition can include not only personal physical or economic costs (such as the value of a loan, the amount of time spent, the intrusiveness on *O*’s personal space) but more abstract factors such as whether *S* has a right to ask, or whether *O* has an obligation to comply. In a real sense, you are “asking more” of someone if you ask them to do something beyond their call of duty.

6.2.1 O-FOCUS AND S-FOCUS IN REQUESTS

I have described a request as an *O*-oriented speech event, but it appears there can also be *S*-focused requests, where some action by *S* is proposed:

- (6) A: Can I use your phone to call him?
B: Mhm. [BNC 134901]

This can be reasonably called a *request for permission*, but sometimes “permission” seems too formal a word: all the speaker seeks in (7) is some kind of acquiescence from *O*.

- (7) A: Can I make a suggestion?
B: What?
A: To avoid frustration, find another place to put those things.
[LCSAE 123602]

Although A appears to be asking permission, B’s reply is not a granting of permission, as *Yes, certainly* would be. Instead, the permission is taken for granted, and the reply *What?* takes the next step in asking what the suggestion is. This is one example among many where a request type has become pragmaticalized (see 3.7), where it has become a matter of routine and has lost much of its force as an indirect request. In effect, *Can I make a suggestion* is little more than an announcement that *S* is going to make a suggestion.

More interesting is the case of an *O*-focused request where the action is envisaged as performed by *O*, but where *S* is the only person mentioned as involved in the action. In *Could I have some more butter please?* [LCSAE 156001] (spoken to the waiter in a restaurant) the addressee’s role as agent is “edited out” of the utterance.

The omission of reference to the agent's role, common with the verbs *have* and *get*, is probably motivated both by verbal economy and by politeness, since the alternative *Can/Could you bring/get me...* would take a little longer to say, as well as making it more bluntly explicit that *O* is the person required to act.

Further, there are problems in drawing a line between *O*-focus and *S*-focus in requests. This distinction, it appears, has a blurry middle ground. Consider the construction *It BE possible to*, which contains impersonal *it* as subject, and an infinitive complement, both *O* and *S* being “airbrushed out.” This can be used to propose a future act either by *O* or by *S*:

- (8) *Is it possible to* lay the table, do you think, for me? [BNC KBW]
- (9) *Is it possible to* get a copy of that [= document]? [BNC JA9]
- (10) *Would it be possible to* consider uh li= uh limiting the S E U and the Nijmegen contribution to sentence grammar? [DCPSE di_a05]

It is clear (because of the words *for me*) that in (8) *S* is asking a favor of *O*: this is a standard *O*-focused request. In (9), on the other hand, the request is for *S* to receive something: it is an *S*-focused request or “request for permission.” In (10), the meaning is less clear. Two linguists are discussing collaboration on a research project, and it is probable that *S* wants both *S* and *O* to “consider” the plan. This could be construed as either *S*-focused or *O*-focused, or both, according to one's perspective. The noteworthy thing is that neither *Is it possible...?* nor *Would it be possible...?* makes any mention of either *S* or *O*. The issue of who is to do the action is something to be inferred. This kind of impersonal distancing of the speech event from *S* and *O* is discussed by Aijmer (1996: 176–177), who, following Haverkate (1984: 79), calls it “defocalization.”

Here are two e-mail messages as more extended illustrations of the polite avoidance of direct reference to the hearer/reader. The first is from a publisher (not the publisher of this book!) addressing co-authors:

- (10a) In order to publish the book at the best time of year, we can't be much later than the middle of June getting this into production—so *I'll hope to see the manuscript shortly*.

The second is from an academic in a university department addressing colleagues:

- (10b) *I wonder if we could all make sure* that these rooms are returned to their “unmarked” state after our sessions in there, i.e. desks in a horseshoe and OHP stowed. It has come to my attention that failure to do this is causing a problem.
thanks!

Having introduced *S*-focused requests, I now have to make a U-turn and claim that, fundamentally, they do not exist. If we return to example (6), and add the request marker *please*:

- (6a) A: Can I use your phone to call him *please*?

it becomes obvious that (6), like (6a), is really a request for an action by *O*, namely the verbal act of giving of permission for *S* to use the phone. Requests for permission, therefore, are actually requests for *O* to do something, viz. *to give permission*—the physical action by *S* (in this case using the phone) being secondary and dependent on the communicative act requested from *O*.

Considered in this way, all requests, including requests for permission, are *O*-focused. The interest of examples like (6)–(10b) is that they diplomatically play down the involvement of *O* in the event. Further, the “defocalized” examples (8)–(10) show a stronger form of disguise that avoids reference to both *S* and *O*. All these examples illustrate a strategy of indirectness in the interests of politeness: a distancing strategy that avoids mention of the envisaged granter or, in (8)–(10), the grantee of the favor. Examples (10a) and (10b) illustrate a further strategy, which is to include *S* (by using *we*) among those who are called on to perform the action.

6.2.2 ON-RECORD AND OFF-RECORD STRATEGIES

Investigators of requests have spent considerable effort in classifying the variety of strategies for requesting in English. B&L’s model (1987: 68–69), as we noted in 2.2.2 (Figure 2.1), proposed five “superstrategies” for doing FTAs, of which requests were a paradigm case. Someone wanting to perform a directive may choose to

- (a) do it *bald on-record*, without redress: e.g., *Get me something to eat.*
- (b) do it *on-record* with *positive politeness*: e.g., *Be a love, and get me a sandwich.* (endearments are seen as a form of positive politeness)
- (c) do it *on-record* with *negative politeness*: e.g., *Could you get me a sandwich?*
- (d) do it *off-record*: e.g., *I’m so hungry. Are you going anywhere near the sandwich bar?*
- (e) or *not do the FTA* (the directive) at all: i.e., [Silence]

The CCSARP group in effect simplified this by collapsing (b) and (c) and completely omitting (e), which is not an FTA or speech event anyway. For them, as in Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 46–48), the three superstrategies are:

- [1] direct requests (or rather, commands; see 6.3.1)
- [2] conventional (or on-record) indirect requests
- [3] non-conventional (or off-record) indirect requests, i.e., hints

I prefer the terms *on-record* and *off-record*—or the simpler term *hints*⁵ often used for off-record speech events by people working in the CCSARP tradition. The reason is that these “non-conventional” requests can actually be highly conventionalized (or pragmatized). Consider the off-record request *Got a pen?* which simply asks

⁵ I used the term *hinting strategy* in a similar sense in Leech (1980 [1977]: 112–114) and in Leech (1983: 97–99).

whether *O* has a pen, but is inevitably understood to be a request: “If you’ve got a pen, please lend it to me.” This is highly conventionalized, in that (a) the indirect interpretation is immediately and unavoidably available in context, and also in that (b) it is so routine that the initial two words *Have you...* are frequently omitted.

Within these broad categories, then, both B&L and CCSARP distinguished various individual strategies. The CCSARP model has since the 1980s been used by others, particularly in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (see 10.4; Trosborg 1995, Schauer 2009) and has been amended in various minor ways. The scheme I shall use, which in its general outlines follows the CCSARP scheme, is listed in 6.3. However, it should be stressed that there is considerable qualitative variation in politeness, both pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic, within the various strategies. Researchers up to now have often been content to make lists of strategies without really explaining why one tends to be preferred to another in given contexts. I will be interested in delving rather more deeply into these strategies, and asking why some are associated with a higher rating of (pragmlinguistic) politeness than others.

What *are* directive strategies? In my understanding, they are the communicative means we use when trying to get someone to do something they would probably not do of their own accord.⁶ The categories of strategy make use of generalizations on the level of meaning rather than of form; for example, *ask a question about O’s willingness* is one example of a strategy. The actual lexicogrammatical form used is a different matter. Many request strategies are typically implemented lexicagrammatically by a formulaic expression such as *Will you...?* or *Would you mind...?* followed by a nonformulaic part such as *make a cup of coffee* or *holding the door open*, describing the desired action *A*. Because they are partly relatively fixed, and partly free, I will call these utterance patterns *semi-formulae*.⁷ Thus, strategies are recognizable on the semantic level, and semi-formulae on the lexicogrammatical level. Less typically, strategies can be implemented by less formulaic utterance patterns—or, to revert to a terminology used earlier, while some pragmlinguistic choices are highly pragmatized (such as *Will you...?*) others are less so. For example, the willingness strategy illustrated in this paragraph can be alternatively manifested in such a form as *I wonder, would you be willing to...?*

Very broadly, it has been assumed that direct directives are less polite than on-record indirect directives, which in turn are less polite than off-record indirect

⁶ Strategies can therefore be seen as semantic generalizations over speech events. “Do something” here subsumes the negative act of refraining from doing something, e.g., *Don’t shout!*

⁷ “Semi-formula” is an adaptation of the terminology of Watts (2003: 190–191), who calls such patterns “semi-formulaic EPMs” (where EPMs = expressions of procedural meaning). The term used by Aijmer (1996: 22–24), borrowing from Pawley and Syder (1983), is “(sentence) stems.” The framework of Pawley and Syder, adopted by Aijmer, is a good way of accounting for both the formulaicity and the limited flexibility of structure and content found in speech events such as requests, where typically the speech event begins with a formulaic word sequence followed by a more freely constructed word sequence referring to the act *A* to be performed.

directives (hints).⁸ However, the last part of this assumption, in particular, has been challenged (see Blum-Kulka 1987, cited in Fukushima 2000: 189). Many nonconventional requests, which essentially hint at the goal and leave *O* to infer its intended force, are the reverse of polite. For example, *You've left the kitchen in a mess* (from Weizman 1993: 130) is a complaint about *O*'s unsatisfactory behavior (infringing the Approbation Maxim), as well as being (probably) an off-record request for cleaning up the mess (observing the Tact Maxim). On the other hand, (8) can be a polite off-record way of asking someone to provide for you the amount of change you want:

(8) You don't happen to have change for a pound, do you?

Notice that to get someone to do something off-record, one can ask them about the existence of a precondition⁹ for performing the desired action *A*, letting one's illocutionary goal (which could not be achieved without that precondition) be worked out by inference. In (8) *S* takes an overtly pessimistic stance to that action: negating the request's precondition (*You don't...have*) and then querying it with a tag question (*...do you?*). This is a polite strategy biasing the request toward a negative outcome, so as to leave *O* plenty of scope for noncompliance.

The general heuristic for working out the force of this utterance is roughly as follows (cf. the discussion of *Can you pass the salt?* in Appendix A1.3):

S is asking about the likelihood of a state of affairs, which is a precondition for *O* doing action *A*. This question is well motivated if *S* has the goal of getting *O* to do *A*.

Therefore (by the Maxim of Relation and in the apparent absence of any other motive for asking this question), *S* probably has the goal of getting *O* to do *A*.

Another way to think of it is as part of a dialogue aimed at fulfilling *S*'s goal of *O* doing *A*. This can be represented in a condensed form in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1

An indirect request.

<i>S</i> asks a question	<i>O</i> replies, assuming a request has been made
Can you open the window?	Sure.

⁸ B&L do not actually make this claim, but they do make a similar claim (1987: 73) that “roughly, the more dangerous the particular FTA *x* is, in *S*'s assessment, the more he will tend to choose the higher-numbered strategy.” Of the five “superstrategies”, numbered 1–5 in terms of increasing risk of face loss, the off-record strategy is numbered 4, lower than all on-record strategies.

⁹ This concept of precondition is more specific than that of *preparatory conditions* or *preparatory rules* in Searle's definition of a request, which are seen as being general to all directives. However, indirect requests can be formed by querying either preconditions or preparatory conditions; see later in this section.

Table 6.1 can be explicated by the more elaborated dialogue in Table 6.2, where the first response (on the right) and the second request (on the left) are bypassed through the short-circuiting process of pragmaticalization.

The utterances in square brackets are inferred, but not uttered. Table 6.3 shows another example, with Table 6.3 again representing the condensed version, and Table 6.4 the spelt-out version.

When the off-record strategy is employed, the second stage procedure, asking *S* to do *A*, is not needed. Off-record (or hinting) indirect requests, like on-record ones, can be compared with one another along a scale of optionality, and the question of how polite they are has to be answered in context by considering the factors already mentioned: vertical and horizontal distance, and the cost-benefit factor (in this case the cost) involved. We include here as part of “cost” the rights/obligations factor (especially the right of *S* to demand the favor from *O*, and the obligation of *O* to supply it). However, there is also another factor contributing to (im)politeness, which is damage to *O*’s face incurred by the request. For example, *Stop talking, Patrick* (BNC JK6) is impolite not so much because of what it asks for in physical terms (it is not costly to stop talking) but through the psychological effect: the implication that Patrick is behaving badly. There is therefore a second source of impoliteness: the utterance is not only a bald-on-record directive (failing to observe the Tact Maxim), but implicitly also a complaint or criticism of *O*’s behavior (transgressing the Maxim of Approbation). In this, we can see it is as a threat to what Spencer-Oatey (2000b: 14) calls “Quality Face”—the value people claim for themselves in terms of personal qualities such as appearance, behavior, and ability. The first example of an off-record directive I gave above, *You’ve left the kitchen in*

TABLE 6.2

The “unpacked” version of the exchange in Table 6.1.

<i>S asks a question + a request</i>	<i>O replies (a) to the question; (b) to the implied request</i>
Can you open the window?	[Yes]
[In that case, please do so]	Sure.

TABLE 6.3

Another indirect request

<i>A asks a question</i>	<i>B replies, assuming a request has been made</i>
Do you have any paper clips?	Yes. Large or small?

TABLE 6.4

The “unpacked” version of the exchange in Table 6.3

<i>A asks a question + a request</i>	<i>B replies (a) to the question; (b) to the request.</i>
Do you have any paper clips?	Yes
[In that case, please sell me some.]	[Okay.] Would you like large or small?

a mess, is an FTA in this sense. Hence, somewhat against B&L's claim (1987: 73; see fn. 6), off-record requests should not necessarily be associated with higher-risk FTAs than on-record ones.

6.2.3 A DIGRESSION ON NONDISCRETENESS

I have made a claim (3.4.1) that there is no discrete or categorical distinction between a request and an order. The difference between these two terms is best considered a scalar matter: the degree of optionality allowed to *O*. In this book I have assumed that there are in reality no discrete speech act categories such as “an order,” “a request,” or “an offer,” etc., but that the social reality underlying these English-language terms consists of scales such as the cost-benefit scale and the optionality scale. I have continued to use metapragmatic terms like “request” imprecisely, however, as a matter of convenience, meaning by them the “the territory in pragmatic space roughly occupied by utterances English speakers call requests.”

If nondiscreteness applies to speech-event categorization, it can also apply to other pragmatic distinctions. For example, the distinction between *on-record* (conventional) and *off-record* (nonconventional) strategies for requests is by no means as clear-cut as has been assumed. Of (9) and (10), (9) is generally considered on-record, and (10) off-record. Both question *O* about a precondition for the performance of the desired act *A*, but (9) is more direct than (10).

- (9) A: Can you give mum a shout for me?
 B: Mum! [BNC KBL]
- (10) A: Have you got any bags of dried fruit?
 B: Which one do you want? [BNC KCN]

In both questions A's requestive intention is recognized by B—who responds accordingly—but A's question in (10) is more indirect than that in (9). Both questions query a condition that will have to be satisfied if the request is to be successful. But in (9) the condition (that *H* is able to give mum a shout) actually mentions the desired action (“to give mum a shout”), whereas in (10) the condition (that *H* has got some bags of dried fruit) does not include the desired action *A* (“to sell me a bag of dried fruit”). If a relatively precise line is to be drawn between on-record and off-record requests, I believe it should be drawn here: between requests that refer to the desired action, and those that do not.¹⁰

¹⁰ It is also relevant that Searle's preparatory conditions for a request (1969: 66) include the condition that “*H* is able to do *A*”, corresponding to the proposition questioned by the requester in (9). Such conditions are quite general to requests, whereas the precondition in (10) is more specific and limited to certain kinds of request. Jonathan Culpeper has commented (pers. comm.) that “the whole notion of directness is broader than the transparency of the illocutionary point. It certainly includes whether or not elements of the propositional content are mentioned. And I think it includes whether the participants are referred to (cf. *Are there any bags of dried fruit?*).” See Weizman (1989) on requestive hints.

6.3 Strategies for Directives

The main semantic *strategies* for performing directives are subdivided into (1) direct strategies, (2) (conventionally) indirect—that is, on-record strategies—and (3) hints (or off-record strategies).

6.3.1 DIRECT STRATEGIES

We begin with the *direct* group, which includes two strategies:

- a) Imperatives (i.e., semantically *mands*; see 3.2.1), e.g., *Bring me a cup of tea*.
- b) Performatives, e.g., I beg you to help me; I am asking you to listen.

These are *direct* in that they convey directive meaning directly, without any device to reduce the face threat. It can also be claimed that these strategies are *direct* in the sense that they contain an overt *illocutionary force indicating device* (IFID)—see 3.1.2—in one case an imperative clause, in the other case a performative preface *I VERB you* containing a requestive verb such as *ask*. Imperatives are of course strongly associated with bald-on-record directives, but like other directives, imperative directives are variable in politeness, according to the vertical and horizontal distance factors and the cost-benefit factor. In fact, imperatives that imply benefit to *O* can be positively polite: *Help yourself* (an invitation/offer), *Have a rest*, *Come in and sit down*, *Enjoy your meal*, *Have a good day*, *Take care*, etc. None of these are directives in the sense of proposing that *O* do something at a cost to *O* and to the benefit of *S*. They are not directives at all, but offers, invitations, warnings, good wishes, etc. Hence the claim that the imperative is an IFID specifically for directives is untrue.

Moreover, it seems to be true that imperatives tend to be used for directives less in English than in other languages such as Italian (Jonathan Culpeper, pers. comm.). For example, *Bring me a menu* (spoken to a waiter) appears rude in English, even with *please* added. An indirect directive beginning *Would/Can/Could you* is usually much preferred. The politeness marker *please* when added to imperatives (and other direct directives) can somewhat soften their impositive force. (The effect is considerably more polite if *please* is added with a rising tone, e.g., *Open wide, please* spoken by a dentist). Imperatives without *please* that demand little favors—i.e., where the cost is small—are often the small change of everyday (e.g., family) interaction:

- (11) Pass him those Tuc biscuits. [BNC KBG]
- (12) Wait a minute the brake's on. [BNC KB8]

The category of performatives (see A1.1) can be extended for the present purpose to include the progressive form of a speech-act verb, *I am asking*..., but not to include hedged performatives, which contain various devices of indirectness to reduce the force of the “pure” performative and are therefore considered below in 6.4.1 (e) as

one of the pragmatic modifiers tending to soften directives. The pure performative is formal and quite rare in everyday discourse. It makes the illocutionary force of the utterance quite explicit, and its degree of (pragmalinguistic) (im)politeness depends very much not only on the P, D, and R factors but on the meaning of the performative verb. For example, *I demand* is highly impositive, *I ask* is less so, and *I beg* less so again. The formality of performatives is evident in that they tend to occur in highly formalized activity types, such as public debates and court proceedings. Of the following examples, (13) is from a written text; (14) is from a legal cross-examination, spoken of course by a lawyer; and (15) is from Hansard, the official record of British parliamentary proceedings:

- (13) *I demand* a full public enquiry into the activities of the company ... (FLOB A02)
- (14) Now *I ask you* if you could explain why it's not until twelfth of January that you signed that application (DCPSE Di_H01)
- (15) *I beg* to move, that an humble address be presented to her majesty ... (LOB H19)

6.3.2 ON-RECORD INDIRECT STRATEGIES: STATEMENTS

We move on now to indirect strategies—cases where (leaving aside for the present the short-circuiting of pragmatization) the directive force can be derived only by inferential steps. The most common indirect strategies in everyday usage are various types of questions, but statements are also an important way of conveying a directive, and we begin with them. Statements do not directly impose *S*'s will on *O*, as imperatives can do, but they communicate a modally loaded assertion from which it is usually easy to infer the illocutionary force of a directive. Modal auxiliaries, particularly *will*, *would*, *can*, *could*, and *should* are important means of conveying this message.

- (a) **Prediction statement:**
 - (16) *You will* just fill out that work ticket. It'll be your responsibility to fill it out correctly because that will be how you will get paid. [LCSAE 152502]
 - (17) 'Insolence to officers *will* not be tolerated.' [from a fictional text] [BNC ACE]
- (b) **Strong obligation statement:**
 - (18) *You must* record testing times for all three tests.
 - (19) *You've got to* quit setting it [= the microwave] for a long time and then not watching it. ... *You gotta* learn to do that or I'm not gonna let you use the microwave Dave. [LCSAE 149301]
- (c) **Weaker obligation statement:**
 - (20) *You should* give me all your old clothes Lisa.
 - (21) *You need to* put a necklace on. [LCSAE 147601]
 - (22) And what *I need you to* do for me is to, like, sign this piece of paper ... [LCSAE 141101]

(d) **Volitional statement:**

- (23) You've probably already skated but *I want you to* bend your knees.
[LCSAE 149201] [at a skating lesson]

(e) **Ability/possibility statement:**

- (24) See, I want to become a very good cook. *You can* hang out with my mom for a while [LCSAE 135401]
(25) *You might* wanna call ahead of time. Just make sure that the guy's there.
[LCSAE 156101] [Note that *might wanna* in this example combine possibility with volition]

These strategies are listed roughly in descending order of face threat or “impositiveness,” and hence their potential for politeness increases from (a) to (e), as is predictable from their position on a scale from strong to weak modality. In (a), *will* expresses the “pure” future of prediction and therefore conveys *S*'s complete confidence that *O* will do what is demanded. This is typically a device of officialdom. In (b), *must*, when used in a directive, expresses not only strong obligation but the personal authority of the speaker, and so it can have a dictatorial tone of “I'm telling you,” making it, if anything, more face-threatening than *will*.¹¹ *Have to* and *have got to* (often reduced in the written record to *gotta*, particularly in AmE) are slightly less face-threatening than *must*, as *S* in this case may not be the person who is exercising authority but simply someone reporting a general obligation. *You have to take your dog to the vet* (LCSAE143701) in its context is not so much a directive as an instruction by which *O* is informed of the procedure for getting a dog certified as being of a particular breed. More typical of its directive use is *Mommie you have to write a note to my teacher* (LCSAE147401), but this still retains the implication that the power to impose (the *deontic source*) lies outside the speaker—presumably in the hands of the school authorities. When *S* clearly has authority, however, for example when a parent is addressing a child as in (26), *have to* can be a slightly more diplomatic alternative to *must*:

- (26) Now listen, you *have to* be quiet and listen... [LCSAE 168102]

Weaker obligation statements (c) can be made with *need* and *should*. *Need to* can be more diplomatic than *must* and *have to*, typically implying that *O* is the beneficiary of the action. Hence it is more like a piece of advice (7.4.2) than a directive:¹²

- (27) A: *You need to* bring insect repellent.
B: I don't have any.
A: Oh, *you guys need to* go buy some. You're gonna get bitten like crazy. [LCSAE 130602]

¹¹ *Must* in the obligation sense is largely avoided in American speech. Julia Youst MacRae (pers. comm.) comments that “In AmE... a parent would very, very rarely use the word ‘must’ with a child.”

¹² *I need you to VERB* is another form of directive, as in this extract from the film *Office Space* (1999): *I'm going to need you to go ahead and come in tomorrow*. (Needless to say, the speaker is the office boss.)

Poised somewhere between strong advice and strong obligation is the colloquial semi-formula *You'd better X*, which strongly urges the “advisability” of an action, either for the benefit of *S* or the benefit of *O*:

- (28) I think *you'd better* go to bed. [BNC KBB]

You'd better often strikes an impolite note, perhaps because the comparative form *better* brings a vestigial implication of blame for the “worse” situation that exists at the time of speaking. This is explicit in this example:

- (29) You haven't done any reading, have you? *You'd better* read a chapter before we go out this afternoon. [BNC KCD]

A weaker obligational modality is also conveyed by *should* statements, which on the face of it could be giving advice for *O*'s benefit, expressing the desirability of some action *A*. However, like *need to*, *should* can be used diplomatically, to play down a requirement *S* is imposing on *O*. The following shows a mother addressing her son:

- (30) A: Those jeans.
B: Yeah. Oh.
A: *You should* probably wash those Dan. They have dog saliva all over them. Dog hair and dog saliva. [LCSAE 151002]

Notice that the modal adverb *probably* in (30) also contributes to politeness by making the directive more tentative.

Volitional statements (d) typically have the speaker as the subject; to make the directive force more explicit, *you* can fill the object slot. *I want* statements, especially when the object slot is filled by *you*, are typically impolite (because they imply ‘What I want is something you need to respond to’), and can only be used nonimpolitely where *S* is in a superior position and can impose his or her will on *O* without undue face threat—for example, where *S* is a teacher in a school classroom:

- (31) *I want you to* go and look up uh the state of Georgia in the encyclopedia and learn something about the flag, okay? [LCSAE 112403]

The hypothetical statement *I would like (you) to* is somewhat less imposing, because *would* places the action in the realm of unreal events, so that it is semantically distanced from reality. As *I would want* scarcely occurs, the verb *like* in effect substitutes for *want* in this hypothetical construction.

- (32) *I'd like to* hear your tribute please, to Danny Blanchflower who died so tragically at the age of sixty-seven yesterday, from Alzheimer's disease [Radio program] [BNC HM4]
(33) What *I'd like you to* do is put put a rectangle round three words... [BNC JSA] [spoken by the instructor in an adult training course]

Although the hypothetical meaning of *would* is weakened through pragmaticalization (6.4.1 (i)), it still plays a role in making *I'd like (you) to* more polite than *I want (you) to*.

The purely hypothetical *would*¹³ purports to put *S* in the frame of mind of *not* expecting the desired action to be performed. However, in practice, for example in (33), this is typically not the case.

The last category of modalized statements we will consider is (e) the ability/possibility statement, most commonly employing the modal *can* or its hypothetical equivalent *could* (grammatically past tense, but not referring to the past in this context). Ability and possibility are very closely related concepts, and we will not need to differentiate them here. Examples are:

- (34) I'll get my Diner's Card. Okay. *You can* just give me a credit on it can't you [LCSAE 152903]
- (35) *You can* buy me a big coke bottle. Buy me a big coke bottle [BNC KPX]
- (36) *You could* sort me out this week, with all that money you've got. [*sort me out* refers to buying *S*'s Christmas present.] [BNC KB6]

May and *might* can also be used similarly, to make the directive relatively muted, depending on the context, but are rather more formal in tone. Note that (37), spoken by a male schoolteacher to pupils, is virtually equivalent to a command.

- (37) Go to the staff room. *You may go in* the staff room and on the round table there is <pause> two sheets of paper... [BNC KCK]
- (38) *You might* just ask her in once in a while. You know, hold her hand and cheer her up a bit. [BNC G12] [from a novel]

You can and its variants, expressing possibility, are the weakest forms of modality one can use to convey a directive. Ostensibly, they simply point out that some action by *O* is possible.¹⁴ However, because '*H can do A*' is a preparatory condition for a request, it is often taken to be what might be called a "democratic imperative"—that is, a directive appearing not to impose but just to suggest what is to be done. In fact, *You can*, like *We can*, is often taken as suggesting or advising that *A* would be beneficial to *O* or to both *S* and *O*, as in *You can do whatever you like*. It is sometimes unclear, because of an unclear balance of cost and benefit, whether the utterance is more appropriately called a "request" or a "suggestion":

- (39) *You can* turn the radio off darling, we're not listening to it. [BNC KBK]

¹³ It is worth noting that there are two *woulds* (both often contracted to '*d*') that recur in polite formulae: the "pure hypothetical" *would* just illustrated in (32) and (33), and the volitional *would* found, e.g., in *So would you all please bring a plate of goodies?* (BNC FYP), where the meaning is rather that of hypothetical volition (*would* being the remote equivalent of *will* in the sense of willingness). See Quirk et al. (1985: 234).

¹⁴ *You can* also introduces permission-giving statements tantamount to offers: *You can have a biscuit if you like* [BNC KBH]. Notice that the tactful conditional clause *if you like* contains the verb *like* (see examples (32) and (33) above) as a substitute for *want*, which would also be possible here. *Like* (expressing desire) seems to be slightly more tactful than *want* (expressing volition) in playing down the face-threatening element that accompanies volition with a first- or second-person subject.

In the goal-oriented view of speech events adopted here, an indirect request that points out a preparatory condition, like *You can X*, indicates that a preliminary goal to the main goal (getting *O* to do *A*) is already assured: ‘There is nothing preventing *O* from doing *A*’. From *O*’s viewpoint this activates Grice’s Maxim of Relation (relevance) to identify the communicative goal (illocutionary goal) that *O* is to do *A*. Meanwhile, the social goal (politely allowing an appropriate degree of optionality, hence mitigating the face threat) is achieved by leaving *O* the choice of accepting, rejecting, or ignoring *S*’s assumed illocutionary goal.

This explanation ignores the pragmaticalization (3.7) that may make this interpretation virtually automatic. However, the explanation in terms of competing goals helps to account for the interpretation of *You can...* as a “democratic imperative,” in principle conceding freedom of action to *O*.

There are other declarative ways of expressing requests, apart from these modalized ones: for example, semi-formulae beginning *I think...* or *I wonder if...* However, I will deal with these later, under the head of “modifiers.”

6.3.3 ON-RECORD INDIRECT STRATEGIES: QUESTIONS

We now move on to the other major class of on-record indirect strategies: where the means to the directive interpretation is to ask a question rather than to make a statement. There are some close parallels between the two classes; for example, just as declarative strategies can be partially ordered on a scale of “impositiveness,” so can interrogative strategies. However, there is also a major difference in (pragmalinguistic) politeness: in making a statement, *S* says in effect “I am making a modalized statement about a future action by you. I expect you to act on it,” whereas in asking a question *S* in effect says: “I am asking a modalized question about a future action by you. What is your response?” Interrogative strategies, in asking a question, are making a show of consulting *O*: indeed, they are apparently handing over the decision to *O*. The greater choice this offers to *O* means greater politeness. To see this, compare the politeness associated with *You can...* and *Can you...?* in (22a) and (22b):

- (40) You can entertain the kids while I’m away.
- (41) Can you entertain the kids while I’m away?

Example (40) almost takes it for granted that *O* will do the proposed favor, whereas (41) does not: it seeks an answer that may either accept or reject the proposal. *You can* is more likely to be used where *S* and *O* are in a familiar relationship—e.g., as members of a family—where it can be assumed that one will oblige the other on matters like child minding, or alternatively will have no compunction in saying “No.”

However, there is one slightly more impositive aspect of the interrogative pattern. The request is more explicit in its demand for an answer: to avoid impoliteness, *O* is virtually obliged to make some kind of answer, whereas in the declarative pattern a noncommittal reply, or even no reply, is more tolerable. A negative answer to the

question—a refusal—is in some degree impolite (a violation of the Generosity Maxim), and so *O* may feel constrained to say *Yes*. Where *S* is in a powerful position, the choice offered by the interrogative form of request may not be felt to be a choice at all!

(a) Volitional questions with *will* and *would*

The more direct interrogative requests are questions about *O*'s volition: *Will you...?*—where *will* signals volition (willingness) rather than pure prediction. When spoken with a falling tone at the end, however, *Will you...* loses its interrogative character and is as peremptory as an imperative command, if not more so:

- (42) *Will you sit still I say or take those beads off.* [DPCSE DL-CO1]

Otherwise, *Will you* is employed mainly among familiars, when the “cost” of the favor is relatively low. It is a fairly unceremonious way of asking a favor:

- (43) *Will you bring a spoon when you bring my pudding...?* [BNC KBL]

Given that *will you* is a question about *O*'s wishes, it asks about a preparatory condition for carrying out the desired action *A* (see the discussion of *you can* in the last section). If *S* knows that *O* is willing to do an action, then logically it is only one step further to ask *O* to do it. To make the request more indirect, the hypothetical past tense form *would* (= willingness) is often used (see further 6.3.3 (a), 6.4.1 (i)):

- (44) *Would you deal with another matter please your worships* [BNC FZW]
[addressing magistrates in a courtroom]
(45) *Would you explain to us what subject you've chosen?* [BNC J40] [at an editorial meeting]

Will you can also be used for offers, when further degrees of indirectness are not needed because *S* is granting a favor:

- (46) A: *Will you have a soupçon more?*
B: Not for me [A is offering some more dessert] [BNC KC0]

And, as is not surprising, there are utterances of this type that are poised between requests and offers, that is, we are not sure if the illocution is meant to benefit *S* or *O*:

- (47) Norma: *Will you come and see me soon?* Jonathan: Yes [BNC KP8]

In this exchange, where Norma appears to be Jonathan's grandmother, the greater benefit could be on one side or the other.

Oddly, when *will you* is accompanied by *please*, the effect (particularly with adults addressing children) seems to make the request, if anything, more coercive, as if *S* is putting on record that a directive is being made, although in theory the interrogative form allows a choice:

- (48) *Will you put the biscuits back please* Richard you don't want biscuits now. [BNC KB8]

Another utterance type where *O*'s volition is being questioned is the hypothetical semi-formula *would you like X*, which we have already encountered in its declarative variant *I'd like (you) to...* (6.3.2). Here again, there is an ambivalence between the request interpretation and the offer interpretation. The request interpretation means that *S* is disingenuously asking a favor in the disguise of something beneficial to *O*:

- (49) *Would you like to sign this to say that your words are being recorded*
[BNC FXR]

As mentioned in 6.3.2, *would like* here can be considered a tactful substitute for the virtually nonoccurring *would want*. We will consider other variants, such as *Would you mind*, in 6.4.1 (f).

(b) Ability/possibility questions: *can you*, *could you*, etc.

Can is more indirect than *will*, and *could* than *would*. Although it is difficult to set up a single scale with strict ordering, it is reasonable to represent the relation between these four auxiliaries on a partially ordered scale of pragmalinguistic politeness, as in Figure 6.2.

The reasoning over the choice between *will/would* and *can/could* is as follows. As we have seen, *will/would you* avoids a confrontational directive by asking a question about a preparatory condition that has to be satisfied if the desired action *A* is to be performed. However, at one remove, volitional questions risk impoliteness. If *O* exercises the freedom of whether to comply by answering no, then *O* behaves impolitely in evaluating his own wishes or goals as higher than those of *S*. Here we come up against the meta-maxim (see 4.4.6) "Don't put interlocutor in a position where he/she is constrained to be impolite." To avoid this risky confrontation of wills, a further step of indirectness can be taken, and a further preparatory condition can be questioned: whether *O* is able to perform *A*. Once again, it is possible to infer from a question about *O*'s ability that *S* is interested in getting *O* to perform the action *A*. But a question of ability can be denied without impoliteness:

'Can you do *A*?' 'No, I'm sorry, I can't do *A*, because *X*.'

X can be any state of affairs, outside the control of *O*, that prevents *S* doing *A*. Thus, by asking a question about ability/possibility, confrontation of wills is avoided: in

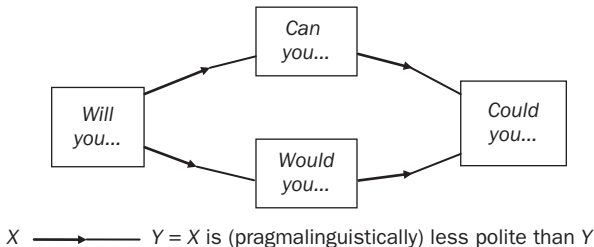


FIGURE 6.2 Diagram showing a partial ordering of some politeness formulae.

principle, *O* can say “No” without refusing a favor, and *S* can save face by saying “I was only asking about the *possibility*.” Although this reasoning explains why *Can/Could you* is more polite than *Will/Would you*, these expressions have, of course, become thoroughly pragmaticalized: they have become specialized to the function of requesting, and moreover have in English become completely routine ways of making requests. The explanation also helps, however, in explaining the occurrence of other, less pragmaticalized, methods of requesting by querying willingness or ability, for example, *Are you willing to...? Would you be prepared to...? Are you able...? Will you be able to...? Is it possible (for you) to...?*

(50) A: So somewhere around our arsenal here is the exam, hey. *Is it possible*, Larry, to send me a copy of that?

B: Okay. [LCSAE140101]

Larry’s response here is appropriate to a request; at the same time, the overt meaning, asking about possibility, is more genuinely alive here than it would be in a question with *Can/Could you*.

In Aijmer’s study (1996: 157) of requests in the London-Lund Corpus (spoken BrE of the period 1958–1977), the four most common interrogative request formulae *will you*, *would you*, *can you*, and *could you* show a frequency preference that favors the most indirect choice. *Could you* occurs forty-two times, compared with the least indirect choice—*will you*—occurring only twelve times. The intermediate cases—*would you* and *can you*—are also of intermediate frequency, with twenty-three and twenty-one occurrences respectively. This picture gives some substance to the stereotype that British speakers tend to opt for greater indirectness and (hence) greater neg-politeness in this area, compared with speakers of other languages. However, it is worth pointing out that the London-Lund Corpus contains a large proportion of dialogues in academic settings and in public media (especially radio broadcasts), where politeness might be expected to be at a premium. It is also worth bearing in mind that the hypothetical past forms *would* and *could* are more likely than other forms to be unambivalent in carrying the indirect meaning of a request, rather than the direct meaning of a question. Thus *Can you tell me the answer?* may be a question about *O*’s ability, or a request for information; and *Will you take a seat?* may be an offer or a request or something between the two. But the past-tense forms of these *Could you tell me the answer?* and *Would you take a seat?* are more clearly located in request territory. The choice of the hypothetical, distancing form *could* marks the utterance with the indirectness characteristic of a polite request.

Incidentally, negative questions as indirect directives with *Can’t*, contrary to what is found in some other languages such as Danish, are less polite than the positive question with *Can*:

(51) *Can’t you* come in the house for once and turn the TV off? [LCSAE171901]

(52) *Can’t I* have another, another drink please? [BNC KCT]

A negative question in English is a conducive (or biased) question expecting a negative answer, but it also implies a rejected expectation that the answer would be “Yes.” Thus *Can’t you listen for once?* interpreted as a request has the sincerity condition that *S* wants *O* to listen. As a negative question, it also has the positive (rejected) expectation ‘I thought you could listen’, along with the negative (persisting) expectation ‘but it appears that you can’t’. There is therefore an opposition between *S*’s wish for *O* to listen, and *S*’s expectation that *O* cannot listen. This conflict accounts for the tone of annoyance that often accompanies such questions. A similar case is a question with *Why*: *Why can’t you listen for once?*

In contrast to the “annoyed” tone of *Can’t you* questions, negative questions beginning with *Won’t you* are not noticeably less polite than their positive equivalents; indeed, *Won’t you have another drink?* appears somewhat more polite than *Will you have another drink?* The reason is that these utterances are interpreted as offers rather than directives. The implication of negative expectation here works to the benefit of *O* in this way: the rejected and persisting expectations of the negative question in this case are ‘I would have expected you to be willing to sit down; but now I assume you to be unwilling to sit down’. The negative question brings extra politeness because of *S*’s wish to overcome the polite reluctance of *O* to sit down. (The politer effect of *Won’t you* questions is more evident in invitations such as *Won’t you have another chocolate cookie?* or *Won’t you stay to lunch?*)¹⁵

6.3.4 NONSENTENTIAL STRATEGIES

Sometimes the strategy of requesting does not have to make use of a full sentential utterance, as the context makes it clear what kind of request is being made, and part of the message can be omitted:

Passport? (spoken with the rising tone of a request)

Another cup, please.

Two chocolate brownies and a multigrain loaf please.

Next?

Tickets please.

A return to Glasgow please.

It is a moot point whether these utterances should be classified as direct or conventionally indirect. Strictly speaking they are not cases of ellipsis, as the actual words “missing” cannot be unambiguously supplied: *Passport* could be fleshed out as *Let me see your passport*; *Could you show me your passport*; *Give me your passport*; *Where’s your passport?* etc. But it is clear, say, at the immigration barrier in an airport, that *S* is asking *O* to produce his or her passport. These quasi-elliptical requests tend to

¹⁵ The negative *Won’t you stay to lunch* in invitations and offers, with its implication that *H* has shown reluctance to accept, is therefore a condensed English equivalent of the Chinese ritual of repeated invitation + refusal, as discussed in 1.1 (see p.7).

occur as much-repeated routines. They are direct, in that they do not contain devices of polite indirectness, and they can strike the recipient as brusque if not rude. On the other hand, the request meaning has to be inferred, by relying on the Maxim of Relation to supply the unexpressed meaning from the context. Indicators of politeness, if present, will be mostly in the rising (questioning) intonation of the request, and the use of *please*. Both these politeness markers are almost obligatory in requests by public service providers, where, as another gesture to politeness, honorific vocatives (*sir, madam, ma'am, miss*) will also often occur: *Ten pounds fifty, please madam.*¹⁶

A special case of nonsentential request strategies is the use of brief acceptances made to offers:

- (53) A: Would you like Parmesan? B: *Yes, please, thanks.* [LCSAE 128701]

Mention should also be made of two request semi-formulae that are less than a full sentence but specify the nature of the requested action in a dependent clause:

- (54) 'If you're doing nothing, *how about* giving me a hand? These weeds are growing like crazy since that rain.' [BNC FNW] [from a novel]

The formulae *How about* and *What about* are associated with suggestions (or offers) rather than requests, but we see from (54) that the "suggestion" can be something that benefits *S* rather than *O* (see 7.4.2).

Finally, a nonsentential request can take the form of an adverbial *if*-clause without an accompanying matrix clause. The next example, spoken by the mediator in a family mediation session, shows two *if*-clauses used in this way:

- (55) I think I'd like to start the session by each of you just taking a couple of minutes to say what the issues are, as you see them, what you wanna try and resolve today. While that person's speaking, *if the other person could say nothing at all, and then if you could both change over...* [From Hill (2007: 188)]

If anything, this conditional clause is further removed from reality than hypothetical question such as *Would you like to...*? It does not ask a question but merely posits a hypothetical condition, leaving *O* to supply what main clause could be added to complete the sentence. The most likely addition would be something like an initial main clause: *It would be helpful (if)...* or *I would be grateful (if)...* (see (c) and (d) in 6.3.5 below). This is a reminder that one politeness strategy not particularly notable in English, but more prevalent in languages such as Japanese (Tanaka 2001: 156–170), is to allow one's utterance to peter out into silence, letting the implied face-threatening aspects of one's utterance remain unspoken.

¹⁶ Jonathan Culpeper comments (pers. comm.): "Interestingly, these are not obligatory in public service encounters in Italy. *Un caffè* or *Mi fa un caffè* would be normal in a café. If there is anything extra, it might be a greeting: *Buongiorno*." In written English, especially in public prohibitions, the absence of any indicator of politeness is obvious in such notices as *NO SMOKING* and *NO ACCESS EXCEPT FOR FARM VEHICLES*.

6.3.5 HINTS: OFF-RECORD INDIRECT REQUESTS

Like on-record requests as illustrated above in 6.2.2-3, off-record requests can be in the form of statements or questions. Their defining characteristic is that they do not actually mention the action *A* that *S* wants *O* to carry out, but leave it to be inferred; hence they have been termed *hints*.¹⁷

(a) Statement hints

Hints in the form of statements typically refer to the situation, usually in the present, that calls for the future action. They can be obviously impolite, in accusing *O* of some misdemeanor (contra the Approbation Maxim), or they can more indirectly imply an accusation:

(56a) You've been using my laptop!

(56b) Someone's taken my laptop.

(56c) Oh dear, I can't find my laptop.

All these could be hints to the effect that *S* wants *O* to return the computer [he or she suspects] *O* has borrowed, but (56a) is clearly the least (pragmalinguistically) polite, and (56c) the least impolite.

Hints can readily be used by customers addressing service staff, sometimes with the implication of a complaint—for example, diners in a restaurant might say to the waiter *The milk jug's empty*; *The music's a bit too loud*; *The steak is overdone*; *It's cold in here*—and the waiter, without further prompting, would (hopefully) apologize and try to remedy to problem. Another type of example can be found in a department store: *I'm looking for watches*; *I can't find the hardware department*. These (especially the restaurant examples) are somewhat brusque and could be preceded by a polite request for attention (called a “preparator” in the CCSARP tradition): *Could you help me?* or *I wonder if you could help me?* or simply an apologetic attention signal *Excuse me* or *Sorry* (see 6.4.2 (a), 6.4.3 (b)):

(57) I'm sorry, I can't see the screen (said to someone standing in one's line of vision).

On the whole, statement hints are not particularly polite, and to avoid face threat they often need to be embellished with some show of reluctance to bother the other person.

(b) Question hints

Hints in the form of questions typically inquire about a situation that, if answered “Yes” (or sometimes “No”), could give rise to the satisfaction of *S*'s need. Like on-record indirect requests, they overtly seek to establish whether there exist preconditions for

¹⁷ Discussed under the heading of the “hinting strategy” in Leech (1977 and 1983: 97–99).

the satisfaction of a request. Unlike on-record indirect requests, however, they are conditional; the request will have uptake only if the precondition holds.

- (58a) Do you *happen to* have a box of tissues?
- (58b) Do you have a box of tissues, *by any chance*?
- (58c) You *don't happen to* have box of tissues, do you?

All these will be understood as requests to avail oneself of the box of tissues (if *O* has one). We will return to the function of the italicized expressions in 6.4.1 (g). A further example of a question hint is (59):

- (59) Are you going to the train station?

This may be a way of asking for a lift to the station, if *O* is driving in that direction. Other hinting questions in easily recognizable contexts are:

- (60) Do you have any ripe bananas?
- (61) Have you seen my trainers?

To these, to make the goal of the speech event explicit, one could redundantly add *If so, please sell me some* and *If so, please tell me where*.

Hints can be observed in the responses people give in dialogue, for example, where the request is aimed at getting information. To a yes-no question beginning *Do you have* or *Do you know*, *O* will often give a positive reply and then add the information required:

- (62) A: *Do you have* his telephone number?
B: Er yeah go on then, it's [arbitrary telephone number added] [BNC JT5]
- (63) A: *Do you know* when that started?
B: Er <pause> yeah I took it out about three years after the, the mortgage one. [BNC K70]

This could not be explained unless *O* had understood the question as having an implicit request function: “Do you know when that started? *If so, please tell me.*”

6.4 Pragmatic Modifiers

We have examined a considerable range of request strategies in English, but these are by no means the only ways in which the lexicogrammatical form of requests can be varied. The CCSARP group adds to these the possibilities of adding various kinds of semantic elaboration, by linguistic devices known as *modifiers*. The word should not be understood here in a purely grammatical sense, for example, as an element such as an adjective or adverb modifying the structure and meaning of a noun phrase or adjective phrase. It is true that many pragmatic modifiers are also grammatical modifiers such as adverbs, but other modifiers have different grammatical

forms, such as changing the mood, tense, or aspect of the verb; or prefacing the utterance with a matrix clause that leads to the embedding of the expression of the desired act *A* in a subordinate position in the sentence. Whereas in contexts of pos-politeness, such as apologies (see 5.2), modifiers tend to intensify or strengthen the meaning associated with a strategy, in the neg-politeness context of requests they generally mitigate or soften the directive force, making it more palatable to *O*. To avoid confusion with grammatical modifiers, I will call these elements “*pragmatic* modifiers,” since we are interested here in their pragmatic function.

Pragmatic modifiers increase the complexity of the request, and also (in most cases) its optionality factor. An additional characteristic of modifiers is that they can be subtracted from the speech event (in some cases with syntactic adjustment), and the speech event still has broadly the same illocutionary force (e.g., as a directive). In this sense, they are optional elements. They are subdivided into *internal modifiers*, which are syntactically included in the same utterance as the head act (the request proper), and *external modifiers*, which are more loosely linked to the head act, by following or (more usually) preceding it. However, the distinction between internal and external modifiers is not always easy to draw; nor is the distinction between external modifiers and *supporting moves* as discussed with reference to apologies in 5.1. From the ensuing examples, it will be seen that a request can contain a number of different modifiers, and these, together with the wide range of indirect strategies, can lead to more and more elaboration and variation in ways of requesting.

6.4.1 INTERNAL MODIFIERS

Internal modifiers can be either lexically or syntactically expressed, as a means of softening the request as it impacts on *O*.

(a) Downtoners

This is a general term for modifiers (often adverbs) that mitigate or soften the directive force of the speech event. Modal adverbs such as *perhaps*, *maybe*, *possibly*, for example, emphasize the element of uncertainty or tentativeness in requests with ability/possibility modals:

- (64) Well I figured *maybe* you *could* give Eddy’s mom a call. [LCSAE 127802]
- (65) *Could* you *possibly* give Ian, Zain and me the authority to work that one out. [BNC J9P]

Strangely, the adverb in this case merely repeats the “possibility” meaning present in the modal *could*.

Other downtoners are diminishers or “belittlers” like *a bit*, *a little*, or *a tad*, which indicate that the cost will be small to *O*. Various combinations intensify the diminution: *a little bit*, *a wee bit* (especially Scots), *a tiny bit*, *a teeny bit*, *a teeny-weeny bit*.

- (66) Can you speak up *a bit* please?
- (67) Would you like to say *a little bit* more about the actual work of your department?

Unlike many European languages, such as Greek, where diminutives play an important role in politeness (Sifianou 1992), English is lacking in morphological diminutives—but syntactic belittlers such as *a teeny bit* can have a similar effect.

The adverb *just*, in the sense of ‘only’ (emphasizing smallness of size, time, etc.), is another frequently used modifier:

- (68) John Power if you’d like to stay on the line *just a moment*, because I’ve got another gentleman who wants to actually talk about that, it’s Les erm calling from Oxford—hello Les. [BNC KRL] [from a local radio phone-in program]

Although downtoners are most characteristically adverbs, there can also be downtoning adjectives like *tiny*, *wee*, and *teeny-weeny*, as well as verbs and nouns associated with smallness:

- (69) Will you *pop* and get some chips if I get you some money? [BNC KB7]
 (70) A: Can I have a *word* with you please?
 B: You may indeed. [BNC F8M]
 (71) Can I have a *tiny sip* please? [BNC KP4]

The verb *pop* (more generally used in BrE than in AmE) refers to a small, sudden movement, so (69) suggests that *O* has to make only a small effort to fetch the chips. Similarly, in (70) *have a word* minimizes the amount of time and effort the addressee (a lecturer) will have to spend talking. The nouns *sip* (71) and *drop* are useful in referring to a small amount of drink, so you can ask for a “sip” or “drop” without seriously imposing on your host. Other minimizing nouns like *sliver* (for a small slice of cake, for example) and *moment* (68), *second*, and *sec* (for a short time) are useful for the same reason, as in *Just hang on a sec* (= ‘just wait a second’) [BNC KCX].

Downtoning or minimizing the cost of the desired act *A*, however, can be a two-edged device. Although it makes the request seem more acceptable to *O*, anyone who complies with the request may find the cost is greater than stated. Diminishers such as *have a word* have a habit of being understatements of cost. “Small in wish” is sometimes not “small in fact.” Related to this is the rather impolite use of *just* in examples like (72):

- (72) She says, “Mary, Stephanie, could you guys *just* go to bed?”
 [LCSAE 122301]

The implication of *just* is “That’s all I’m asking,” that is, “I am only asking you to do a small thing,” but for the children to whom this request was addressed, it could seem very different. *Just* can aggravate the situation, as would be seen in the continuation of the dialogue from which (72) is taken, where one of the participants surreptitiously adds *What a bitch!* as a comment on the speaker of (72).

(b) Politeness marker: *please*

This has already received some attention. It marks an utterance as a request spoken with a certain (often routine) degree of politeness. But its effect depends greatly

on context. At one end of the scale, it is almost indispensable as a marker of routine politeness in nonsentential requests such as *Tickets please*, or answers to offers: *Would you like some more? Yes, please*. At the other extreme, especially when *please* is pronounced with an emphatic falling intonation or is used as an isolate (see 3.5), it can be an insistent reinforcement of the directive:

- (73) Richard! Stop driving *please*! *Please* Richard! *Please* Richard! *Please* stop jumping on the chair arms will you? [BNC KB8]

Wichmann (2004: 1523), following House (1989: 107), associates *please* with “standard” or routine situations where the rights and obligations are clear, and no “social or communicative difficulty” is in question. The routineness commonly associated with *please* has led to the suggestion that *please*, instead of being a politeness marker, is simply an illocutionary marker. That is, it signals the status of the utterance as that of a request, rather than signifying any particular degree of politeness. This applies most evidently to elliptical utterances (like *John Graham, please*, where the name of a patient is called out in a hospital, requesting him to follow the caller), or to hints, like the chair’s procedural statement at a board meeting: *Right, I think we <pause> move on then please*, where only the final *please* fixes the illocution as a request. A third type of utterance where *please* determines the interpretation of a routine request is a straightforward information question: *What’s the time please?* The addition of *please* marks this as probably taking place in an official setting, for example, in an examination hall. However, even here *please* is a politeness marker as well as an illocutionary marker: note that if *please* is deleted, the level of politeness drops to zero.

(c) Deliberative opening

In requests with a deliberative opening, that is, *I wonder* or *Do you think*, the question containing the nub of the request is embedded in a matrix (main) clause and turned into a reported question:

- (74) Hello <pause> *I wonder if* you’d mind asking him to wait and I’ll er be with him in about ten minutes [BNC J9X] [spoken by an interviewer at a job interview]¹⁸
- (75) Okay, well we’re probably going to start then on Thursday if you can make it, now you’re going to be out, let me see, no you’re not going to be out of town are you? Okay. Okay so *do you think* you could come by on Thursday? [LCSAE 161802]

These are toward the most indirect and most polite end of the pragmalinguistic politeness scale, going further than the corresponding direct questions *Would you*

¹⁸ The *if*-clause following *wonder* has been called a conditional clause (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 283). However, this is an incorrect description: *if* could be replaced here by *whether*, showing that this is an indirect question (or dependent interrogative clause). Nevertheless in its nonfactivity, it resembles a conditional clause.

mind asking...? and *Could you come by...?* in distancing the utterance from a bald-on-record directive. In “I wonder” requests like (74), *S* retreats from direct questioning (which would demand an answer) into merely stating the uncertainty, the lack of information, in his or her current state of mind. Hopefully the confessed information gap will be supplied (courtesy of the CP’s Maxim of Quantity and the PP’s Generosity Maxim) by an interactant who happens to have the information required.¹⁹ Similarly in (75) the question is about *O*’s state of mind, and whether he or she would go so far as even to *contemplate* the possibility of the desired action. Spelling out the implications of the deliberative modifiers in this way may make these requests seem absurdly tentative; but pragmaticalization has led to them being accepted as relative normal ways of making a polite request.

In Trosborg’s (1995: 212–213) taxonomy of requests, the *Do you think...?* or *Do you mind...?* type of request is termed “consultative,” reflecting the impression it gives of *S* consulting *O*’s preferences. This is a reasonable description of the *Do you think...?* type of request, but it is less appropriate to the *I wonder...* type of request. My preferred title “deliberative” indicates that on the face of it these indirect requests are concerned with cerebral activities. Just as *I wonder* is about the deliberations of *S*, so *Do you think...?* is about the deliberations of *H*.

(d) Appreciative opening

Here is another device that involves embedding the requestive clause in a subordinate position. Appreciative openings are “propitiators” in the sense that they are designed to sweeten the bitter flavor of a directive, to make *O* feel better about performing the requested act *A*. The matrix clause expresses *S*’s appreciation or other positive attitude to *O* that will ensue if the action is carried out: *I’d be so grateful if X*; *We’d really appreciate it if X*. Notice the hypothetical mood of the main clause,²⁰ diplomatically leaving the choice wide open to *O*, but promising a reward of gratitude if the action is performed.

- (76) ‘By the way, *I’d appreciate it if you came along tonight*. I need you to act as my chaperone,’ she added with a mischievous laugh. [BNC G1W]
[from a fictional text]
- (77) *I’d be very grateful if you would investigate this*. [BNC HPK] [from a letter to a local council]

Such ceremonious requests are rare in everyday speech: their formality is more suited to official or business letters. It is a sign of pragmaticalization that the meaning of a hypothetical condition has been weakened. Consequently, the *if*-clause does

¹⁹ Anyone who wants to test this may do so by saying *I wonder what the time is* when entering a room, and noting how often the information gap is filled by another person within earshot.

²⁰ The corresponding nonhypothetical expression *I will be grateful* is more than thirty times less frequent in the BNC than *I would be grateful* or *I’d be grateful*, which has become a conventionalized formula.

not always match the main clause in being in the hypothetical mood (as “normal” grammar would require), as in *I'd be grateful if they can be left to the officers* [BNC J3T], as contrasted with the more usual *I'd be grateful if they could be left to the officers*. A noun phrase may also follow, introduced by *for*:

(78) I'd be grateful for *your advice*. [BNC F7A]

One special feature of the appreciative opening is that it introduces an element of pos-politeness into the predominantly neg-politeness territory of requests. This is corroborated by the use of intensifying adverbs: *I'd really appreciate it...* ; *I'd be very/sol/most grateful...* etc. The obvious reason for this is that *S* is looking ahead to *O*'s hoped-for compliance and the thanks then due to *O*—thanking being a convivial illocution associated with pos-politeness.

At a highly formal level of usage there are appreciative openings focusing on *O*'s beneficence rather than on *S*'s future gratitude, for example, *Would you be good/kind enough to X?* or *Would you be so good/kind as to X?* These are rare, if not obsolescent, and when they occur they are often used humorously or ironically.²¹ Here is the sole example of *Would you be so good...* in the BNC, coming from a fictional text set in a grand house in the earlier twentieth century:

(79) “Would you be so good as to ask Mr. Lee to step out here please. I have a few words for his ears alone.” [BNC EVG]

At a much more familiar and informal level, we find propitiatory appreciative openings like *Be a dear/love and X*; however, these are also somewhat mannered, and the only instances found in the BNC are again from fictional written texts:

(80) ‘... Be a good boy and get us something to drink, will you, *carino*?’
[BNC JY7]

These seem to be appropriate to addressing children or intimate family members. More elaborately appreciative forms such as *Would you be an absolute angel and X* are likewise rare and have a gushing hyperpolite tone.

More common in corpora than the contrasting types of (79) and (80) is a more everyday opening pattern *It would be ADJECTIVE if...*, which disguises the request in an impersonal form. The adjective has a favorable meaning and may vary from *helpful* and *nice* (as in *It would be nice if you attended*) to more enthusiastically favorable words such as *great*, *wonderful*, or *tremendous*, e.g., *It would be great if someone would look after the sports gear*.

²¹ We can place with these “appreciative openings” the adverb *kindly*, although it does not occur as an opening of a directive, except with imperatives like ‘*Kindly answer the question, Miss Levington,*’ *he replied*. [bnc H7W]. Ironically, kindness is notably absent from the tone of such utterances. In the ten-million-word spoken subcorpus of the BNC, there are only four instances of the adverb *kindly* in requests, and two of them are identically sarcastic: *Will you kindly shut up!*

(e) Hedged performative openings

A further example of an opening main clause with the desired action relegated to a dependent clause is the hedged performative (Fraser 1975), that is, where the opening main clause (see 6.3.1) softens in varying degrees the force of a performative. The main clause “hedges” the performative, by introducing modality and (sometimes) interrogation. From the next examples, it will be seen that hedged performatives, like pure performatives, tend to occur in formal, public settings, although they are less stilted than pure performatives.

- (81) *May I ask*, all those in favor, please, to show their hands <pause> those against. [BNC JNK] [spoken by the chair at a business meeting]
- (82) *May I beg* him to stop making political capital out of the health of the citizens of the capital and concentrate on the real issues? [from proceedings of the British Parliament] [BNC HHV]
- (83) *Could I ask* Rotarian Jeff [name] please to propose a vote of thanks. [BNC F8N] [at a Rotary Club meeting]

It is noticeable that in (81)–(83) the speaker refers to the addressee(s) in the third person—another sign of a formal situation. All three examples also show the mitigating effect of a request for permission preceding the actual performative verb (although this is counteracted in (82) by the sharp critical tone of what follows). Hence these can no longer be regarded as a “true” performative requests (as in *I ask...*, etc., 6.3.1); they are in effect requests to make such a request—yet another distancing device! However, when spoken by someone in authority, as with the chair at a meeting, as in (83), the request is unlikely to be disobeyed. The softening of the performative may be combined with other mitigating devices, such as the downtoners *just*, *perhaps*, and *not... quite* as in (84):

- (84) Councillor [name] *could I just perhaps request* that you *perhaps* don’t make it *quite* so easy for any future break-ins. [BNC JT8]

No doubt the extremely indirect, mitigated request here reflects the criticism implicit in the speaker’s request. In effect, he is saying ‘And don’t do it again!’

Other cases of hedged performatives introducing modality are illustrated in (85)–(87):

- (85) ... therefore I *must ask* the indulgence of the general assembly to change the verb. [BNC F87] [after noticing a grammatical error, at a Church of Scotland meeting]
- (86) I *must insist* we get back to the boundaries [parliamentary proceedings; spoken by the Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons] [BNC JSG]
- (87) And now I *would like to ask* her Royal Highness [pause] to come to the platform and address us. [BNC JNF] [at a meeting of the charity Save the Children].

The tone of *I must* in hedged performatives is quite different from the authoritarian tone of *you must* in strong obligation statements (6.3.2 (b)). *I must* in such contexts as *I must ask the indulgence...* and *I must insist...* implicates that the speaker cannot avoid something, that he or she does it reluctantly and apologetically. Hence in (86) *I must insist* is a way of expressing regrettable compulsion for a speech act that may be thought face-threatening—another way of mitigating impoliteness.

(f) Negative bias

We turn now to another device granting the requestee greater optionality. This is to bias the request toward negativeness, thereby suggesting that the performance of the desired action *A* is not to be expected. Alongside volitional statements (6.3.2 (d)) like *I want...* or *I'd like...* we can place negative volitional statements beginning *I don't mind* or *I wouldn't mind...*, where the verb *mind* itself has a negative meaning, that of negative volition, “to object to something.” Thus *I don't mind* is doubly negative (‘I do *not* have a *negative* feeling about *X*’). The statement form *I don't mind* is rarely used to introduce a request, but it can signify acceptance of a preceding offer, request, or suggestion:

- (88) Andrew: This is about the fifth meal you've made! *Do you mind?*
Dorothy: *I don't mind.* [BNC KBW]

From this it is easy to see how *Do you mind...?* and its hypothetical equivalent *Would you mind...?* have come to be used as polite requests.

- (89) *Do you mind* if I use the ladder? [LCSAE 128101]
(90) *Do you mind* stopping at the store? [LCSAE 145101]

Requests with *mind* are often used where *S*'s purpose somehow trespasses on the rights or mental territory of *O*, for instance by smoking in his presence or by asking his age:

- (91) A: Do you mind if I have a cigarette?
B: No go ahead. [BNC JYN]
(92) Would you mind if I ask you how old you are? You look really young.
[LCSAE 123201]

This type of request is exceptional in that a polite and compliant response is *No*. Naturally, a *Yes* answer is taken to be an abrupt refusal:

- (93) A: *Do you mind* if I watch the news at six?
B: *Yes.*
A: But it [...]
B: You'll have to watch it again with Patrick. [BNC KCV]

It is also possible to utter a request with *mind* in the form of a negative statement:

- (94) A: You don't mind Alison taking you home?
 B: No, I don't mind. [BNC KCF]
- (95) A: You don't mind if I call her.
 B: No, of course not. [LCSAE 167102]
- (96) You don't mind if I call you Douglas do you? [BNC HUV]

These are normally spoken with a rising tone, to indicate their interrogative intent, although, as (95) shows, this may not be reflected in the use of a question mark in the transcript. Despite the built-in negativity of *mind*, these negative statements more or less take it for granted that *O* will agree with *S*'s wishes.

However, in other than *mind* requests, *S* can use a negative statement (often followed by positive tag question as in (97)), to emphasize her negative expectation of compliance:

- (97) *I don't suppose you could be persuaded to come up by train for a night or two could you?*—that would be so very super, a treat of the first order. [BNC HD4].
- (98) Student: *You couldn't give me a few more equations just*
 Tutor: Equations I certainly could I certainly could. [BNC FME]

The effusive politeness of (97) comes from a written source, a private letter to an acquaintance. Notice that *I don't suppose* is another example of a deliberative opening—see 6.4.1 (c) above—with the negative bias adding a further degree of polite indirectness.²² In (98), the student makes a diffident request, to which the tutor replies with enthusiastic compliance: perhaps because a mathematics teacher is particularly unlikely to receive many requests of this kind. It is notable that these negative statements are combined with the modal *could*, already indicating polite indirectness. Negative statements as requests rarely occur with nonpast modals, such as *can* or *will*: *I don't suppose you can/will be persuaded...* are less likely to occur as a request, because of the clash between the “more polite” negation with the “less polite” non-hypothetical verbs.

(g) Happenstance indicators

Expressions such as *happen to* and *by any chance* are further devices pessimistically distancing the request from expectation of success. They are used to suggest that the requester is simply relying on chance for the fulfillment of his or her wishes and

²² This is an example of transferred negation (Quirk et al. 1985: 1033–1035). The negative could be moved to the following dependent clause with no perceptible change of the meaning: (97) is equivalent to *I suppose you couldn't be persuaded...*

has no reason to expect a helpful or compliant answer. Happenstance indicators can be appropriately used with hinting strategies:

- (99) ‘...I don’t think anything’s broken, by the way.’
 ‘ Apart from the bonnet, of course,’ said Tuppe. ‘And the fan belt. *You don’t happen to carry a spare, I suppose.*’ [BNC HWN]

In (99), from the written fictional part of the BNC, the speaker, one of the parties in a road accident, hintingly asks another party for a fan belt.

- (100) Okay do you have the referral form *by any chance?* [LCSAE142501]

In (100), another example of a hinting request, this time in the form of a question, *S* asks *O* to provide the referral form in connection with a job application.

(h) Temporal availability queries

Expressions such as *Do you have time to...?* as with hinting questions again give *O* an excuse for noncompliance, on grounds of not having time:

- (101) A: *Would you have time to get me a refill?*
 B: Absolutely! What are you having?
 A: I would like to have a diet Coke and I don’t need any more ice really,
 I think I’m fine on the ice.
 B: Okay, don’t worry, I’ll just grab that for you. [LCSAE147801]

This piece of dialogue is quoted in extenso, to show how time availability queries can be a preliminary to a more specific offer-request sequence illustrating both *A*’s neg-politeness (*I would like to have...*) and *B*’s pos-politeness (*Absolutely!* etc.).

(i) Past tense—hypothetical

We have already noticed the very frequent use of the *hypothetical* or unreal past tense, particularly the past forms of the modal auxiliaries *would*, *could* (and sometimes *might*²³), which are often preferred to their nonpast equivalents *will* and *can* (and *may*). The sense of unreality is, of course, greatly reduced by pragmaticalization, and the past form is effectively an indicator of slightly greater tentativeness. But on the record, by adding the extra meaning of ‘This request belongs to the world of unreality’, *S* expresses the belief that the action is unlikely to be performed—allowing *O* an opportunity, again, for noncompliance. There is sometimes a faint sense of an unstated hypothetical condition; for example, *Would you help me?* (unlike *Will you help me?*) can distance the request further by implying ‘Would you help me *if I were to ask you?*’.

²³ *Might* can occur as the hypothetical equivalent of *may* in requests for permission, e.g., *Moderator might I ask a question?* [BNC F85]. It is “formally polite” and might be judged overpolite (or facetiously polite) in many contexts.

There is another use of *would* that is not the hypothetical past of volitional *will*, but simply a hypothetical mood marker, without any modal meanings such as willingness or prediction. This occurs in main clauses, in such formulae as *Would you like to...* or *would you mind*. Notice that *Would you mind* is the hypothetical equivalent of *Do you mind* (which quite often occurs in an indirect request), and not of *Will you mind*, which is hardly acceptable²⁴ as a preface to a request. Hence *would* here is not the past hypothetical form of *will*, but simply the hypothetical equivalent of the present indicative *do*. Another point to notice is that *would* cannot be used instead of *will* in statement directives such as *You will report to the guardroom at 8 a.m.* Since these are effectively bald-on-record commands, allowing no opportunity for non-compliance, it does not make sense for them to be mitigated by a hypothetical form. Hence *You would report to the guardroom at 8 a.m.* cannot be used as a directive. In the question form of directives, however, since *will*-questions express willingness and are devices of mitigation, *would* instead of *will* is fully acceptable, as we have seen in 6.3.3(a), for example, *Would you* (= ‘Would you be willing to’) *say that again?*

The hypothetical mood of *would* is conveyed in subordinate clauses purely by the past tense: *Would you mind if I left early tomorrow?* (not: **Would you mind if I would leave early tomorrow?*). However, the present tense is sometimes used instead of the past tense here, as one of the consequences of pragmaticalization: *Would you mind if I leave early tomorrow?*

(j) Past tense—past time

There is a clear distinction between the hypothetical past tense just discussed and the use of the past (or preterite) tense, typically with a first-person subject, to signify past time as a device of distancing. The former normally has a “pure hypothetical” *would* (just discussed in section (i)) in its main clause, whereas the latter has the simple or progressive past tense form in the main clause. Both indicate a “remote” meaning compared with the present tense but are otherwise different, one providing modal distancing and the other temporal distancing. Examples of the past time usage are:

- (102) *I wondered* if you would mind if I recorded our conversation for the next few minutes... [LCSAE 117901]
- (103) ‘*I wanted* to ask if you could mend this,’ she explained, and took the engine out of a box. [BNC FRY] [from a fictional text]
- (104) *I was hoping* we’d avoid the political discussion, Betty. [BNC KSI]
[spoken by the chair of a local government committee meeting]

The past tense clearly does not mean, here, that the attitude of “wondering,” “wanting,” or “hoping” no longer applies at the time of utterance. But by putting the mental state verb in the past tense, *S* seems to suggest that she is now prepared to abandon that attitude, thus avoiding confrontation with *O*’s wishes.

²⁴ There is just one somewhat unclear example of *will you mind* prefacing a request in the 100 million words of the BNC.

(k) Progressive aspect

Still focusing on the verb, we find that not only tense and modality but also verbal aspect can be used to convey politeness in indirect requests. This is shown in (104), where the progressive aspect form *was hoping* occurs, producing a more tentative effect than *I hope* or *I hoped*. Further, examples like (102) and (103) above can be made more tentative by replacing V-ed by *was V-ing*: *I was wondering if...* ; *I was wanting to ask...*

(105) *I was wondering* if you would mind if I recorded our conversation for the next few minutes..

(106) “*I was wanting* to ask if you could mend this,” she explained, and took the engine out of a box.

The present progressive can be employed similarly, although it lacks the additional distancing effect of the past tense.

(107) Yes this is Miriam [name] I talked with you this morning and *I’m wondering* if we might be able to make that visit tomorrow at five? [a phone call] [LCSAE 160601]

(108) ...are you coming Saturday? We’re *we’re hoping* that you’re gonna be there...[LCSAE 163503]

The progressive occurs here with mental state verbs that characteristically go with the simple nonprogressive aspect (*I wonder, I hope*). Why does the progressive make the utterance somewhat more tentative? This is puzzling, but a major component of the progressive’s aspectual meaning is ‘temporariness’, ‘inconclusiveness’, and it seems that the inconclusive overtone of the progressive lessens *S*’s professed commitment to the mental states of ‘wondering’, ‘hoping’, etc. There appears to be an implicit acknowledgment that these mental attitudes might change if *O*’s response were discouraging.

(l) Tag questions

Some earlier examples, (73), (80), and (97), have illustrated the use of tag questions such as ...*will you?* and ...*could you?* after imperatives. With directives, a tag question is a way of retrospectively toning down the effect of the bald-on-record command, as if to pay lip service to the idea that *O* is being *asked* to do something, not just *told*. But the toning down of the FTA, especially in the case of the tag question *will you*, is fairly minimal. It can even seem to exacerbate the face threat, being suggestive of *S*’s impatience, as in *Stop complaining, will you?* Slightly less face-threatening, but still with little or no concession to politeness, are:

(109) Get a pair of ten and a halves *will you?* [discussing buying footwear] [LCSAE152902]

(110) Carry on drying your hair *can you?* [BNC CEB]

Particularly in AmE, the single-word tag question *okay/OK?* is more acceptably used after an imperative, with much the same effect as *will you?* and *can you?* in (109) and (110) above:

(111) Say hello to Karen and Chris for me, *okay?*

The use of the tags *will you* and *can you* corresponds to the use of *Will you* and *Can you* in interrogative indirect requests. As one would expect (see 6.3.3), therefore, *can you* is marginally more polite than *will you*, since it allows for the possibility that *O* cannot perform the action required and so gives *O* an “out.” The hypothetical versions of these tags, *would you* and *could you*, also occur after imperatives: ‘*Pass the salt, Dolly, would you?*’ [BNC CKE]; ‘*Turn that off, could you?*’ [BNC KD9, referring to the TV]. These add a perceptible element of politeness to *will you?* and *can you?* as if *S* is trying retrospectively to turn the imperative into a hypothetical question about willingness or ability.

Tag questions also occur after statements, as in (112), again with the effect of further softening the tone of the preceding directive:

(112) Perhaps you could open the door, *could you?* [BNC APM]

For this effect, the tag has to be of the same polarity (positive) as the preceding clause. After the discussion of *Can’t you* questions in 6.3.3(b), it is not surprising that the negative tag *can’t you* following a positive main clause sounds impatiently demanding:

(113) I glared at Vern from above. ‘Be civil, *can’t you?*’ [BNC BMS]

6.4.2 EXTERNAL MODIFIERS

External modifiers are not part of the request utterance itself (the head act), but can be added to a request, either before or after it, to make it more polite, friendly, or persuasive. As a piece of discourse, they are loosely attachable to the request utterance, but they can also stand on their own and can even do the job of the request without the head act.

(a) Apologies

An apology or “excuse me” can be added before the request itself. In part it functions as a proactive disarming gesture of politeness (because *S* is aware that the request will impose on *O*), and in part it functions as an *alerter*, to get the attention of *O*:

(114) *Excuse me* could you speak up just a little bit? [BNC FUE]

(115) *Sorry*, can I just interrupt? [BNC KD5]

Typically such apologies are used when *S* transgresses conversational etiquette, for example, by interrupting. In (114) *S* is interrupting the speaker at a pre-retirement course; in (115) she is seeking to abruptly change the topic of a conversation.

(b) Thanks

A thank-you is another propitiatory gesture of politeness:

(116) Can you do the next one James please, *thank you*. [BNC F7L]

(In this example, the geography teacher at a prep school in the UK is asking a pupil to read aloud.) The thank-you not surprisingly follows the request, anticipating that the act *A* will be performed and prematurely showing gratitude. (On premature gratitude, see 7.3.)

(c) Vocatives

A vocative (or term of address) refers to the addressee(s) of an utterance, and has at least three pragmatic functions (Leech 1999: 108):

- (a) to appeal for attention, i.e., making it clear to *H* that he/she is being addressed
- (b) to single out the addressee, i.e., making it clear that *H*, and not some other person within earshot, is being addressed
- (c) to establish and/or maintain a social relationship with *H*

All three of these functions can be detected in:

(117) A: Hey *Mum*! B: What, *darling*?

In this exchange, *Mum* clearly serves function (a) and also function (b) if people other than A's mother are present; *darling* serves function (c) only. Function (c), establishing and maintaining social relationships, is the only one that plays a significant role in politeness. However, this is on the bivalent scale of politeness (see 1.2.1), concerned with the two parameters of vertical and horizontal distance, rather than the trivalent politeness that additionally involves the cost-benefit parameter. This means that the (im)politeness of vocatives is somewhat independent of the (im)politeness of directives, and it could indeed be treated in relation to other speech events, such as apologies in Chapter 5, or offers or invitations in Chapter 7. Nevertheless, for convenience I am dealing with them in this chapter, since the use of a vocative can be an influential factor in determining whether a request makes a polite impression.

By far the most frequent type of vocative in English is the first or given name of the addressee, which can be in the full form—the one you would find on a birth certificate—(e.g., *Robert*) or in the more familiar short form (*Rob*) or hypocoristic (pet name) form (*Bobby*). In recent years over most areas of the English-speaking world, first-name address has become the norm, and the more formal/polite title + surname form has become a marked alternative, for example, *Miss Robertson*, *Mrs. Robertson*, *Mr. Robertson*, *Ms. Robertson* (this last not usually occurring as a spoken form). Addressing someone by their first name can be another propitiatory gesture, signaling that I am treating *H* as a known individual—an acquaintance or friend—rather than as a stranger.

Other kinds of vocative vary from the respectful honorifics *sir* and *madam* to family vocatives like *Mother*, *Mom*, *Mummy* (these again, as the example shows, vary from the full form to short forms and pet forms) and to a whole range of familiar vocatives such as nicknames (*Blondie*), endearments (*dear*), and familiarizers (*guys*, *folks*, *man*, *bro*). Of these, nicknames and familiarizers claim camaraderie (in the sense of Lakoff; see 4.4.2) rather than respect, whereas endearments claim closeness and affection. Honorific forms that tender respect to *O*, such as *sir* and *madam*, are now relatively rare, except in special situations such as address to an officer in the armed services, address to a teacher in the classroom, or respectful address to a customer by a service provider. Honorific titles such as *Dr.* in *Dr. Smith* and *Professor* in *Professor Valentine* are similarly undergoing decline, being largely restricted to the addressing of respected strangers or acquaintances (i.e., where *O* is high on both the vertical and the horizontal scales of distance). Figure 6.3 roughly represents a scale running from the most familiar (with minimal vertical and horizontal distance) to most distant and respectful (with maximal vertical and horizontal distance).

The figure also shows a distinction between vocatives that identify people as individuals, and those that are used irrespective of the identity of the addressee(s). The latter type, such as *guys*, can of course be used in addressing people whose names *S* does not know.

Figure 6.3 additionally indicates a further minor dimension of variation. At the lower end of the bivalent politeness scale (on the left of Figure 6.3), the scale bifurcates into endearments and familiarizers. Endearments (*dear*, *love*, *darling*) signal affection and some degree of intimacy or closeness.²⁵ On the other hand, familiarizers (*buddy*, *mate*, *dude*, used especially by males in addressing males) signal camaraderie rather than

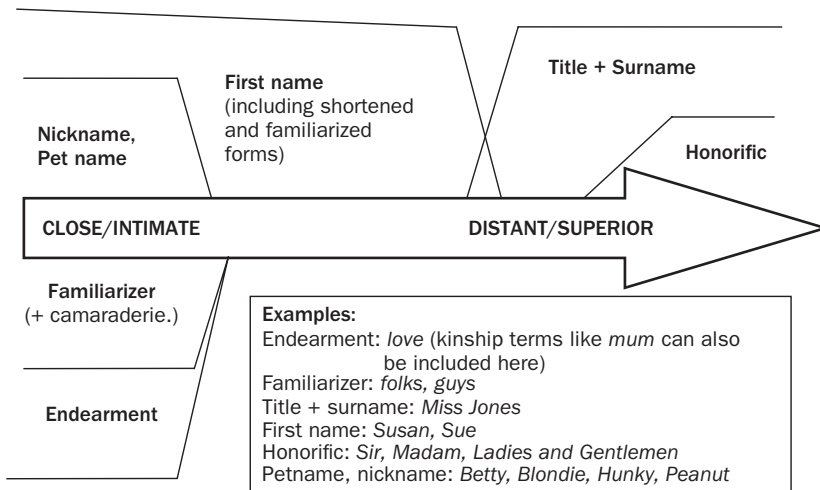


FIGURE 6.3 Vocatives: on a scale of bivalent politeness (see 1.2.1).

²⁵ Not always, however. Visitors to the British Isles often note with some surprise (and possibly some discomfort) that strangers can be addressed with endearments, especially by older women.

intimacy, and the lack of respect or deference they sometimes indicate can be felt to be offensive by strangers so addressed. The plural vocative *guys* is the closest thing to a universal “one size fits all” term of address. It is familiar and friendly in tone but can be used irrespective of the gender and age of *S* and *H*, particularly in the United States.

There is no need to exemplify the use of first-name vocatives, which can be found in a number of the preceding examples in this chapter—examples (73), (80), and (104). Here are examples of honorific vocatives, which are often associated with polite and indirect forms of request:

- (118) There you go *sir* that’s two ninety eight there please altogether there now.
[*S* is a tradesman selling eggs, and showing the traditional respectful *sir* to a customer] [BNC KB8]
- (119) And that card will require that you have an annual income of fifteen thousand dollars per year *ma’am* okay may I please have your Triple A membership card. [LCSAE172002] [during a call centre telephone call]

On the other hand, familiarizing and endearing vocatives, being toward the close/intimate end of the bivalent scale, are associated with more direct forms of request. They keep company with imperatives in these examples:

- (120) Charlotte don’t play with that *lovey* [addressing a child] [BNC KBH]
- (121) Let’s have a look *mate* [*S* is asking to see his companion’s program at a sports event] [BNC KBR]
- (122) Okay *dude*, give me a fucking cigarette [LCSAE141201]
- (123) Oliver now come on *darling* be a good boy and give me that. [BNC KDE]

Familiarizers and endearments have a great deal to do with rapport management in the sense of Spencer-Oatey (2000b), but politeness enters the picture here, if at all, only in endearments between equals, for example between partners or spouses, as in *Honey, can I use that ashtray please?* [LCSAE137902].²⁶

6.4.3 SUPPORTING MOVES

As ways of elaborating a request, there is no clear dividing line between the external modifiers we have just examined and supporting moves, as discussed with reference to apologies in 5.1. In fact, the CCSARP authors Faerch and Kasper

For example, I have been affectionately addressed as *love*, *dear*, and *darling* by middle-aged women serving food in motorway service stations. Waitresses in diners (inexpensive restaurants serving Middle American food) in the United States also tend to use *honey* or *sweetheart* in a similar way.

²⁶ In this respect my treatment of endearments and familiarizing vocatives is different from that of Brown and Levinson, who regard them as devices of positive politeness, reducing face threat by “anoint[ing] the face of the addressee by indicating that in some respects, *S* wants *H*’s wants” (1987: 70). There is little doubt that appropriate endearments make a request more acceptable to the recipient, as they show a positive social attitude to *H*. However, from my point of view, endearment and politeness are distinct means of showing a positive attitude to *H*. Politeness, unlike endearment, gives more value to *O* than to *S*. Endearments (purport to) establish a mutually affectionate relationship. Thus for me, honorific vocatives, but not familiarizers or endearments, come within the domain of politeness (see 1.2.1).

(1989: 237) treat them as a single category, referring to “external request modification by means of supportive moves.” For my purposes, the label “supportive move” is appropriate when the head act is preceded or followed by a separate “move” or speech act with its own illocutionary force. But this is a relative distinction. Although I have placed apologies among the external modifiers above, there are more elaborate and independent apologies that could easily be considered supportive moves:

(124) *Sorry to bother you. Can I come up for a moment?* [BNC HTR]

This section considers the most important supportive moves recognized in the CCSARP coding scheme, *grounders* and *preparators*, and then briefly mentions other less important moves.

(a) Grounders

Grounders are explanatory moves that can either precede or follow the head act. Their function is to justify the request, by making it seem a reasonable thing to ask in the circumstances:

(125) *Judith, I missed class yesterday. Could I borrow your notes?* [from the CCSARP Coding Manual, Blum-Kulka et al. (1989: 287)]

(126) *Would you mind doing the beans now Joelle, cos it won't be ready otherwise, it won't be ready in time for dinner.* [BNC KBH]

(127) *Wait a minute the brake's on.* [BNC KB2]

(b) Preparators

Preparators give *O* prior notice of *S*'s intention to make a request, either by stating the intention or by asking permission: examples from the CCSARP coding manual (ibid.: 287) are *I'd like to ask you something* and *May I ask you a question...?* We can include among preparators here another CCSARP supportive move category, that of “getting a precommitment.” The tactic in (128) is to invoke *O*'s compliance before he knows exactly what he is letting himself in for:

(128) *Arnold, would you do me a favour please? Could you slip out <pause> and retrieve our pianist?* [BNC KN8]

Although in this example the preparator has the form of a politely worded indirect request, it is doubtful whether it contributes much to the polite impression of what follows.

(c) Other supporting moves with politeness implications

As noted by CCSARP, other supportive moves include (i) a disarmer, forestalling any objections, (ii) a promise of reward or recompense, and (iii) a minimization

of the imposition (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 287–289), to which we may add (iv) a sweetener, boosting *O*'s self-image. Examples are:

- (i) *You've got such green fingers.* Could you just help me plant this orchid?
[invented]
- (ii) Would you do just do it *then I'll make you a cup of coffee.* [BNC KCT]
- (iii) Would you just check the money? *It won't take long.* [invented]
- (iv) Would you mind if I ask you how old you are. *You look really young?*
[LCSAE 123201]

These add an element of pos- or neg-politeness ((iv) is a repetition of example (92)).

Notice that (i) and (iv) both have the character of compliments, a move of pos-politeness to enhance the face of *O*. These and other supportive moves are difficult to find in corpora, which suggests they are quite rare.²⁷

6.5 Responses to Requests

Responses to requests can be broadly divided into positive, or **compliant responses**, and negative responses, or **refusals**. (It has to be remembered, though, that positive and negative are reversed in requests with the verb *mind* (see 6.4.1(f)), where *No* usually means 'I will' and *Yes* means 'I won't'—see examples such as (92) above.)

Positive responses are like offers (7.1) in that they observe the Generosity Maxim and are instances of pos-politeness. *Yes/Yeah* and *Okay* are common routine replies, often with additional material added, as in (130):

- (129) Carole: <-|-> Do you <-|-> think you could change her nappy for me?
<laugh> Charlotte: *Okay.* [BNC KBH]
- (130) A: [in a discussion about how to get an auditor] No, it must be an accountant. Could you ask? B: *Yeah, I'll ask Alwin.* [BNC KLS]
- (131) A: Would you take on this job? B: *Can do.* [A as chair of a business meeting is asking B to undertake the task of writing an update]
[BNC KM4]
- (132) A: Would you would you just hang on a minute? B: Certainly would.
[BNC HUV]

As one would expect with pos-politeness, the "Yes" answer can easily be intensified, by adding or substituting a modifier like *certainly* in "*Can I have a sponge now?*" "*Certainly.*" [LCSAE123802]

Another compliant way to answer a request is to use *I* followed by an appropriate modal; for example, a natural response to a *Can you...* request is *I can*. It is significant, here, that the hypothetical form of the modal used in the request is

²⁷ Their occurrence in the CCSARP Manual may be a reflection of the discourse completion test (DCT) method of data collection in CCSARP (see 10.1) rather than a reflection of their role in the making of requests.

rarely mirrored in the response. For example, in (132) *Would you* is answered by *I will* rather than *I would*:

- (133) A: <-|-> *Would* <-|-> *you*, *would you* apologize to Steve on our behalf?
 B: *I will*. [BNC FUL]

The neg-politeness that encourages the use of tentative hypothetical forms like *would* is not appropriate to the reply, where pos-politeness (in keeping with the Generosity Maxim) encourages a more enthusiastic response. However, there are occasions where the reply to a hypothetical request mirrors the request's hypothetical character. This was illustrated above in example (98) and (132); (98) is repeated here.

- (98) Student: You *couldn't* give me a few more equations just
 Tutor: Equations I certainly *could* I certainly *could*. [BNC FME]

Strictly, one might regard the *could* in the tutor's reply as inappropriately flouting the Generosity Maxim—which would favor *can* as a more enthusiastically compliant response to a request. Possible explanations for examples like this are

- (a) that the automatic repetition of the modal verb used in the request is easier from a processing point of view, and
- (b) that the extensive pragmaticalization of the hypothetical *could* lead to its use in responses that are no longer at all hypothetical or tentative in intent.

It is clear from the repeated intensifier *certainly* in (98) that the tutor, despite using *could*, is expressing eagerness to oblige.

A refusal, as an FTA, is a dispreferred response: *No* is far rarer than *Yes*, and direct refusal is avoided, sometimes through evasion or prevarication. In (134) B avoids answering the specific request by stating a general rule, where negation is mitigated by hedging (*I don't think...*).

- (134) A: Could you break down the profit of the FT group between Les Echoaa and, and the FT in the UK?
 B: I don't think we normally do that. [HYF]

The negative response can be introduced by the prevaricating discourse marker *Well* as a means of avoiding direct negation:

- (135) A: Can you do this <-|-> please mummy.
 B: *Well*, wait till we've washed up...

It is difficult to track down examples of bald-on-record refusals, but their lack of politeness is likely to be found acceptable only where social distance is small, for example, in this argument over money apparently between a mother and her teenage son:

- (136) A: I've only got six hundred and fifty, will you give me some?
 B: *No I won't*

- A: <yawning> Oh, I'm skint
 B: That's your problem [BNC KBM]

Needless to say, this confrontation between parent and child allows no role for politeness.

6.6 Concluding Remarks

Although this chapter has concentrated on one speech act type, the devices of politeness we have reviewed in 6.4 under the headings of pragmatic modifiers and supporting moves are often found with other types of speech event, such as complaints or offers. Hence from time to time we shall refer to these categories in the next chapter.

This chapter, despite its limited focus on the pragmalinguistic facet of requests, has exceeded the length of the other chapters. Even the list of devices we have given is far from complete, as *S* can always think of less usual ways to request. A research student asked me by email recently, *Is there a chance we could Skype at 10.45?* using a happenstance strategy (6.4.1(g)) to disclaim any power to enforce an alteration of an appointment, but avoiding one of the formulae such as *by any chance* or *happen to*. To give another illustration of the open-endedness of any request typology, consider this example:

- (137) Rose: Do you think it'll be worth making some more inquiries?
 Sheila: Yes
 Rose: Do you think you could Sheila?
 Sheila: Yes.²⁸
 Rose: Do you mind? [BNC KLS]

At a Women's Institute meeting, Rose (apparently acting as chair) asks Sheila *Do you think it'll be worth...*? This sounds like an appeal for advice, but in the follow-up turn Rose turns the advice seeking into a request. She reiterates the request, using two strategies high on the pragmalinguistic politeness scale. Indirect politeness tactics of these kinds are likely to occur in particular social groups where an ethos of equality prevails, but where someone in charge, who should initiate action, has to resort to elaborate strategies to achieve collaboration while maintaining tactfulness.

Another general point to note is that requests often contain combinations of politeness devices—for example, an indirect request strategy can combine with various pragmatic modifiers or supportive moves:

- (138) and I was wondering if you could tell us a bit more about these
 Homework... [BNC J9N]

²⁸ There appears to be an error in the BNC transcription here: "Yes" is attributed to Rose, not Sheila. In this example I have assumed that Sheila is the speaker of this turn.

TABLE 6.5

Combining strategy and modifiers: an example.

Device Conducive to Politeness	Section	(Basic) form
Strategy: ability/possibility question	6.3.3 (b)	<i>can you</i> + infinitive
Modifier: deliberative opening	6.4.1 (c)	<i>I wonder if</i> + clause
Modifier: past tense—past time	6.4.1 (j)	<i>I wondered if</i> + clause
Modifier: progressive aspect	6.4.1 (k)	<i>I was wondering if</i> + clause
Modifier: past tense—hypothetical (?)	6.4.1 (i)	<i>if you could tell us</i>
Modifier: downtoner	6.4.1 (a)	<i>a bit more about...</i>

This combines the five (or six) devices conducive to politeness shown in Table 6.5: one conventionally indirect strategy and five modifiers (of which one, marked “(?)” is doubtful).

This seemingly elaborate indirect request is not unnatural in its particular context: it occurred in a public meeting at which a company official made a press announcement, and this was a question from the floor. In part the indirectness no doubt occurred because the speaker was a self-selecting participant at a public meeting with no clear right to take the floor, and in part because the situation was one in which the company’s position was being probed and challenged. In other words, it was one in which there was a high risk of face threat.

Another topic that deserves some consideration is the relative frequency of different questioning request strategies. Aijmer (1996: 157) gives frequency data from the London-Lund Corpus, consisting of the spoken material collected by the Survey of English Usage, London between 1958 and 1977.²⁹ If we take the choice between the four modals *will*, *would*, *can*, and *could* as initiators of a hearer-oriented request, *could you*, *would you*, *can you*, and *will you* occur in the listed order of frequency—the more indirect strategies occurring more frequently than the more direct ones.³⁰

Aijmer has a further table for statement-form requests, the most frequent of which involve the sequences *you could*, *you can*, and *you would*. The evidence of the London-Lund Corpus is that, at least for British “educated speakers” of a generation ago, indirect requests with *could you* or *you could* were the most likely options.

Whereas the last chapter and this one have explored individual speech events (apologies and directives) in some detail, Chapter 7 will deal more briefly with a wider range of speech events such as offers, advice, compliments, and complaints—a representative range of the speech events in Chapter 4 (Table 4.1). These are speech event “territories” where neg- or pos-politeness is called for, or is likely to occur. In Chapter 8, by way of contrast, we will turn to behavior that is not polite, including behavior that is impolite.

²⁹ Speakers contributing to the SEU, according its creator, were restricted to “educated professional men and women” (Quirk 1974: 167). Hence, for reasons of social class as well as time, the findings of Aijmer’s study may not be generally valid today.

³⁰ These data are obtained from Aijmer’s Table 4.6, after adding together slight variations of these basic formulae: *could you*, *could you... please*, *could you possibly*, etc.

Other Politeness-sensitive Speech Events

If all politeness-sensitive speech events were given a chapter to themselves, like Chapters 5 and 6, this book would become very long indeed. Instead, in this one chapter my plan is to extend the coverage of polite phenomena in this book by dealing with a range of familiar speech events from a largely pragmalinguistic point of view. The speech events I will deal with include those, apart from apologies and requests, that have been subjected to a considerable amount of scrutiny with reference to both English and other languages. With the maxims they chiefly illustrate (as defined in 4.3.1, especially Table 4.1) they are as shown in Table 7.1.

7.1 Offers, Invitations, and Undertakings

Offers and invitations are speech events that instantiate the Generosity Maxim; however, as will be seen, as examples of politeness they are actually more complicated than that, because of the involvement of more than one maxim. They are treated together here because, from a pragmatic point of view, invitations can arguably be viewed as a subclass of offers.

An offer, as explained in 4.3.1, belongs to Searle's commissive category of speech acts; it is a speech event whereby *S* proposes to do or provide something for the benefit of *O*. An invitation is an offer taking place in a hospitality frame; it means that *S*, in the role of host, offers to provide something nice for *O* in the role of guest. It may be an invitation to a meal, to a party, to stay at *S*'s home, and so forth. Admittedly, there is a distinction in the framing of the verbs *offer* and *invite*: the verb *offer* is typically associated with a future action by *S*, and the verb *invite* is typically associated with a future action by *O*:

- (1a) They offered *to buy* me a drink at the cafe on the corner.
- (1b) They invited me *to have* a drink at the cafe on the corner.

But, as we see from (1a) and (1b), the implication of the generous act is the same in both cases.

TABLE 7.1

Contents of this chapter

7.1	Offers, invitations, and undertakings	Generosity Maxim
7.2	Compliments and mitigated criticisms	Approbation Maxim
7.3	Thanks	Obligation (of S to O) Maxim
7.4	Agreement, mitigated disagreement, advice, etc.	Agreement and Opinion-reticence Maxims
7.5	Congratulations, commiserations, and good wishes	Sympathy Maxim

An offer, like a request, proposes a future action *A*, but unlike the *A* of a request, the *A* of an offer is to the advantage of *O*, and (normally) at a cost to *S*. Another resemblance to a request is the optionality factor: like the recipient of a request, the recipient of an offer can make a choice between accepting and declining it. For this reason, a typical offer is in the form of a question about *O*'s volition. Here is a typical dialogue, with the offer in italics:

- (2) Ann: And this is the
 Enid: stem ginger.
 Noel: Stem ginger, yes
 Mollie: Oh yes! This is lovely!
 Enid: *Will you have a soupçon more?*
 Mollie: Not for me. [BNC KC0]

As in requests (see 6.3.3 (a)), the *will* here is best seen as volitional *will*, not the epistemic *will* of prediction, which, however, it resembles in referring to the future. Other volitional formulae introducing offers are illustrated in these examples:

- (3) *Bread, toast? Do you want* a bit of toast sweetie, Tim, erm Christopher?
 [BNC KBW]
 (4) Thank you Mr [name]. *Do you want to* add anything to that Mr
 [name]...? [BNC FMN: spoken by the chair at a meeting]
 (5) A: *Shall we* put a plaster on it? B: Yes please. A: *Would you like* a little
 bit of cream? B: Yes please. [BNC KDV]
 (6) '... *Won't you* come in for a minute? My housekeeper will make you
 some tea.' [BNC BMU: fictional text]
 (7) '*Wouldn't you like* something to eat?...?' [bnc APM: fictional text]
 (8) *Wouldn't you rather* have a hot cross bun? [BNC KCH]
 (9) What *would you like* to drink? [BNC KNC]

Another similarity with requests is the ability, shown by *Bread, toast?* in (3), for elliptical speech events to consist simply of nouns or noun phrases (some such expression as *Would you like* being understood). However, in the case of offers, *please* (which is almost obligatory in elliptical requests) would be completely out of place: *Bread, toast, please* would turn the offer into a request. *Shall* in *Shall I/we...?* as in (4) is another modal verb that can interrogate the wishes of *S*. This is mainly

a BrE formula. In the same example, *Would you like...*? is mainly used for offers, although, as noted in 6.3.3(a), this formula can also be used for requests—typically disingenuous requests where *S* pretends to act in the interests of *O*. On the other hand, the negation of volitional *will* in *Won't you...*—see (6)—has a persuasive force, because it pays lip service to *O*'s reluctance (usually for reasons of politeness) to accept the offer. This arises from the special force of English negative questions (see 6.3.3 (b)) by which *S* acts as if to persuade *H* to abandon a negative inclination, and to adopt a positive one. Paradoxically, negatively marked offers of the form *Won't you X?* express a positive bias in favor of *X* (encouraging acceptance), and are therefore the opposite of requests of the form *Would you mind Xing?* which (as noted in 6.4.1(f)) are biased in a negative direction.

The observations given above indicate how, in spite of their similarities, offers and requests tend to be opposites in terms of their politeness tactics. In contrast to the indirectness and neg-politeness (1.2.2) of requests, offers are exemplars of pos-politeness: in principle, according to the Generosity Maxim, the more the offer constrains *O* toward acceptance, the more (pragmalinguistically) polite it is. Thus offers in the most direct form—either as mands or as statements (*Sit down in that comfy chair; I'll get you a drink*)—are not only the most constraining but also the most generously polite, in the sense that they seem to allow little or no room for *O* to refuse the benefit. The reasoning behind this is that *O* will want to give a polite response, which will be (according to the Tact Maxim) to avoid imposing on the offerer and hence to dodge direct acceptance of the offer. The italicized words in (10)–(13) illustrate some common lexicogrammatical forms having this positive-biasing effect:

- (10) *Do have* a seat Mrs [name] anyway, what can I do for you today? [bnc GY6] [doctor speaking to patient]
- (11) A: *Let me* get the tab *I insist*. B: Oh you don't have to do that.
[lcsae144202]
- (12) 'Of course *you must* come with us, Henry, dear. *I insist*. Besides Margot will be so pleased.' 'I really don't see why any hostess should be pleased to see a total stranger arrive at her dinner party.' [BNC A0D: fictional text]
- (13) *I insist* you join me for supper [BNC JY8]

In these examples we have an implicit battle between the pos-politeness of the offerer (which is to make the offer difficult to refuse) and the neg-politeness of the offeree, which is to decline the offer, or at least to accept it with appropriately expressed reluctance (notice the disclaimer *I really don't see why any hostess...* in (12)). This is the English counterpart, in a much attenuated form, of the Chinese iterative ritual of invitations and invitation refusals noted in 1.1; see Gu (1990: 253–255) and Mao (1992: 91–93).

Example (12) also exemplifies a common supporting move for offers, which is to claim that the offered action *A* will be beneficial to *S* and her family. The implication is that *O* should not be reluctant to accept, as by doing so *O* will do *S* a favor.

Another pos-politeness maxim makes itself felt here, the Approbation Maxim: in saying *Margot will be so pleased*, *S* pays Henry a compliment by portraying him as being desirable company for Margot. So this is a doubly supporting move for the offer, not only paying a compliment but claiming that acceptance gives pleasure to the offerer. Therefore (by implication) the offer should be accepted, acceptance being the polite thing to do. (A similar strategy is also found in polite responses to thanks (7.3.1), where *You're welcome* or *It's a pleasure* (especially in AmE) is a favorite formula.

However, it is not quite true to say that pos-politeness is the ruling force in offers. This is true only insofar as *S* can carry the conviction that this is a straightforward case of *S* conferring a benefit on *O*. For example, whoever says (13) *I insist you join me for supper* has to be fairly convinced that the supper would be an unalloyed pleasure to *O*. But there is also a neg-politeness force—the Tact Maxim—influencing offers, especially where there is a formal or rather distant relationship between *S* and *O*, such that an imperative, putting pressure on *O* to accept, would be out of place. Imagine a typical situation of “Boy meets Girl.” By offering something in an insistent way, as in (13), Boy might well intrude on the privacy of Girl, limiting her freedom of action. The offer might be judged predatory and unwelcome—in fact, an FTA. Also, the utterer of (13), by saying *I insist you join me to supper*, appears immodest enough to suppose that his company over a meal will be totally enjoyable to *O*. Quite often then, as here, the neg-politeness of the Modesty Maxim as well as of the Tact Maxim militates against the Generosity Maxim.

Hence offers can be to some extent face-threatening as well as face-enhancing speech events, and the pos-polite and neg-polite forces can work against one another. (We will find other classes of speech events—such as advice—that are subject to similar competing pressures.) This seems a likely explanation of why typical interrogative offers, illustrated in (2)–(9) above, include some formulae that incorporate distancing modifiers, especially the hypothetical past tense (see 6.4.1 (i)). Formulae like *Would(n't) you like...* and *Wouldn't you rather...* (unlike *You must...* and *I insist...*) introduce this element of distancing from reality, and hence of tentativeness, in their make-up. It seems that such formulae are modeled on the acceptance that would appropriately be used by *O* in a polite reply: *Yes, I would (likelove to)*. It would be appropriately polite for *O* to tone down the likelihood that the offer will be brought to fruition, and so *S*, mindful of *O*'s reluctance to accept, may adopt a similarly tentative stance.

Other modifiers can be similarly used to play down the presentation of an offer still further. Imagine, again, the “Boy meets Girl” scenario in (12): *I wonder if you'd be able to join me to supper* might be more likely to bring about acceptance than *Would you like to join me for supper*. But there is always a point beyond which a polite offer turns into a polite request: *Would you mind joining me for supper?* formulated as a request, could be counterproductive, putting *S* in the role of a supplicant. Here, as in the previous chapter, we meet borderline cases that hover between one Searlian speech act and another.

Offers beginning with *Can I* or *Can we* are another example of the borderline between offers and requests. Whereas *Can I...* is a favorite formula to begin a request for permission, it can also be used for offers, as (14) shows:

- (14) A: *Can I* get you a drink?
 B: Yeah if you would please. [BNC KBA]

Here *can* means permission, rather than ability; the person who asks this question is sure of her ability to get the drink but is seeking permission to offer one. But why should someone seek *O*'s permission to do something that is favorable to *O*? The answer, of course, is yet another facet of neg-politeness. We have seen that the Tact Maxim plays a role in offers, because offers and invitations can threaten *O*'s personal space and freedom of action. Hence, in more formal and distant personal encounters than those of (10)–(13), asking permission to make an offer is a polite strategy.

A less common alternative to *Can I...* is *May I...*, a usage of *may* (= permission) that is becoming infrequent but can still occur in the opening offer of (for example) service providers: *May I help you with those bags?*

Another, more informal, borderline case is an offer masquerading as a suggestion or a piece of advice, using the *Why don't you* formula (cf. 7.4.2):

- (15) Yeah, *why don't you* just sit down and have our drink first. [BNC KDE]

According to this formula's overt meaning, *S* challenges *O* to find some good reason for *not* doing the action *A*. Through pragmaticalization, however, this has come to have something of the force of a *positive* suggestion for future action. But often only from context is it possible to judge whether *A* is for *S*'s benefit (a directive), for *O*'s benefit (an offer or piece of advice), or for the benefit of both (a suggestion). This strategy has a variant with *I*, which is more suited to an offer:

- (16) *Why don't I* make you a couple of eggs with salsa on them? [LCSAE127802]

It is clear from the foregoing discussion that here, as elsewhere, metapragmatic categories like "offer" do not identify clear-cut speech events, but rather a territorial range varying on scales such as the "optionality," "cost-benefit," "s-orientation," and "*H*-orientation."

Another borderline area of metapragmatic difference is the distinction between offers and *undertakings*.

Going back to examples (10) and (11), these both illustrate imperatives giving little or no choice to *O*. *Do have a seat...* in (10) is a persuasive or emphatic (second person) imperative, and *Let me get the tab...* is a first-person singular imperative, by which *S* commits to carrying out the action described (in this case, paying the bill at a cafe).¹ Here optionality is at a minimum, as it is also in utterances beginning

¹ *Let me* is ambiguous between a first-person imperative and the normal second-person imperative where *let* is a transitive verb meaning 'allow' (Quirk et al. 1985: 829–830). It is the first-person, self-directing, imperative (typically pronounced /lemi/) that is most likely at issue here.

	(COST TO S, BENEFIT TO O)	(BENEFIT TO S, COST TO O)
NO OPTIONALITY	promise or undertaking	order or command
OPTIONALITY	offer or invitation	request

FIGURE 7.1 Schematic relation between related metapragmatic terms on the scales of optionality and cost-benefit.

I'll... that imply benefit to *O*, such as *I'll buy you lunch* [LCSAE 120001] or *I'll drive you home* [LCSAE 122201]. We might call these utterances “undertakings” or “promises,” distinguishing them from “offers” where *O* is given a choice as to whether to accept the favor. So understood, they are in the same metapragmatic relation to offers as requests are to orders, as shown schematically in Figure 7.1.

(Note, however, that the English term *promise* tends to be reserved for undertakings relating to an action sometime in the future, rather than immediately.) The point about optionality is that in pragmatic reality it is a scale rather than a dichotomy. Hence, there is room for unclarity as to whether the utterance *Let me help you* (spoken, say, by a passer-by to someone who has fallen down in the street) is an offer or an undertaking.

Before concluding this section, we need to discuss a problem relating to offers/invitations. If an offer is considered the pos-politeness counterpart of a request, the magnitude of the three major factors determining sociopragmatic politeness—viz. not only horizontal and vertical distance, but the cost-benefit factor—should determine how polite the offer is felt to be in a given context. However, consider the contrast between the weightiness of what is offered in the imaginary scenarios of (17) and (18):

- (17) Look here, why don't you borrow my luxury yacht for a couple of weeks—and keep it as long as you like.
- (18) Won't you have an extra glass of wine? Just a tiny drop?

The value of the transaction, both in cost to *S* and benefit to *O*, is much greater in (17) than in (18), and yet in (17) *S* magnifies the offer still further with *keep it as long as you like*. In (18), on the other hand, the value of the offer is small, and by adding *Just a tiny drop?* *S* reduces its value still further, which should lessen the degree of politeness. Yet our judgments about politeness do not seem to echo the theoretical claim that the politeness in (17) is immensely greater than that in (18). Why the difference? Is it just that the offerer in (17) wishes to show a higher level of generosity?

I suggest that the difference tends more to lie in the calculation of the likelihood that *O* will accept the offer. Offers, it appears, can be fairly empty gestures of politeness until someone “cashes them in” and accepts the value of what is on offer.² The *O* of (17) may be in a position where he is unlikely to accept the offer; the *O* of (18), however, is in a situation where the choice of whether to accept is very immediately available. But, as we have already seen, *O* is likely to decline or resist an offer for reasons of politeness if not inclination. In that case, to maximize generosity *S* has to choose a strategy of apparently reducing the size of the thing offered, in order to prevail on *O* to set aside the Tact Maxim and accept the offer. The goal associated with the Generosity, to “give a favorable value to *O*’s wants” (4.3.1, Table 4.1) will not be achieved unless *S* succeeds in prevailing on *O* to accept. Moreover, as we saw in 4.4.6, it is polite of *S* to attribute politeness to *O*. Hence we have the apparent paradox that an offer or invitation indicating that what is offered is of great value can even be judged less polite than one where it is of little value.

7.2. Compliments and Criticisms

Compliments are well defined as follows by Holmes (1988: 446):

A compliment is a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some “good” (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speaker and the hearer.

Compliments and responses to compliments are respectively the domains of the Approbation Maxim and its obverse, the Modesty Maxim. Like offers and invitations, compliments obviously exemplify pos-politeness, since every compliment has a positive semantic loading in favor of *O*. Compliments can go to enthusiastic extremes: Arnt and Janney (2005: 37) illustrate the “Anglo-American” compliment as involving not only emotive and commendatory words but emotive prosody, facial expression, and gesture:

“HEY! that’s a TERRIFIC idea! REALLY! (full gaze, broad smile, shoulder slap).
[quoted in Watts, Ide and Ehlich (2005 [1992]: 37)]

There appears to be no obvious formula (comparable to request formulae such as *Could you*) for expressing compliments. Yet, perhaps surprisingly, compliments appear to be constructed largely according to a limited repertoire of patterns.

² Wolfson et al. (1983) talk of “phoney invitations,” which are prevalent in English-speaking (especially American) culture, such as “You must come and have a meal with us sometime soon,” which appear to members of other cultures (e.g., Russians; Tatiana Larina, pers. comm.) to be insincere and valueless, as the invitee waits for the date to be fixed and then finds that nothing happens. According to Julia Youst MacRae (pers. comm.), in the United States quasi-invitations such as “Let’s get together soon for a meal/drink,” followed by responses like “Yes, that’d be great,” are a convenient way of closing a conversation on a polite note but with no serious intent (for a similar use of thanks, see 7.3).

Wolfson (1989) reported research done by herself and Manes (see Wolfson and Manes 1980, Manes and Wolfson 1981, Wolfson 1983) in analyzing compliments in middle-class AmE, and concluded: “In analyzing data collected from a wide range of spontaneous interactions, it was discovered that compliments are characteristically formulaic both in terms of semantics and of syntax” (219). She went on: “Two thirds of all compliments that make use of adjectives to carry the positive semantic load, do so by means of five adjectives: *nice, good, beautiful, pretty* and *great*.” (Of these, *pretty* and *beautiful* were particularly likely to be used between female speakers.) Where the positive load is carried by verbs, “ninety percent (90%) make use of just two verbs: *like* and *love*.” She found that at the syntactic level 50 percent of all compliments were characterized by formula (a), where the parentheses enclose an optional intensifier and the slash (/) represents a choice between *is* and *looks*:

- (a) NP *is/looks* (intensifier) ADJ. (*You look really lovely.*)

Two other syntactic patterns, (b) and (c) below, accounted for an extra 29 percent of her compliment data (*ibid.*: 61–62):

- (b) I (intensifier) *like/love* NP (*I really like your accent*)
 (c) PRO *is* (intensifier) a ADJ NOUN (*That's a terrific idea*)

This result was not restricted to middle-class Americans; the studies carried out by Wolfson and Manes were broadly confirmed by later research, including studies of English-speaking groups in New Zealand and Great Britain (see Holmes 1986, 1995, Creese 1991), in spite of cross-regional differences.³

Below are some examples from the corpora of BrE and AmE, showing something of the contexts in which they occurred, and including the response of the complimentee. (The compliments themselves are shown in italics.) Examples (2)–(6) basically illustrate pattern (a), but with some extra features. For example, in (2) the parents, after using compliment pattern (a), go on to use a slightly different pattern—Wolfson's (c)—in which the adjective modifies the head of a noun phrase predicative complement: *that's a good color*.

This incidentally shows why compliments often come in groups of two or more. It seems that the relative lack of variety of patterns for complimenting often leads people to pile one compliment on another for extra effect. Two further examples of reiterated compliments are seen in (2), where the repetition of the same adjective with a different intensifier, *absolutely*, adds zestful emphasis.

- (1) A: It's really brilliant. Absolutely brilliant! [B has been cooking lasagna]
 B: I've never done one of them.
 A: It's lovely Joyce it's really nice. [BNC KB2]

³ Creese reports, for example, that the favorite adjectives in New Zealand compliments were *nice, good, lovely, great*, and *neat*, whereas those in Great Britain (on the basis of limited evidence) were *good, nice, great*, and *lovely*.

In A's second utterance, two new adjectives are used, ringing the changes on enthusiastic praise: *lovely*, *nice*.

Wolfson's syntactic templates are only the first stage of refining the pragmatics of compliments. Various external and internal modifiers (cf. 6.4) can be added. Thus in (2) and (3) we notice the use of the interjection *Oh* for emotive impact, and in (6) the adverbial *on you* links the compliment flatteringly to the addressee.

- (2) A: *This is lovely!* B: Yeah, I think that's very good. [BNC KCB]

 A: *Oh that's a good color...*
 B: Aren't they nice!... It's lovely! [BNC KCB]
 [parents looking round their daughter's new home]
 (3) *Oh your house looks nice.* [BNC KC9] [complimenting O on their home]
 (4) *That's beautiful* on you, that's the one to have. [BNC KDL] [buying clothing]

The use of a vocative (such as *Joyce* in (1)) can also help to personalize a compliment. In (5), instead of the declarative form of utterance *You are good*, the exclamatory question form *Aren't you good!* is used for extra emotive emphasis.

- (5) [admiring a logo designed by B]
 A: Oh! Aren't you good!
 B: Well I thought it was quite good.
 A: *Well it's eye-catching* isn't it. Just what you want.

It is worth noting that A's second turn in (5) introduces a more original and targeted adjective of commendation, *eye-catching*. Such more discriminating choices can strike the recipient as more genuine, as they avoid the hackneyed, mechanical effect of very frequent adjectives such as *good*, *nice*, and *wonderful*. In the same turn speaker A follows up the compliment with a tag question (*isn't it*), indicating that the appreciative experience is something to be shared with O. Another example of the same interactive tactic is observed in the question *don't you think...*? in (6), which places an example of Wolfson's Type (a) structure in a following subordinate clause:

- (6) A: What a surprise <laugh>, *don't you think it's wonderful?*
 B: It's beautiful.
 A: It really makes that room.
 B: Mm.
 A: You know when I came in, I thought *oh it's heaven*. [BNC KCV]

B in (6) replies by agreeing with the compliment, and A follows up with another compliment in an idiomatic, though less stereotyped pattern: *It really makes that room*.

Exclamatory patterns are another dimension of variation: in addition to the pattern of *Aren't they good!* in (5), example (7) illustrates the *What a ADJ N* pattern, as well as the positive exclamatory question:

- (7) A: Hi Lisa, *what a pretty shirt*, is it silk?
 B: No.
 A: Really pretty, *boy is it colorful*. [LCSAE 133001]

Here both the exclamation *boy* and the positive exclamatory question *is it colorful* are typical of AmE.

These examples show compliments following somewhat routinized patterns, but it must always be remembered that compliments can take an open-ended variety of forms, as in (8), which does not conform to any of Wolfson's types:

- (8) A: Ah Louise *Here comes the star of the show*. [BNC KSV]

7.2.1 RESPONSES TO COMPLIMENTS

As most compliments are in statement form, one might expect to observe a broad distinction between responses that accept or agree with that statement, and responses that reject or disagree with it. In fact, compliment responses are more complicated than that. They have been found particularly interesting to study (see Pomerantz 1978; Golato 2005; Spencer-Oatey et al. 2008) because the compliment recipient is in a double bind: to agree with a compliment breaches the Modesty Maxim, and to reject it breaches the Agreement Maxim. These two responses, illustrated schematically in the invented dialogues (a) and (b), are both brusque and ungracious if not impolite:

- (a) A: You were brilliant. B: *Yes, I was, wasn't I*. [dispreferred response]
 (b) A: You were brilliant. B: *No, I wasn't*. [dispreferred response]

As one would expect, the impression of impoliteness in “immodestly” accepting a compliment decreases according to the closeness between complimenter and complementee. For example, in (5) the compliment paid by the parents is accepted by their daughter. Little or no immodesty is implied by her agreeing with them, but it is noteworthy that she mitigates her acceptance in her second reply, using the hedging preface *Well I thought...* and the downtoner *quite* in *it was quite good*.

Here is another example of a positive response that appears to flout the normal requirement of politeness:

- (1) Graeme: Oh we are looking posh aren't we!
 Sarah: Oh yes of course! [BNC KCB]

However, here Graeme is apparently Sarah's father, and his playful use of the slang adjective *posh* and of the first-person plural pronoun *we* to refer to Sarah are signs that he is joking; this is more like banter (4.4.3, 8.4) than a sincere compliment. Sarah's response, which agrees wholeheartedly with the compliment, is also apparently nonserious.

Negative responses to compliments are less easy to find in English-speaking dialogue. Here is one, from an AmE example incidentally illustrating a number of other neg-politeness ways of responding to a compliment:

- (2) Leola: Let me see your watch.
 Amanda: Oh.
 Leola: That's not the one I was talking about but *that is so cute*.
 Amanda: *It's not*.

- Leola: No, *that's cute*.
 Amanda: Thanks, it is pretty.
 Leola: Oh how adorable.
 Amanda: But it's kind of loose and it's on the last buckle.

[from a lecture handout by Magnus Levin: "A corpus-based approach to compliments in American and British English: regional variation and sex-based differences"]

In some cultures, such as the Chinese and Japanese, a rejection of a compliment is traditionally considered acceptable if not normal, as Modesty in those cultures is a particularly powerful maxim. In the English-speaking world, on the other hand, impoliteness is often avoided by using an evasive strategy, one that somehow ignores the content of the compliment and responds in a nonoffensive way. Amanda's last remark in (10) illustrates how the complimentee can dispraise the thing complimented, as a way of counteracting the praise of the compliment. Perhaps the most common method of "deflecting" the compliment is to thank the complimenter:

- (3) A: *I like that top*.
 B: Oh *thank you*. It was three pounds, in Mark One. [BNC KP5]

Thanking is a way of showing appreciation for the *act* of complimenting, without committing oneself to assent to, or dissent from, the compliment itself: —a kind of metapragmatic response. Whereas Chinese are traditionally taught to reject a compliment in keeping with Modesty, American females (according to Julia Youst MacRae, pers. comm.) are often taught to "accept" a compliment by saying "Thank you." Another type of "deflection" is to add some informative remark about the subject of the compliment, a strategy also illustrated by the remark about the price in (3), as well as by the response in (4):

- (4) A: *I like that cardy* [= cardigan]
 B: It's from a set, it's got a hat and a scarf. [BNC KB9]

Similarly, in (5), Arthur ignores the compliment he is being paid and instead points out the pyracantha as one of the features of his garden:

- (5) [in Arthur's garden] A: *This is lovely this* <pause>
 Arthur: Will be once that hedge gets up
 A: I like that divided hedge it's beautiful
 Arthur: You notice how the pyracantha are there
 A: Yeah, yeah. [BNC KP1]

In fact, Arthur's first reply by implication is an indirect denial of the compliment: [*It*] *Will be [lovely] once that hedge gets up* implicates that the garden is NOT lovely now.

A half-joking form of deflection is illustrated in (6), where Katharine challenges the sincerity of Stefan's compliment, as if it is said only for the sake of politeness.

- (6) Stefan: They're nice. They're very nice.
 Katherine: <laughs> You don't have to be polite.
 Stefan: No *I really like them*. [BNC KCV]

Perhaps the commonest evasive way of responding to a compliment is to say nothing, in effect, to ignore the compliment, and to continue the conversation as if it has not been uttered—perhaps responding nonverbally, by smiling, making deprecatory gestures, and so on.

The following passage of dialogue illustrates in a more extended way the interchange of A's compliments and the evasive responses by which B avoids taking full credit for her precocious success:

- A: Would you mind if I ask you how old you are. *You look really young?*
 B: I'm nineteen.
 A: Really?
 B: Yeah.
 A: Wow and *you're a Systems Administrator. I'm very impressed.*
 B: I went to school early.
 A: Hm, *that's fantastic.*
 B: I was lucky.
 A: I thought, she looks really young, she's really twenty eight or something.
 B: Twenty eight?
 A: Well 'cause you act very much like an older person and so I've met a lot of people who look young but they're really older.
 B: Hmm [LCSAE 123201]

A's whole contribution to the dialogue appears to have a complimentary goal, the implication being that for a woman to look younger than she is is a good thing, and that B's professional status is a remarkable achievement for one so young. B's replies *I went to school early* and *I was lucky* are self-deprecating, indicating that she could not take the credit for her early success. A's last turn, however, seems to misfire a little in suggesting that B acts like an older person—not necessarily considered a complimentary remark, as seems evident from B's noncommittal reply *Hm*.

7.2.2 INDIRECT OR MITIGATED CRITICISM

The noun *criticism* and the verb *criticize* generally refer, in everyday life, to a speech event in which *S* says something that is (either directly or by implication) uncomplimentary or derogatory about *O*. Other verbs with a similar metapragmatic function are *accuse*, *grumble*, *complain*, *scold*, and *tell off*. Some of these verbs, particularly *grumble* and *complain*, are often used to indicate the speaker's annoyance or dissatisfaction with a "target" who is considered to be guilty of some offense affecting *S*,

but who is not *H* but rather some third party. However, the situations in which these speech events are most likely to infringe Approbation are those where the person being criticized, accused, or grumbled at is *H*, or is connected with *H*. These are the speech events we will be concerned with in this section.

A direct criticism using the obligational modals like *should* and *shouldn't* can be felt to be downright insulting:

A: You know I've had er I've I've had seven children myself [unclear]

B: Well *you should* be ashamed of yourself.

.....

B: Well if you can't control your children *you shouldn't* flipping well have them.

[BNC HUV: from James Whale's phone-in programme]

But criticisms, like requests, can be to various degrees indirect. Here A objects to B's recording their speech surreptitiously:

(1) A: Did you have it running on the way to the car? [it = the tape recorder] *It's not very nice* to tape people when they don't know they're being taped.

B: I haven't turned the thing off yet. [LCSAE 094501]

As previously noted (1.1; see further 8.2), however, there are activity types where it is allowable, if not normal, to be sharply critical of *O*, and the general laws governing neg-politeness—that the need for it decreases as the factors of vertical distance, horizontal distance, and cost (i.e., the weightiness of the FTA) decrease—apply also to criticism, so that among close friends and family members, unmitigated criticism is rather common. One only has to listen in to siblings quarreling over games, toys, and other possessions to realize that the Maxim of Approbation may have little role in such a close family environment.

Going back to (1), there is nothing in this utterance to signal that *H* (rather than a third party) is being grumbled at, but in the context it is clear that *H* is the person who is being accused of unauthorized recording. In that case, it is clear that the utterance offends against the Approbation Maxim. The fact that there is no second-person reference, however, is already a sign of mitigation—a softening of the effect of criticism by avoiding identification of the target.⁴ The criticism is presented as a general truth (*It's not very nice...*) which could apply to anybody; it is an example of “defocalization” as discussed in 6.2.1. A further mitigation is the use of negation combined with litotes (understatement) in the opening expression *It's not very nice*. One of the most direct ways of opening a criticism of this kind would be to use a pejorative adjective: *It's bad/mean/rotten...* This can be rendered milder by a straightforward negation of the antonymic adjective: *It's not nice to...* In *It's not very nice* in (1), a second layer of mitigation (albeit highly conventionalized) is added through the intensifier *very*, which

⁴ Adolphs (2008: 71) notes that *Why don't you* tends to be more face-threatening and more *H*-centered than the *Why not* construction, where personal reference to *H* is omitted.

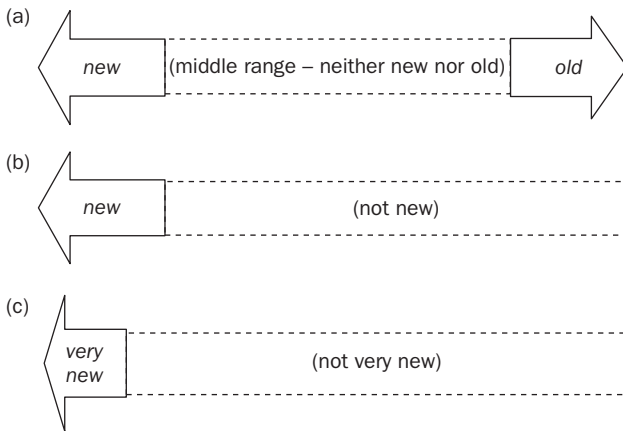


FIGURE 7.2 A schematic diagram showing the effect of negation (and negation combined with intensification) on a pair of polar opposites *new* and *old*.

after negation achieves the opposite of intensification (let's call it de-intensification). In the case of polar antonyms $\{X-Y\}$ such as $\{old-young\}$, $\{nice-nasty\}$, the adjectives of the pair represent tendencies toward opposite poles, such that there is neutral territory (neither X nor Y) in the middle range, as indicated in Figure 7.2 (a).

Hence “not X ” includes more of the scale than “ Y ,” and “not very X ” than “not X .” Grice's first Maxim of Quantity is flouted in this rather uninformative statement, so “not X ” or “not very X ” is likely to carry as an implicature a stronger proposition containing Y . This explains, for example, why (2a) and, especially, (2b) and (2c) are lesser claims, and hence milder criticisms than (2), although they may carry the proposition “That was a stupid thing to do” as an implicature:

- (2) That was a stupid thing to do.
- (2a) That wasn't a clever thing to do.
- (2b) That wasn't a very clever thing to do.
- (2c) That wasn't the cleverest thing to do.

In place of *very*, more extreme intensifiers, such as *terribly* or *terrific* can be used after negation for stronger de-intensification: *I wasn't terribly keen, actually; It wasn't a terrific success.*

Apart from negation, another tactic of understated criticism is the use of a downtoner such as *a bit*, *a little*, as in *I was a bit disappointed* [BNC KPV]. A further type of understated criticism involves the use of comparative forms, as in this stereotypical school report from a maths teacher: *She could do better at mathematics*. On the surface, this merely says that there is a possibility that she could achieve a higher standard; that is, she hasn't yet attained perfection. But surely this is more or less true of every student. In practice, “could do better” is likely to be interpreted more critically—to use another understatement, that “there is room for improvement”—or in plain talk (via the first Maxim of Quantity)—that her standard is unsatisfactory.

We have seen that intensifying adjectives (like *terrific*) and adverbs (like *terribly*) have a role in understatement. The same can be claimed about certain nouns. In the next example, an American party organizer talks about avoiding a confrontational approach to staff when they have done something wrong:

Um I won't come down heavy on people when there are violations, but I might talk to them and say look. *There's some problems.* [LCSAE 163401]

Nouns like *problems* and *issues* are usefully evasive when criticisms have to be made. The implication is that there is something wrong, and that it is (probably) the fault of *O*. But the accusation (if such it is) is stated vaguely, so that *O* could interpret it as inoffensive.

Somewhat more confrontational are questions with *why*, especially ones that refer to matters concerning the addressee:

A: Why did you leave the light on?

B: Oh 'cause I forgot. [LCSAE 094501]

If we ask what makes a *why* question particularly apt for expressing muted criticism, one answer is that the “fault” (in this case leaving the light on) is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation: a bald statement like *Hey, you left the light on!* or *You shouldn't have left the light on* is more accusatory. A second answer is that *H* is given an opportunity to explain, to exonerate himself. To this extent the complaint is less “in your face.” On the other hand, the assumption that *H* “committed the crime” is taken for granted, and the demand for an explanation “Why” can itself be face-threatening—and what is put in the presupposition can be very unpalatable: *Why do you make my life hell?*

Why-questions come in various forms. A positive *why*-question assumes that there is, or has been, a “sin of commission,” whereas a negative *why*-question assumes a “sin of omission”:

Why are you picking on me? [BNC KCX]

Why didn't you ring me and let me know you were coming? [BNC KCP]

The *Why don't you* question has already been mentioned as a device for recommending future action, and it has been extensively pragmaticalized for the functions of suggesting, advising, or even (in AmE) requesting, as in (23):

A: Why don't you put this in the office for me? B: Okay. [LCSAE 156102]

But it can also retain an accusatory element of meaning and often elicits a self-justification in reply:

A: Why don't you go to bed? B: 'Cause it's only nine thirty. [LCSAE132703]

A positive *why*-question can have a similar force:

A: Cooper, why do you always make excuses when I ask you to sing some popular format?

B: I can't do it right now... [LCSAE 115101]

Unmitigated criticism of a past action can take the form of *should(n't)* + perfect + *A*, as in (3):

- (3) You *shouldn't have* come here, Charlie, you really *shouldn't*. You *could have* phoned. There was no need for this. [BNC G0N]

Somewhat more interesting, however, is the use of *could have* in this example—simply pointing out the possibility of an alternative action. This is a somewhat more indirect way of making a complaint, merely indicating what *could* have, rather than what *should* have been done. But this device, again, is sufficiently pragmaticalized to be associated with an accusatory tone of complaint, as the descriptions in these fictional representations of speech in the BNC suggest:

- 'You could have tried,' she *grumbled*. [BNC A0R]
 'You could have lent it to me,' Paula said, *peevish*. [BNC BMW]
 'You could have protected me!' I replied *bitterly*. [BNC HH5]

In BrE (but not AmE), *might* can occur instead of *could* in this complaint formula, as shown in this further fictional example:

- 'I just went for a walk.'...
 On the other end of the line there was both relief and accusation in Brian's voice.
 'You *might have let* someone know.' [BNC CDE]

and in this conversational example:

- ...that's what I said, put a new tape in. You *might have got* it ready for me!
 [BNC KBB]

We have seen in (1) on p. 192 that defocalization, especially avoiding reference to *O*, can be one way to soften the effect of criticism. Personal reference can also be avoided by the use of the passive voice, as in this example, where a mediator is trying to resolve child care issues for a divorcing couple:

- ...And I'm hearing that, you know, that *things have been said* and Catherine, well, you didn't know that *it was being said*. (Hill 2007: 69)

It is obvious in the context that the suppressed agent is Catherine's estranged husband, who is present, and who by implication is being accused of talking to their children in an unhelpful way.

In this section, we have noted a number of lexigrammatical devices that can be used to mitigate the face-threatening impact of criticisms or complaints:

- Avoidance of second-person (and first-person) reference
- Negation of commendatory words such as adjectives
- Negation + intensification of commendatory words such as adjectives
- Possibility + comparatives, as in *could do better*
- Vague nouns such as *problems* and *issues*

Why-questions involving *O* as an agent or other participant
Could/might + perfect aspect

Use of the agentless passive (as a means of avoiding personal reference)

This list is incomplete but is enough to show something of the range of pragmatic-linguistic resources available. Moreover, these can easily occur in combination with one another. For example, the complaint

But why, why didn't somebody explain that to me? [LCSAE 125202]

combines a *why*-question with an indefinite pronoun *somebody*, thus avoiding second-person reference. A final example, from a local authority meeting, shows how, in a more extended piece of discourse, a number of mitigating devices, some of them unmentioned above, occur together:

Health authority meetings can't, they ^a*aren't very well* publicized <pause> erm <pause> and in fact, sometimes we have to go over and, and get our own agendas <pause> and er <pause> ^b*I would suggest* that ^c*perhaps* <pause> ^d*would it be possible* for them to be much better publicized than they currently are? [BNC F7V]

The italicized parts of this passage all have an effect of mitigation, pointing up *S*'s tentativeness and diffidence in raising a matter of complaint. Identified by their superscript letters, they are: (a) negation + intensification, (b) hedged performative, (c) modal adverb, (d) hypothetical *would*, and (e) possibility question. Of these devices, (b), (c), (d), and (e) are associated with indirect requests (see 6.3, 6.4) as well as complaints, and indeed in this piece of discourse a speech event that begins as a complaint is transformed into a request—a reminder of how closely related these speech events can be. Both are manifestations of neg-politeness, and a point worth noting here is that different maxims of neg-politeness tend to draw on a similar repertoire of linguistic strategies, which are natural strategies of distancing and evasion. A final point about (34) is that the frequent occurrence of pauses and other disfluencies is a further indication of the speaker's hesitation and reluctance in bringing up a matter of complaint.

7.3 Thanks

As Aijmer says in her excellent chapter on "Thanking" (1996: 33–79):

- (4) Thanking and apologizing have much in common, which is the result of the fact that both are expressive speech acts, i.e. they express the speaker's psychological state towards a state of affairs or a person (see Searle 1976: 12).

In other respects, too, this section is a mirror of the account of apologies in Chapter 5. Thanking, like apologizing, is an intrinsically courteous speech act, an act of pos-politeness, so that to increase politeness we add intensifiers like *a lot* and

very much. Also repetition of the IFID *thank you* or *thanks*, like repetition of the IFID *sorry*, is a common intensifying feature. As previously explained, the need to thank with a greater or lesser degree of intensity is determined by the value of the P, D, and R social factors: degree of vertical and horizontal distance, and the size of the favor for which thanks are due.

In terms of function, thanking, again like apologizing, is a move to restore the equilibrium, the balance of comity between people, when one is indebted to the other. In the case of apology, the imbalance has occurred because *S* offended *O*. In the case of thanking, the imbalance is due to a favor or good turn that *O* has done for *S*. Both speech events are basically face-enhancing for *O*, in fulfillment of the Maxim of Obligation (of *S* to *O*).

Having said that, we have to observe that a large proportion of thankings, as of apologies, are cases where the utterance is highly routinized, and where the imbalance is trivially small. But such ritual thanks, I would argue, are never *completely* ritualized—there is always some polite “point” to their use. For example, at the end of a phone call, each of the participants may help to signal the end of the conversation by thanking the other:

- A: so we'll see you in an hour's time
 B: excellent. *thanks a lot*
 A: *thank you*
 B: bye [WSC DGZ042]

Here the thanks serve to indicate that A and B have no more business to transact; they enact what conversation analysts have called a *pre-closing* of the encounter (Levinson 1983: 319). Nevertheless, I would argue that the thanks do not serve just a closure function: they also convey an appreciative acknowledgment, however minor, that the conversation has been beneficial to each speaker. Hence, as often happens and again can happen with *sorry*, there is a ritual exchange of pos-polite acknowledgments.

Yet another similarity to apologies is that the “cause of imbalance,” the reason behind the acknowledgment, is very often discourse-driven. In his study of apologies in the BNC (see 5.4.1), Deutschmann found that 45 percent of the apologies examined were discourse related—due to talk offenses, or hearing offenses (where the *sorry/pardon* was in effect a prompt for repetition), or requests (Deutschmann 2003: 81). Further, he found (*ibid.*: 78) that 50 percent of apologies were routine or ritualized. It is quite likely that a similar percentage applies to thanking.

Searle's definition (1969: 67) of the speech act of *thanking* (*for*), using the four types of felicity conditions we have encountered in earlier chapters, is as follows:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Propositional content condition: | Past act <i>A</i> done by <i>H</i> |
| Preparatory condition: | <i>A</i> benefits <i>S</i> and <i>S</i> believes <i>A</i> benefits <i>S</i> |
| Sincerity condition: | <i>S</i> feels grateful or appreciative for <i>A</i> |
| Essential condition: | Counts as an expression of gratitude or appreciation |

(As Searle points out, the sincerity and essential rules overlap.) These conditions are a sound starting point for an account of thanking, but one has to be aware that the propositional content rule does not always apply. Somewhat strange even for native speakers is the habit, increasingly found in public notices, of using *thank you* in referring to a favor that has not yet been granted. Three examples of this “premature thanks” are the following:

Customers are respectfully advised that
only food purchased from this restaurant should be consumed here.

Thank you for your understanding.

[a sign at Middleton Stoney services on the M40 motorway, UK]

Only Food And
Drink Purchased At
The Venue Can
Be Consumed
On These
Tables
Thank you

[a notice on the door of The Venue, a café at Lancaster University, UK]

Thank you for not taking your trolley beyond this point
[a notice on the perimeter of the car park outside Sainsbury's supermarket,
Lancaster, UK]

After reading these notices, customers may or may not refrain from the implicitly forbidden action. Only after they decide to obey the injunctions above will the *Thank you* be felicitous according to Searle's rules. I believe that examples of premature thanks such as those above cannot be regarded as a true expression of gratitude, as they contravene the normal understanding that thanks are not to be given unless the action A^5 has been performed.⁶ It is possible, however, that a change in the meaning of *thank you* in English is taking place. Given that one form of politeness is to attribute politeness to the other party, there may be, too, an increasing use of premature thanks as a device of politeness. It is an up-and-coming indirect form of request in which, instead of using the request marker *please*, the author states a general rule, and then assumes in advance that the reader will be considerate enough to conform to it. Pos-politeness replaces neg-politeness, both in thanking the public and in implicitly complimenting them on their politeness.

⁵ Incidentally, Searle's propositional content rule is also incomplete in that the favor to be thanked for may be a nonaction $\sim A$ (i.e., refraining from carrying out a particular act) as well as an action A .

⁶ In this conditionality can be claimed yet another resemblance between thanks and apologies: premature thanks are the counterpart of the conditional apology (*I'm sorry if...*) discussed in 5.3.

TABLE 7.2

Pragmalinguistic strategies of thanking.

A	Thanking somebody explicitly (i.e., an IFID)	e.g., <i>thank you, thanks</i>
B	Expressing gratitude	e.g., <i>I'm so grateful</i>
C	Expressing appreciation of <i>H</i>	e.g., <i>that's kind of you, that's really nice (of you)</i>
D	Expressing appreciation of the act	e.g., <i>that's lovely; it's appreciated</i>
E	Acknowledging a debt of gratitude	e.g., <i>I owe a debt of gratitude to...</i>
F	Stressing one's gratitude	e.g., <i>I really must thank you</i>
G	Expressing emotion	e.g., <i>Oh (thank you)</i>
H	Commenting on one's role by suppressing one's own importance (self-denigration)	e.g., <i>I am an ingrate; I'm so careless</i>

Note: Based on figure 2.2, Aijmer (1996: 37).

From her London-Lund Corpus (LLC) data, Aijmer (1996: 37) lists the strategies for thanking as seen in Table 7.2.

Of these, A is extremely frequent, whereas B–H are either infrequent or have a supporting role. Using the CCSARP distinction between *head act* and *supporting moves* (see 5.1), type A, the IFID, must be considered the head act, whereas types B, C, D, and the rare H are more appropriately considered supporting moves, although they may occur on their own. E is extremely formal and is likely to occur only in the acknowledgments prefaced to a book, or in similar ceremonial circumstances. The interjection *Oh*, with similar exclamatory words, is best considered an *external modifier* in the CCSARP scheme.

It is relatively easy to see how these various supporting moves can contribute to politeness. B (*I'm grateful*) emphasizes the sincerity of the thanks; C and D pay *O* a compliment (Approbation); E stresses the sense of debt (Obligation); F intensifies the sense of owing thanks; G adds emotional emphasis, sometimes combined with a sense of surprise; H, by self-denigration, appeals to the Modesty Maxim. To register a high degree of gratitude, two or more of these thanking devices can occur together:

A: No go ahead and charge me for it and I will give you cash

B: Thirty dollars *Oh thank you very very much*. This is *really gorgeous*. [LCSAE 144201]

Here moves A (thanking) and D (expressing appreciation) are combined.

We turn now to the IFID *thank you* (and its variants) as by far the most common strategy. Table 7.3 is based on Aijmer's study of thanking (1996: 39) in the LLC and gives an idea of the frequency of the different linguistic forms of this speech event.

Notice that thanks are often intensified by adverbial expressions of degree: *very much*, *very much indeed*, *a lot*. (*A lot* occurs after *Thanks*, but oddly not after *Thank you*.) Other intensifiers are *so much* and (in BrE) *ever so much*. A simple general rule is that the longer the expression of thanks and the more intensified it is, the greater

TABLE 7.3

Frequencies of expressions with *thank you* / *thanks* in the London-Lund Corpus.

	Realization	Number
	<i>Thank you</i>	134
	<i>Thank you very much</i>	73
	<i>Thank you very much indeed</i>	17
	<i>Thank you so much</i>	2
Subtotal	THANK YOU (...)	226
	<i>Thanks</i>	33
	<i>Thanks very much</i>	28
	<i>Thanks very much indeed</i>	5
	<i>Thanks awfully</i>	2
	<i>Thanks a lot</i>	2
	<i>Many thanks</i>	1
Subtotal	THANKS (...)	71
Total		297

(pragmalinguistically speaking) the degree of pos-politeness. Not included in this table are extra forms acting as IFIDs for thanks: in BrE, *ta* and *cheers* are casual vernacular equivalents of *thanks*, and in AmE especially *much obliged* is a thanking formula that was formerly common but is little used today.

7.3.1 RESPONSES TO THANKS

Predictably, in terms of the GSP, polite responses to thanks are minimizers—minimizing the debt that the thanker has expressed toward the thanked. Negative expressions are characteristic: *It doesn't matter*; *No problem*. (The less common negative response *Don't mention it* is a paradoxical oddity, in that it forbids, too late, what has just been said.) Also characteristic are responses like *You're welcome* or ((*It's*) *my*) *pleasure* that express *S*'s happiness or willingness to do *H* a good turn, by implication minimizing the need for gratitude. The discourse markers *all right* (with its variant spelling *alright*), *right*, or *okay* (with its variant spelling *OK*) can also be responses signaling that the thanks are accepted: the speaker feels no debt (now) exists and is ready to close the topic and move on. This kind of response often occurs as a way of bringing the dialogue to an end, as a preliminary to a farewell (usually *Bye* or *Bye bye*):

- John: <unclear> thanks very much Dennis.
Dennis: Thank you.
John: *Okay* Dennis thank you
Dennis: Bye bye.
JOHN: Thank you very much. [BNC HMD: from a local radio phone-in]

Finally it should be noted, however, that thanks (again, like apologies) are rarely given verbal acknowledgment. Particularly when an expression of thanks is routine, it is not followed by any minimizer such as *You're welcome*. Such a minimizer is likely to occur only when the thanks have been strongly expressed, or where there

is considerable distance (vertical or horizontal) between the interactants (e.g., in a service encounter).

7.4 Agreement, Disagreement, Advice, and O-Focused Suggestions

The four speech labels in the heading of this section have one thing in common: they are all closely concerned with politeness in the domain of opinion receiving and opinion giving. That is, they are affected by the Agreement Maxim and its counterpart Maxim (see 4.3.1(M8)) of Opinion Reticence.

7.4.1 AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT

When someone expresses an opinion, there is a tendency in ordinary social conversation for the interlocutor to express agreement with them rather than disagreement. This is an aspect of pos-politeness—showing consideration for the other person's opinion or judgment—and in the interests of politeness, addressees will find it easy to intensify their agreement, by using such intensifiers as *exactly* and *absolutely*:

A: And Well, people didn't have computers.

B: *Exactly*, *exactly* and it, it really has made a big difference. [LCSAE130001]

A: It's just like a muscle to keep exercising.

B: *Absolutely*. And the more you use it the better it is. [LCSAE167802]

A: So we've got lots of time.

B: *You bet*, super. [LCSAE142501]

A: I bet they would like to be in that flash car and they'd probably do the same thing

B: *absolutely right* jo [WSC: DGB056]

Another way to show emphatic agreement is to use stronger synonyms as descriptive terms, like *gorgeous* in this exchange:

J: T's—it's a beautiful day out, isn't it?

L: Yeah it's just gorgeous,...

[from Pomerantz (1975: 1); quoted in Levinson (1983: 338)]

Here are other variants of responses of agreement from the WSC (the New Zealand spoken corpus):

A: yeah I I don't know if um the listeners out there would be in tautoko
[Maori word] in support of of of maori language but you know that'd
be worth finding out

B: *what a good idea*. thanks for bringing that to our attention Larry
[WSC: DGB014]

A: ...he's a MAN not a youth

B: *yeah that's true*. thanks for your call [WSC: DGB016]

Agreement takes its place in conversation almost as an unconsidered reflex. On the other hand, if we need to disagree with our interlocutor, neg-politeness takes over: as Levinson points out (1983: 338–339), disagreement is a *dispreferred* response, and therefore is often put forward hesitantly, indirectly, or with mitigation.⁷ Supposing *H* mentally has a reservation or disagreement with what *S* says; there is a tendency to avoid baldly contradicting *S*'s opinion by (a) a token concessive agreement followed by disagreement *Yes, but...* or (b) a partial disagreement introduced by the deliberation signal *Well...*⁸.

- (1) Sophie: he's been to the station before.
 Cherrilyn: *Yes, but* he hasn't been for ages has he?
 And he's <pause> been <pause> wrestling with this alsatian [BNC KBL]
- (2) A: What because you see th—, people a— at the, at the bottom end of society see people at the top end indulging in tax avoidance schemes and things like that, and offshore bank accounts and think well if they can get away with it why can't we?
 B: *Well* a—, *I I didn't say* anyone should get away with fraud. [BNC FX5]

B's partial disagreement in (2) also illustrates how further characteristics of dispreference are hesitation and disfluency. Note the filled hesitation pause after *well* and the repetition of *I*.

There are various devices in English for expressing one's opinion in an indirect or mitigated fashion, especially if it is likely to conflict with the opinions of others present. *I think* or *I don't think* is a common preface to an expression of opinion. Muted disagreement can be prefaced by denial of knowledge, as in B's reply below:

- (3) A: *I don't think* it's good for them moving them about from school to school do you?
 B: No it can't be. <pause> *Well I don't know about* that, I mean with some schools it'd be a good idea to get them away from it. [BNC KBP]

It is also useful to distance one's opinion from reality by using hypothetical *wouldn't* or *I'd think...*

⁷ Locher (2004: 112–149) analyzes in detail the pragmalinguistic devices of disagreement used in a dinner-table argument in the United States, most of them being devices of mitigation. The mitigation types she lists (p. 113) are (1) hedges, (2) giving personal or emotional reasons for disagreeing, (3) modal auxiliaries, (4) shifting responsibility, (5) objections in the form of questions, (6) the use of *but*, and (7) repetition of an utterance by a next speaker or the same one. She found (p. 146) that of 253 disagreement strategies, 26 percent were unmitigated and 74 percent mitigated, a clear illustration of the preference for mitigation of disagreement.

⁸ Couper-Kuhlen and Kortmann (2000: 383) point out that *conceding* as a discourse relation, especially by first acknowledging the opposite view, has “been a concern of rhetoricians” as an optimal way to counter and persuade.

Levinson (1983: 339) notes that a pause before replying or else a nonresponse is a sign of the dispreference for disagreement:

A: God isn't it dreary!

B: ((SILENCE = DISAGREEMENT))

There are, however, situations where agreement would be downright impolite, as when *S*, following the Modesty Maxim, makes a self-denigrating comment, and hence agreement would offend against the Approbation Maxim:

A: I'm getting fat hh

B: ((SILENCE = AGREEMENT))

Cases like this seem to show that some maxims of politeness (here the Approbation Maxim) outweigh the Agreement Maxim in importance.

In any case, the Agreement Maxim is often in competition with Grice's Quality Maxim; that is, politeness conflicts with honesty. It is interesting that in (3) above, speaker B gives two answers: the first (*No, it can't*) agrees with the negative opinion of A, and the second is a mitigated form of disagreement, as if on second thoughts B rejects her own quasi-automatic agreement. If we mentally disagree with someone, we have to decide whether to feign agreement (thus giving precedence to the Agreement Maxim) or whether to voice our disagreement (giving precedence to the Quality Maxims). It is in this situation where conversational goals conflict that some kind of compromise, in the form of partial or mitigated disagreement, recommends itself. Alternatively, of course, silence (as in the examples above) can be a way of evading this dilemma.

One should not forget, however, that there are spheres of communicative activity where robust disagreement is accepted, and indeed is sometimes highly valued. These include not just adversarial discourse arenas such as electioneering battles between members of political parties (see 8.2) but also academic discourse, where, according to an influential ideology of science, progress can be made only by strenuously arguing against and discrediting contrasting theories and paradigms of thought.⁹ The discourse of academic debate in conferences and symposia forms an interesting arena of compromise where, on the level of ideas and arguments, a battle takes place, whereas on the more human level of social interaction there is pressure to maintain civility and a sense of collegiality (a favorite academic word). Here the Agreement Maxim reasserts itself, and varied ways of softening disagreement can be observed.

At the other extreme, there is a kind of discourse in which the Agreement Maxim (in combination with the Sympathy Maxim) reigns unchallenged; this has become known as *phatic communion*. Malinowski, who invented the term, defined it as "a type of speech in which ties of union are created by the mere exchange of

⁹ On the crucial role of argument and criticism in scientific method, see Popper (1963/1972: vii–viii and *passim*).

words” (Ogden and Richards 1923: 315), but it is familiar to most people under the label “small talk.” This is the kind of discourse that keeps the conversational ball rolling in talking to strangers or casual acquaintances, where no serious exchange of information or opinion is needed. Stereotypically, phatic communion in the UK frequently includes remarks about the weather:

A: Hey! Int the weather picking up lovely!

B: Yeah, it’s nice today. [BNC KBT]

But the main requirement is that the topic of discussion be commonplace and uncontroversial. Among Americans, small talk between strangers is highly valued¹⁰ and can be related to the friendly camaraderie ethic that, according to Lakoff (1990; see 11.6) has spread across the United States from California in recent decades.

7.4.2 ADVICE AND O-FOCUSED SUGGESTIONS

We turn now to the neg-politeness counterpart of the Agreement Maxim, the Opinion-reticence Maxim (4.3.1(M8)). Advice and *O*-focused suggestions are speech events where politeness arises from the need to avoid expressing one’s views in an opinionated manner—an offense against Opinion reticence. Advising and suggesting are two closely related kinds of speech event where there is a risk of showing opinionated behavior, that is, appearing to impose one’s opinion on the other person.

I noted earlier that suggestions are speech events covering a territory overlapping with other types of speech events, such as directives and commissives. Between *suggesting* and *advising* there is yet another area of overlap. In this section, I will be concentrating on *O-focused* suggestions, those proposing a course of action to be taken by *O*. Other verbs, such as *recommending* and *proposing*, have a similar metapragmatic function.

The verb *advise* and its corresponding noun *advice* deserve some preliminary consideration. Advising means proposing a course of action to be taken by *O*, but it is quite different from directives like *Open the door*: the action proposed is supposed to be for the benefit of *O*, rather than at a cost to *O*. As Searle puts it (1969: 67), “Advising you is not trying to get you to do something in the sense that requesting is. Advising is more like telling you what is best for you.” This brief informal definition alludes to both polite and impolite aspects of advice, and it explains why advising is a rather ambivalent speech event. The polite aspect lies in the promotion of *O*’s interest: *S* shows an intention to help *O* (Generosity Maxim). The impolite

¹⁰ Julia Youst MacRae notes: “This kind of small talk exchange between strangers is very common in the U.S., and goes beyond just the weather. People chat with each other while waiting in line, while riding elevators, waiting at bus stops, etc. It’s usually very agreeable comments that are exchanged, but they can last more than one turn each for the speakers (and often include some kind of joke or quip). International students, especially from Asian countries, are often very taken aback by it.”

aspect lies in the implicit superiority *S* claims over *O*, through *S*'s readiness to impose her judgment or opinion on *O*. Hence on the one hand the Generosity Maxim is upheld, and on the other hand the Opinion-reticence Maxim (see 4.3.1) is threatened. This is why advising is often expressed through various kinds of indirectness and mitigation.

It is true that perhaps the most linguistically direct form of advising—using an imperative—is sometimes employed, either when the distance between *S* and *O* is small or when it is particularly clear that the advice will be welcome. Here the speaker is offering some beer:

- (1) You got to taste this, Julie. *Get yourself a little glass or something.*
[LCSAE 139501]

Also direct and potentially face-threatening is the semi-modal *had better*: when combined with the subject *you*, it conveys the impression that *S* is putting pressure on *H* to do something, either in *H*'s or in *S*'s own interest. *You had better* is normally reduced to *you'd better* and (even more frequently, especially in AmE) to *you better*, where the auxiliary *had* is entirely elided. According to whether the recommended action is in *S*'s or *H*'s interest, the utterance can be classified as a directive (as in (2)) or as a piece of advice (as in (3)):

- (2) *You better* give me a sip of that, I'm parched. [LCSAE131201]
(3) So if you eat with chopsticks *you better* eat in bowls. [LCSAE109201]

There are also borderline examples, such as *You'd better get ready for bowling*, where the issue of whose benefit is intended is not clear.

Another kind of directness is found in the use of performatives, whose formality, reflecting their "metastatement" status (Adolphs 2008: 78), contrasts greatly with the offhand casualness of the imperative in (1) or *you better* in (2)–(3). Performatives tend to occur in public communication contexts:

Er *I suggest* you pick up the phone and you give us a call now on [telephone number], alright? [BNC HUV: a radio phone-in program]

There are many ways to disguise grey hair. *We advise you* to ask your hair-dresser about these. [BNC CB8: a leisure magazine]

To reduce the face-threatening potential of such direct performatives, the adviser can use hedged performatives (see 6.4.1(e)) such as *May I suggest...* and *I wouldl'd advise you*:

'You may stay if you wish, Miss Mason. But *I'd advise you* to get some rest yourself'. [BNC HJD: fictional text]

Why don't you, which has already attracted attention in this chapter, is also a face-threatening form of suggestion, despite its indirectness. The negative *don't* seems to imply that *O* is not doing something that *S* believes is in *O*'s best interest;

hence the formula hints at something lacking in *O*'s attitude or behavior. As Adolphs (2008: 65) puts it, "pragmatically, it challenges the current behavior of the addressee by proposing a certain line of action." To illustrate this, (4) shows *S* arguing that *H* should get a scratching post to discourage her cat from scratching the furniture:

- (4) Like he was scratching up the furniture right so I said "well *why don't you* get him a scratching post" and she's like "oh, that would never work" so I went out and I bought him that scratching post and it's just what he wants. [LCSAE 158403]

Why don't you is considerably more frequent in AmE conversation than in BrE conversation. The related elliptical *why*-question with *Why not*, on the other hand, is more common in BrE (although it is less frequent than *why don't you* in both varieties).

In (5) two people are discussing where in the home to place a new air conditioner:

- (5) If you're going to take the effort to put it in *why not have it central*?
[LCSAE 135303]

According to Adolphs's analysis (2008: 71) *why not* is less face-threatening than *why don't you*, as it does not mention the addressee (it's defocalized; 6.2.1), and also the recommendation is more general (here capable of applying to anyone installing an air conditioner) rather than targeting *H*. In (6) below, *A* is reporting another person's complaint about a printer:

- (6) *A*: <laughing> He said, "it is printed, there is er, er command on the screen that says you know, hit these two things simultaneously and it'll stop printing." I tried it, it didn't work.
B: *Why not* just turn it off? [LCSAE 124203]

B's reply, again, offers advice that could be construed as general, and is not directed particularly at the hearer.

There is also a positive variant of this formula, *why* + bare infinitive, illustrated by *why teach* in (7):

- (7) I mean, *why teach* with chalk and talk. *Why not* just put a video on?

So far the advice and suggestion strategies considered have had considerable potential for face threat, and the question arises: What strategies can be used to mitigate this? Some of the neg-politeness strategies and modifiers used for requests discussed in Chapter 6 can also be used here, for example, consulting *H* by means of a question, using modal hedges such as *perhaps* and *maybe*, the past tense to increase tentativeness, or *I (just) wonder(ed)* as an oblique interrogative device.

This example from a workplace discussion shows several of such devices (shown in italics):

I wondered if maybe you should have this file with you instead of me. Are you getting ready for your meeting? Maybe you should have the file with you. Do you think? [LCSAE 125203]

An intriguing device of indirection is stating the suggestion in the form of a hypothetical conditional statement, with the dependent clause *if I were you* as the protasis and a main clause apodosis with *I* as its subject. Here is someone being advised on job seeking:

Oh, if you, if you know definitely that there's someone who you want to work for, *if I were you I'd do the research*, call and find out who you address the letter to, who, who, what the address is, the whole thing, so you can make it either fictional or real... [LCSAE 118101]

The order of the *if*-clause and the main clause can be reversed:

I wouldn't touch that *if I were you*, cos it's very very hot. [BNC KBW]

This strategy reduces face threat in two main ways. First, it employs the hypothetical mood in imagining a totally impossible situation where *S* is transformed into *H*, and second it turns the *H*-focused speech event into an *S*-focused one (where *S* and *H* switch roles), so that the advice giver becomes the person who acts on the advice. No longer, then, is *S* imposing his or her views on *H*, and the Opinion-reticence Maxim is (on the face of it) observed.

In an elliptical variant of this pattern, the *if*-clause disappears, so that *I would* or *I'd* alone becomes a formulaic introduction to a piece of advice. In (8) A is advising B to replace an electric heater with a gas one:

- (8) A: Well well *I'd* get rid of the electric one your electric one God *I'd* get rid of that.
B: Yeah. We need a gas furnace. [LCSAE 160203]

Notice that in (9) the adviser tactically changes in mid-utterance from the more coercive formula *you should* to the milder, more indirect one *I wouldl'd*:

- (9) I will say that *you should*, *I would* change those trash cans. *I'd* make them a little homier *I think*. [LCSAE 163801]

At the end of (9), we note the frequent hedging device *I think*, added as a tag to the advice-giving clause and making it more tentative. Elsewhere *I think* or (especially in AmE) *I guess* comes at the beginning of the advisory utterance:

... what *I think* Les, *I think you should* have two walls, I don't know, *I think* you should have two walls, one either side... [BNC KBB]

Here the negative comment clause *I don't know* is another sign of tentativeness. Gardeners can resent their neighbors telling them what to do with their garden or yard.

Adolphs draws attention to an important distinction between *solicited* and *unsolicited* advice. Obviously solicited advice is welcome, whereas unsolicited advice can be unwelcome; it may be resented as bossy, unless the adviser manifestly has the authority and expertise to render it acceptable. It is unsolicited advice, therefore, that is likely to make most concessions in the form of hedging or other forms of mitigation.

7.5 Congratulations, Commiserations, and Good Wishes

The final theme of this chapter deals with speech events relating to the Sympathy Maxim, which, with its neg-politeness counterpart feeling reticence, is the emotive strand of the GSP. Congratulations, commiserations, and good wishes have in common an expression of fellow feeling with the other person. They manifest pos-politeness in that they place a high value on the feelings of *O*: *H*'s feelings, they imply, are important enough to be a matter of concern and sympathy for *S*. What is implicated through the Sympathy Maxim might be summarized as:

"I am happy because you are happy"	[congratulations]
"I am sad because you are sad"	[commiserations]
"I also share your wish that you be happy in the future"	[good wishes]

Being manifestations of pos-politeness, these utterances can be intensified to convey a greater degree of (pragmalinguistic) politeness, as examples below will show.

7.5.1 CONGRATULATIONS

It is a good starting point for looking at congratulations (as we have seen for other types of speech event) to refer to its definition in Searle (1969), making use of Searle's four types of felicity conditions:

Propositional content condition:	Some event, act, etc., <i>E</i> related to <i>H</i>
Preparatory conditions:	<i>E</i> is in <i>H</i> 's interest and <i>S</i> believes <i>E</i> is in <i>H</i> 's interest.
Sincerity condition:	<i>S</i> is pleased at <i>E</i> .
Essential condition:	Counts as an expression of pleasure at <i>E</i> . —(Searle 1969: 67)

As is clear from the first two conditions above, congratulation presupposes some action or event favorable to *O*. This can either be an achievement—an action performed by *O* (such as winning a competition)—or a piece of good fortune over which *O* had little or no control (such as winning a lottery). The typical reason for congratulation, however, is some kind of achievement by *O*.

Of course, the IFID *Congratulations*, without further modification, is itself the most obvious way of congratulating someone:

- (1) A: And, I got the great accolade the following season when he said,
well you're not as bad as I thought you would be!
B: <laugh>
C: *Congratulations Beth!* [BNC FL5]

Here Beth is recounting her achievement, unexpected by her male colleagues, in becoming a football referee. There can also be prepositional phrase additions to this single word, to say to whom the congratulations go, and why:

- (2) Last year branch income was on target at seven point eight million pounds, a massive increase on the plateau of five to five and half million pounds we were on before Skip Lunch. *Congratulations to you all.* [BNC JNF]
(3) *Many congratulations on a well deserved win.* [BNC HPK—i.e., on winning the competition for the best-kept village]

Notice that in (2) the preposition *to*... introduces the recipient of the congratulations, and that in (3) the preposition *on*... introduces the reason for the congratulations. Other elaborations of the IFID *Congratulations* include a vocative like *Beth* in (1), and pos-politeness being strengthened by various intensifying modifiers, as in *Many congratulations* in (3). Other intensifiers are adjectives, as in (*My*) *heartiest congratulations* or (*My*) *heart-felt congratulations*.

On a more formal and public level, the verb *congratulate* can be used as a performative. By far the most common usage of this kind in the BNC occurs in the proceedings of the British House of Commons:

I congratulate my right hon. friend on his initiative in talking to the manufacturers about improved vehicle security. [BNC HHV]

Here *my right hon. friend* is the conventional House of Commons way of addressing one's remarks to a leading member of one's own party, and so performative sentences of this kind are a rather sycophantic way of registering one's support for one's party leaders. Slightly less formal, though still public in style, is the use of hedged performatives, as in:

- (4) *May I congratulate you on your most informative articles in the September and October issues on Life with the Washington.* [BNC CGL]

Another performative variant avoids the verb *congratulate*, instead using the construction *extend my... congratulations*:

- (5) *May I extend my heartiest congratulations to Dexter Tiranti, Lesley and Peter Adamson, Troth Wells and the whole NI team on reaching the 200th issue.* [BNC HH3]

Both (4) and (5) come from the “Letters to the Editor” section of world affairs magazines: they are formal in style, and would seem pompous if used in everyday conversational speech.

All these ways of rendering congratulations are somewhat formally polite; in contrast, in casual speech, to congratulate someone on an achievement, the exclamatory phrase *Well done* is often used, or one of its variants *Well put* (i.e., “well expressed”), *Well read*, or (in BrE) *Well spotted*,¹¹ etc. can be used for particular (often minor) kinds of achievement. Here a lecturer is congratulating a student (although it may be noted that his comment begins with a muted criticism):

- (6) Erm, just one little slip, you put eighteen fif—nineteen fifty nine, it was eighteen fifty nine wasn’t it, the Origin of Species? That was just a slip.
An excellent, very clearly and very correctly expressed. Excellent essay.
Well done. [BNC HUL]

There are many other ways of congratulating by expressing one’s own emotion of pleasure or delight. Here is an example from a novel:

- ‘Tony and I have decided to get married.’
‘Oh, but *that’s marvellous!*’ Lindsey was genuinely delighted. [BNC JWX]

A final comment on the by now familiar issue of overlap between speech event categories: the difference between *compliments* and *congratulations* is not always clear. They are both examples of pos-politeness, but a theoretical, rather than practical, distinction can be drawn between them. One of them, a compliment, is a manifestation of the Approbation Maxim (praising some estimable property of *O*, or of someone or something associated with *O*). Congratulations, on the other hand, are a manifestation of the Sympathy Maxim, expressing common feeling over some favorable action or event associated with *O*. The one speech event focuses on high evaluation of something connected with the addressee; the other focuses on the favorable emotion *S* feels in sympathy with the addressee. In practice, the same example may illustrate both; for example, (4) and (6) above, though primarily congratulations, could also be described as paying a compliment.

7.5.2 COMMISERATIONS, CONDOLENCES

Both these words apply to utterances that politely express *S*’s sympathy for *O* when *O* has suffered some misfortune. Like congratulations, commiserations can vary from very formal to casual, informal situations. Beginning at the formal end of the scale, condolence as a formal expression of sympathy over bereavement is the most stereotypic example.

¹¹ *Well spotted* is a congratulation for noticing something. An AmE equivalent of *Well spotted* is *Good eye*.

It is difficult to find examples of condolences in corpus data, since they are normally among the most private of messages. Here are “template” card messages, provided by the website ObituariesHelp.org [4 Feb.2012], for the death of a young son, a brother, a friend, and a husband of the addressee respectively:

Dear Sarah,

I am so very sorry. You gave him every chance you could and he fought so hard. He was such a brave boy and you showed such love and courage helping him through the hardest battle of his life. The relief does come, but it comes with a price. Please know you are in my thoughts and prayers.

With love,
Joshua

Dear Judith,

Words cannot express my sorrow for your loss. I am deeply saddened by Jacob’s death. My thoughts and prayers are with you.

Sincerely,
Elspeth

Dear Lidia,

Please accept my sincerest condolences for the loss of your beloved Jason. I hope these flowers bring you some comfort in the days ahead.

Sincerely,
Margaret

Dear Sarah,

I am so deeply saddened by the news of Craig’s death. He will be greatly missed. You and your family are in my thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,
Wendy

It is obvious that the recurrent theme in such condolence messages is sympathy: the sender is claiming to share the sorrow of the receiver, and there is also comfort, in the sense that the sender wishes to make the receiver feel the bereavement less acutely—to “share” the pain. One way of doing this is to generalize the condolence: to stress that the deceased’s life, and *H*’s role in it, have been highly valued, and that the sorrow will be widely shared: *He will be greatly missed* (in the last letter above) is one rather stereotyped way of conveying this. This shows, again, that there is an overlap in the functions of the Approbation and Sympathy maxims. The messages above also contain many examples of emotive intensification:

<i>so very</i> sorry	<i>so deeply</i> saddened
<i>so</i> hard	<i>sincerest</i> condolences

such a brave boy *such* love
 hardest battle *greatly* missed

Apart from condolences of bereavement, expressions of sympathy for lesser misfortunes are of course commonplace:

I'm sorry that things are not working out for you guys, I hope they do work out...[LCSAE113501]
 I'm sorry to hear that. [LCSAE171902] [of a health problem]
 I'm so sorry Brian is sick. [LCSAE171902]

Finally, particularly with respect to congratulations and condolences, it is worth recalling the general truth that politeness is no guarantee of sincerity. There are certain situations where, if *H*'s good fortune or misfortune is known, congratulations or commiserations are to be expected and may be a matter of form rather than of genuine feeling. Births, marriages, and deaths are well known to be such occasions. To take a more extreme example: congratulations from one rival to another who has just beaten him or her in competitive sport are not likely to express unalloyed delight.

It should also be borne in mind that congratulations—or, more particularly, commiserations—may be unwelcome if they are felt to intrude on the private feelings of the recipient. Here the neg-politeness counterpart of the Sympathy Maxim—the Feeling-reticence Maxim—is likely to play a role in discouraging the expression of sympathy in some cases of misfortune.

7.5.3 GOOD WISHES, GREETINGS AND FAREWELLS

Still on the theme of the Sympathy Maxim, we close this chapter with some consideration of expressions of good wishes, especially where they have a role in marking the beginning or ending of a dialogue. Good wishes can be defined as remarks that show sympathy with *O* by expressing the wish or hope that things will turn out well for her. In this, good wishes and hopes contrast with congratulations mainly in being oriented toward the future rather than the past.¹²

First, in support of the theoretical need for a Sympathy Maxim, the point can be made that well-wishing is much more frequent than ill-wishing. Ill wishes or curses can, of course, be uttered in conflictive situations, for example, *Drop dead, bitch. I wish you'd go to hell.* But these are less frequent than good wishes, which are

¹² However, notice that the verb *hope* in expressing good wishes can refer to events in the present and past, as well as the future: *I hope you had a good time; I hope you're enjoying your vacation;* etc. The main thing to notice about *hope* in this connection, as contrasted (e.g.) with *be glad*, is that the favorable state of affairs the hope is concerned with is unknown to *S*. Compare *I hope you like it here* with *I'm glad you like it here*.

so frequent and normal that they have become highly conventionalized and routinized. As greetings and farewells, *Good morning, good afternoon, good evening*, etc. are so far pragmatized that they have lost the overtly sympathizing clausal structure that once accompanied them: *God give you good evening, I wish you good day*, etc.¹³ Even less transparent is the farewell *Goodbye* (from *God be with you/ye*; see Arnovick 2000), which has become simply an opaque farewell signal and is indeed now becoming rather rare in speech, being largely replaced by the even more attenuated farewell signal *Bye* or its reduplicated variant *Bye bye*. *Hi* and *Bye* are now the most common greeting and farewell forms in American speech,¹⁴ and these casual forms are almost pure discourse markers, without any overt politeness implications. As rituals of departure, however, *Bye* and *Bye bye* are meeting increased competition from *See you* or its longer variants such as *See you later, See you soon, and See you tomorrow*,¹⁵ apparently modeled on such well-established European-language farewells as *Au revoir* (French) and *Auf Wiedersehen* (German), both meaning “until re-seeing.”

It is worth reflecting on why these farewell signals have a politeness function, and why they are quite often accompanied by other polite gestures in the form of good wishes. The rituals of beginning and ending a conversation bring with them a face-threatening component. On the one hand, we have seen that a unilateral opening of a conversation, with strangers, often takes the form of a routine apology, especially *Excuse me*, as there is clearly a cost to *H* of time, effort, and trespass on *H*'s personal territory if the conversation is unwelcome. Similarly, the unilateral closing of a conversation is fraught with face threat because of the implication that *S* no longer wants to continue sharing *H*'s company. Hence, in saying goodbye we can reduce face threat through the implication in *See you...* that the farewell is only temporary. This again can be seen as a manifestation of the Sympathy Maxim: by expressing the intention to meet again in the (near) future, *S* and *H* imply that they take pleasure in one another's company, softening the discourtesy that might otherwise be felt. Saying farewell is often a mutual closing of the exchange with matching signals:

A: Alright Cynthia.

B: Okay.

A: Thank you.

¹³ Crystal and Crystal (2002: 170) cite examples from Shakespeare that show the transition from fully clausal forms to attenuated forms, e.g., *Give you good night* (Hamlet I.i:16), *O, God-i-good-e'en* (Romeo and Juliet III.v:172). Later periods also show evidence of advancing stages of pragmatization. In Dickens's writings there are seventeen examples of *I wish you good day/evening/night*, unreduced farewell expressions that are no longer current.

¹⁴ In the American corpus LCSAE *Hi* as a greeting is much more common than *Hello*, whereas in the British corpus, the BNC, *Hello* is much more frequent than *Hi*.

¹⁵ In BrE (according to the BNC conversational data) *Bye* or *Bye bye* as a farewell is about twice as frequent as *See you (...)*. In AmE, according to the LCSAE, the *See you (...)* farewell is substantially less frequent than in BrE, and so the differential between *Bye (bye)* and *See you..* is even greater. The suggestion that *See you (...)* and *Bye (bye)* have slightly different functions is strengthened by the observation that *See you (...)* can accompany *Bye (bye)*, as in *See you—bye*, and can carry a definite commitment to a future meeting, as in *See you tomorrow morning*.

B: Thanks bye bye.

A: Bye. [BNC KGH]

Phatic communion is defined by Trudgill (2003: 102–103) as “the use of language to establish and maintain good social relations, without necessarily communicating any information, as when British people pass comments on the weather.” As already noted, we see this in the opening and closing of encounters. During closings, certain types of good wish frequently occur, especially in AmE: *Have a nice/good day; Have a good weekend; (You) Take care (now)*.¹⁶ To these a reciprocating reply *You too* may be added. A similar phatic function is performed by congratulatory remarks on the pleasure of the meeting: *Good to meet you. Glad to see you. Nice talking to you.*

A: It was nice to meet you.

B: It was nice to meet you too. [LCSAE 158402]

Greetings, on the other hand, often lead into questions inquiring about *O*’s health or general well-being: *How are you? How are things? How (are) you doing?* If someone has a health problem, an opening question might be *How have you been? How are you feeling?* These questions, although they might expect a routine answer such as *Fine. How are you?* do again have a politeness (Sympathy Maxim) function, as they signal that *S* cares about *O*’s well-being. Similarly, inquiries can be made about close relatives.

Another set of phatic remarks, often used in closing conversations, consists of good wishes about *O*’s immediate future, especially if he or she has something good to look forward to, such as a meal, a holiday, a concert, etc.: *I hope you have a good time. Enjoy your meal. Enjoy. Good luck. Have fun.* Also more specific pretexts for good wishes are birthdays, festivals, etc.: *Happy birthday! Merry Christmas! Happy New Year!*

All such propitiatory expressions are highly stereotyped and may often be felt to be virtually empty of feeling. However, their omission in some circumstances may create a negative, alienating impression, and their presence may contribute to a general atmosphere of mutual goodwill.

7.6 Concluding Remarks

This chapter has covered a number of polite speech events illustrating a range of maxims: the Generosity, Approbation, Obligation, Agreement, Opinion-reticence, and Sympathy Maxims. They have also illustrated the neg-polite mitigation of

¹⁶ *Take care* as a farewell in AmE can strike Brits as odd, suggesting that the addressee is about to embark on a dangerous maneuver—and might, for example, fall on the ice in wintry weather. However, British speakers have been growing accustomed to using this expression as a general good wish for the future.

potentially offensive speech events, such as criticisms and disagreements, and the pos-polite intensification of face-enhancing speech events, such as compliments and thanks. This chapter, like Chapters 5 and 6, has filled out the range of data of politeness behavior covered by the GSP model presented in Chapter 4.

Readers may feel that such an unremitting concentration on polite behavior is cloying. If so, it will be a relief to turn to the next chapter, which focuses on behavior that in one way or another exemplifies the opposite of politeness, especially impoliteness and rudeness.

Politeness and Its “Opposites”

Until recently the complaint was often made that the study of politeness has been pursued without proper attention to its opposite, impoliteness. This gap has in the last decade of two been filled by an increasing number of studies (Culpeper 1996, 2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; Culpeper et al. 2003; Bousfield 2008; Bousfield and Locher 2008), and even by a recurrent conference with the felicitous name LIAR (standing for “Linguistic Impoliteness and Rudeness”). But what is the “opposite” of politeness is not as straightforward as might be supposed. Although the most obvious construal of impoliteness is simply as the contrary of politeness, in practice there have been differing opinions as well as various kinds of “oppositeness” to be considered.

There are four major themes of “oppositeness” to be discussed in this chapter: nonpoliteness (8.1), impoliteness (8.2), irony or sarcasm (8.3), and banter (8.4). All of these phenomena, in some sense, contrast with politeness, but they contrast with it in different ways. Nonpoliteness is simply the absence of politeness; impoliteness is the contrary of politeness—its polar opposite. The other two kinds of oppositeness, irony and banter, already briefly discussed in 4.4.3, are exploitations of politeness. In the case of conversational irony or sarcasm, the contrast is between the overt meaning, which is polite, and the covert or implicated meaning, which is its opposite. In the case of banter, the contrast is between the overt meaning, which is impolite, and the implicated meaning, which is its opposite.

8.1 Nonpoliteness: Lack of Politeness or Impoliteness

Nonpoliteness is the least complex category to deal with. Nevertheless, because of how I have used “politeness” in earlier chapters, it is worth examining the various ways in which politeness can be absent from an utterance.

Firstly, let’s define *nonpoliteness* as excluding not only politeness but also impoliteness. In other words, we define it as a property of utterances that have no politeness value of any kind. Such utterances are legion; take, for instance, the opening turn of example (1) below, a short extract from an oral history interview

sense, of course, there is both underpoliteness and overpoliteness; and the zero zone between the underpolite and the overpolite is where Watts’s “politic behavior” resides.

Underpoliteness is in practice a kind of impoliteness. To illustrate this, I can provide an example from a personal report from a member of a mountain-rescue team that was called out one night in bad weather to rescue a walker who had injured himself on the mountain. The mountain rescuers had toiled up the mountain in the dark in dangerous conditions, at last located the injured walker, and carried him down the mountain on a stretcher. When the road was finally reached, the “patient” hobbled away to his car, sat in it, started the engine, said *Well, thanks—goodnight!* and drove off.

Here obviously, on the cost-benefit scale, both the cost to *O* and the benefit to *S* were enormous, and an expression of profound gratitude could be expected. Instead, *S* made the most minimal expression of thanks possible—an extreme case of *underpoliteness*. But should that be equated with *impoliteness*? The most frequently cited definition of impoliteness is that of Culpeper (1996, 2005), who more than anyone has opened up this field, and who states that

- (2) Impoliteness comes about when: (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)
(Culpeper 2005: 38)

By characterizing *face attack* as the cardinal principle of impoliteness, Culpeper sees it as something (intended to be) positively damaging to *O*’s self-image.³ We could say, given this definition, that the mountaineer’s failure to thank his rescuers adequately was a grave omission, but we could hardly call it a form of *attack*, as there is no positive violation of politeness maxims, and the mountaineer may have had no intention of damaging the face of his rescuers. However, the term *underpoliteness* can reasonably be applied to it, in the sense that the speaker makes some token gesture of *pragmalinguistic politeness* (the use of *thanks* in the mountaineer’s parting utterance), but this is construed as *sociopragmatically* inadequate for the occasion. Thus underpoliteness, as I see it, is a case of sociopragmatic impoliteness where there is an inadequately low degree of pragmalinguistic politeness.

Another distinction between different kinds of politeness made in Chapter 1 is between trivalent and bivalent politeness. If we focus on trivalent politeness—the kind where the three factors of vertical distance, horizontal distance, and cost-benefit are in play—the least problematic kind of (pragmalinguistic) nonpoliteness is found in utterances in which no transactional value of any substance can

³ Culpeper has since offered a different, and more elaborated, definition of impoliteness (2011a: 23, 254–255) in which he avoids the concept of “face attack” and instead describes impoliteness as “a negative attitude towards specific behaviors occurring in specific contexts.” However, the definition in terms of face attack has remained an influential entry point into the investigation of impoliteness.

be detected (that is, where no cost-benefit is involved), for example, in assertive and rogative utterances such as we find in (1) above.

It is also very common, in English, for an utterance to have no value in terms of bivalent politeness (the kind of politeness where only vertical and horizontal distance is in play), as in fact is the case with the extract above. Unlike honorific-rich languages such as Japanese and Korean, English has relatively few devices for signaling respect or deference to *O*, and all are optional extras, for example, respectful vocatives like *madam* and *sir* that can be easily omitted from an utterance:

- (3) Salesman talking to customer: Just sign here *madam*. [BNC FUT]
- (4) Cross-examining lawyer: And er when did you start as a firearms officer?
Police Officer: In nineteen eighty three *sir*. [BNC JNE]

In both these cases, the honorific vocative *sir* or *madam* can be easily omitted, which means that the only honorific marker in the utterance (signifying polite, if distant, respect) would disappear—a case of zero bivalent politeness.

8.2 Impoliteness

Some authors have maintained that impoliteness is in no way comparable to politeness, and that it should be studied on its own terms, rather in terms of a theory of politeness (see Eelen 2001: 98–100; Mills 2003: 124). My position is that, on the contrary, the best way to start theorizing about impoliteness is to build on a theory of politeness, which is clearly a closely related phenomenon, in fact the polar opposite of politeness. For a start, as Culpeper (2011a: 111) points out, “impoliteness is a scalar notion,” just like politeness. Occam’s razor proposes that we should not multiply entities beyond necessity. Applied to (im)politeness, this should mean: Let’s see how far the entities (scales, maxims, etc.) of a politeness model can be adapted to apply to impoliteness.⁴ This leads to the question at the head of the next section: How far can a theory of politeness be a theory of impoliteness?

As I have already noted, impoliteness has received considerable attention as a topic of investigation recently,⁵ and this is not so much, I suggest, because of the high frequency of impolite behavior as because of the “markedness” of impolite behavior, the fact that it tends to be salient when it occurs. As pointed out in 1.1, there are some restricted situations in which impoliteness is “licensed” and normal (for example, question time in the House of Commons in the UK; see Harris 2001). There is also little

⁴ To use analogies: one does not develop a theory of darkness by ignoring a theory of light; one does not develop a theory of falsehood by ignoring a theory of truth, nor a theory of ugliness by ignoring a theory of beauty.

⁵ The best entrée to the field is provided by Culpeper’s book-length survey (2011a), which gives a broad and well-balanced survey of impoliteness studies, as well as detailed coverage of bibliographical references.

doubt that impolite behavior can be entertaining as a spectator sport, which explains the proliferation of exploitative TV programs (such as the BBC quiz program *The Weakest Link*, Culpeper 2005; and fly-on-the-wall documentaries like *The Clampers* and *Soldiers to be*)⁶ that give opportunities for “enjoying” spectacular impoliteness. It is also noticeable that the favored TV news extracts showing the House of Commons (the UK’s main legislative chamber) in action are of the weekly sessions of Prime Minister’s Question Time, when the leader of the opposition and the prime minister trade insults, in the guise of questions and answers, with one another. (Notice, incidentally, that the spectators are able to “enjoy” the excitement of impoliteness because their own face and public standing are not in any degree threatened by it.)

In contrast, when impoliteness does become a common phenomenon in everyday society, this is reflected in widespread concern and indignation in the community, as amplified in the media. One example of this in the UK is the large number of cases of aggressive and violent behavior (including verbal behavior) reported as shown by members of the public toward members of the National Health Service. A report in May 2008 indicated that 84,273 cases of violent or abusive conduct had been recorded as taking place.⁷ This caused a media outcry against such abusers, suggestive of the strong support members of the community at large give to health workers on the receiving end of such conduct. It is fair to conclude that some degree of cooperation and politeness is in a very general sense regarded as the norm against which uncooperative and impolite behavior are considered exceptional and “bad.”⁸ At the same time, a point made in the introduction to Chapter 1 should be reiterated: politeness as “communicative altruism” does not necessarily coexist with *genuine* altruism, so that no assumption can necessarily be made about the benevolent motivations of users of polite language.

8.2.1 HOW FAR CAN A THEORY OF POLITENESS BE A THEORY OF IMPOLITENESS?

I see no great conflict between Culpeper’s characterization of impoliteness in the definition above and the model of politeness I presented in Chapter 4. Culpeper’s definition is repeated here in the form of a list:

- (a) the speaker communicates face attack intentionally, or
- (b) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or
- (c) a combination of (a) and (b)

⁶ These and similar programs are described in Bousfield (2008: 7–17) and used as data through that book. Extracts from similar programs are analyzed by Culpeper, e.g., “Soldier Girls” in Culpeper 1996: 359–363).

⁷ As reported in a lecture at Lancaster by Derek Bousfield, referring to the website www.nhs.uk/zerotolerance.

⁸ For a contrary view, see Mills (2003: 124); she does not regard politeness and impoliteness as polar opposites and does not regard impoliteness as “marked” in contrast to politeness.

TABLE 8.1

The categories of constraint violation of the “General Strategy of Impoliteness.”

Violation of Maxim (expressed in an imperative mood):	Related pair of maxims	Label for the maxim violated	Typical speech-act type(s)
(M1) give an unfavorable value to O's wants	<i>Generosity / Tact</i>	Generosity	Refusing, threatening
(M2) give a favorable value to S's wants		Tact	Ordering, demanding
(M3) give an unfavorable value to O's qualities	<i>Approbation / Modesty</i>	Approbation	Insulting, complaining, telling off
(M4) give a favorable/high value to S's qualities		Modesty	Boasting, being complacent
(M5) give an unfavorable/low value to S's obligation to O	<i>Obligation</i>	Obligation (to O)	Withholding thanks or apologies
(M6) give a favorable/high value to O's obligation to S		Obligation (to S)	Demanding thanks and apologies
(M7) give an unfavorable/low value to O's opinions	<i>Opinion</i>	Agreement	Disagreeing, contradicting
(M8) give an favorable/high value to S's opinions		Opinion reticence	Being opinionated
(M9) give an unfavorable/low value to O's feelings	<i>Feeling</i>	Sympathy	Expressing antipathy to O
(M10) give a favorable/high value to S's feelings		Feeling reticence	Grumbling, grouching

Note: S = speaker; O = other(s), typically the addressee.

To account for this face attack, as a first approximation to a model of impoliteness, we can simply reverse the GSP (General Strategy of Politeness), which is repeated here from 4.3.1⁹:

- (5) In pursuing the GSP, *S* will express/implicitly evaluative meanings that are unfavorable to *S* and favorable to *O*. [*O* = other person(s), especially the addressee]

by substituting what might be considered a “General Strategy of Impoliteness”:

- (6) In pursuing the goal of impoliteness, *S* will express/implicitly evaluative meanings that are favorable to *S* and unfavorable to *O*.

This means that the GSP, directed toward concord and face maintenance, is replaced by the contrary self-serving strategy, directed towards discord and face-attack. This “General Strategy of Impoliteness” means that any of the constituent maxims of the GSP is to be violated, as is shown in Table 8.1.

⁹ In fact, Culpeper (1996: 358) proposes that “reversing Leech’s Politeness Principle (1983: 81)” is “one general way of being impolite.”

The other aspects of Culpeper’s definition have to do with whether impoliteness resides in the intention of *S* or the interpretation of *O*, or in both. His definition is wide enough to embrace both the *S*-intended and the *O*-interpreted understanding of impoliteness. As I see it, this is no different from the position I have already argued for politeness (2.4.2): that its investigation should include both *S*’s and *O*’s perspectives, that the attribution of politeness to an utterance can mean either “*S* intends it to be polite” or “*O* interprets it to be polite” or both.

(There is perhaps a difference of degree here, though, in that it seems easier to claim “*S* was unintentionally impolite” than “*S* was unintentionally polite.” Clearly “unintentionally” implies that whoever makes this claim is talking with the hearer’s perception of politeness in mind—since the speaker’s perception of politeness would imply that the (im)politeness was intended. It does seem that the greater naturalness of the expression “unintentionally impolite,” compared with “unintentionally polite,” is a confirmation of the claim I made at the beginning of 8.2, that in general terms politeness is unmarked and “normal” compared with impoliteness. Hence it is more likely that someone trying to be polite will be inadvertently impolite than vice versa.)

Another aspect of Culpeper’s model of impoliteness is that it closely mirrors the superstrategies of B&L’s model of politeness (see 2.2.2): viz. performing the FTA (1) baldly, or (2) with positive politeness, or (3) with negative politeness, or (4) off record, or (5) not at all. Culpeper’s categories of impoliteness strategy are:

- (1) *Bald on record impoliteness*
- (2) *Positive impoliteness*—the use of strategies to damage the addressee’s positive face wants
- (3) *Negative impoliteness*—the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face wants
- (4) *Sarcasm or mock politeness*—the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere
- (5) *Withhold politeness* (summarized from Culpeper 1996: 356)

In my treatment of impoliteness I exclude sarcasm (4) as I assign it to a separate section (8.3). Culpeper’s fifth category “Withhold politeness” can be contextualized if we imagine that the rescued mountaineer discussed in 8.1 did not even say *thanks*—that he failed to thank the rescue team at all. This, from my point of view, would be the extreme case of underpoliteness and hence a particular kind of sociopragmatic impoliteness. A failure to thank in appropriate circumstances (i.e., where *S* owes a debt to *O*) is a violation of one of the maxims of politeness; see (M5) in Table 8.1.

Although I do not claim that “the violation of politeness” as defined above is a complete account of impoliteness (see 8.2.3 and 8.2.4), my own approach is analogous to Culpeper’s in that I take the categories of politeness (the ten maxims of 4.3.1, as summarized in Table 4.2) and stand them on their head. Impoliteness can be recognized as a violation of the various maxims of the PP, both those of neg-politeness and those of pos-politeness. In general, impoliteness involves taking value from the other person and giving value to oneself. But it is important to bear in mind that these

violations are scalar, like the maxims themselves: that is, just as there are various degrees of observance of the maxims, so there are various degrees of violation.

My argument will be that violations of the GSP account for the majority of cases of impoliteness, but there are other manifestations of verbal attack, such as using emotionally charged and taboo language, which have no counterpart in the GSP. For example, *Can it!* is an intrinsically rude way of telling someone to stop talking. No amount of mitigation will turn this into a polite request: *Would you mind canning it?* is absurd (or ironic) rather than appropriately polite. It seems reasonable to make a terminological distinction, and to reserve the term *rudeness*,¹⁰ rather than impoliteness, for such instances of naked affront.¹¹ They belong to the category of conflictive discourse (4.2.3) where the illocution serves to promote discord, and where politeness can have no role. I will return to these after the next section, which illustrates all the varieties of impoliteness as listed in Table 8.1.

Before we examine these components of impoliteness in more detail, it is important to recognize that impolite messages, like the polite messages of the GSP, are often arrived at by implicature, rather than by what “is said.” On November 4, 2012, Sally Bercow, wife of the speaker of the British House of Commons, tweeted the message *Why is Lord McAlpine trending? *innocent face**, and was found guilty of libel, although apparently there was nothing libelous or even derogatory in the tweet. The background was as follows. During a media frenzy over cases of child sex abuse, there were allegations that Lord McAlpine, a senior peer of the Conservative party, was a pedophile. Subsequently, after this allegation was found to be false, the English High Court determined that Mrs. Bercow’s tweet “meant that Lord McAlpine was a pedophile who was guilty of sexually abusing boys living in care.”¹² The judge, Mr Justice Tugendhat, “said that in its natural and ordinary meaning, the tweet meant that Lord McAlpine was a pedophile who was guilty of sexually abusing boys living in care.”¹³ Though it would be impractical to try to account for the inferential process that led the Court to that conclusion, a helpful first step might be to explain, for nontweeters, the meaning of *trending*. According to Wikipedia (August 14, 2013), “a word, phrase or topic that is tagged at a greater rate than other tags is said to be a *trending topic*,” that is, a popular or “hot” topic on Twitter. This seems to be an extreme case where impoliteness (a severe breach of the Approbation Maxim) depends heavily on implicature.

¹⁰ Culpeper (2011a: 72–98) examines in detail the use of the adjectives *impolite* and *rude* and their near synonyms, showing a close overlap of usage between *impolite* and *rude*, although *rude* tends to be an everyday “folk term” in contrast to *impolite*, which tends to be more formal. I have decided to make a distinction between these terms along the lines suggested above, as seems reasonable, in that *impolite* is the polar opposite of *polite*, and *rude*, though it denotes intrinsically conflictive behavior, does not contrast with any antonymous term for polite behavior; there is no “unrudeness.”

¹¹ An objection to this “intrinsic rudeness” claim is that in the right context people can say *Can it!* in a humorous or playful way, with no face threat. However, this is accounted of differently in this chapter as an example of banter (mock impoliteness/rudeness); see 8.4.

¹² As reported in the *Daily Telegraph*, May 24, 2013, by Peter Dominiczak, political correspondent.

¹³ As reported by Patrick Strudwick in the *Guardian*, May 24, 2013.

Both polite and impolite messages can be implied rather than stated; but the tendency to use implicature is probably stronger in the case of impoliteness, as it serves a defensive function. The speaker can claim not to have made an offensive remark, and the escalation of impoliteness into more violent confrontation can be averted (see the beginning of 8.3). In some cases, there may be legal or quasi-legal reasons for indirectness, since the law of slander or libel might bring retribution if an offensive remark were too blatant.

8.2.2 ILLUSTRATING TYPES OF IMPOLITENESS: FROM *WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?*

I have committed myself to the view that polite behavior is a kind of accepted norm, against which impoliteness is a marked, and less frequent, option.¹⁴ A simple illustration of this, if corpus frequency is admitted as evidence, is the observation that in the BNC *I agree* occurs more than five times more often than the combination of its negative counterparts *I disagree*, *I don't agree*, and *I do not agree*. Apparently the Maxim of Agreement is upheld far more frequently than it is violated.

However, as I also pointed in 1.1, we have the option of being impolite, and indeed there are certain activity types and discourse roles where impolite verbal behavior is expected and recurrent. Culpeper (1996) uses army recruit training discourse as an example of discourse where impoliteness prevails—naturally, the impoliteness being on the part of the trainer rather than the trainee! Examples of TV activity types where impoliteness is prevalent have been analyzed by Culpeper, Bousfield (2008), and others: the TV program *The Weakest Link* (where the rudeness to contestants of the quizmaster Anne Robinson is proverbial; Culpeper 2005); talent shows such *Pop Idol* (Culpeper 2011a: 249), where aspiring stars are roundly criticized by judges; the reality show *The Clampers*, in which traffic wardens enforcing wheel-clamping penalties suffer abuse from their victims (Culpeper et al. 2003; Bousfield 2008).

Fiction can also supply instances where impoliteness is pervasive. To illustrate instances of impoliteness as manifest in violations of the ten maxims, I have decided to use Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962),¹⁵ a play renowned for the impolite, aggressive verbal behavior of its characters, especially its two main protagonists, the wife Martha and her husband George. In fact, when I made a rough count of the instances of impoliteness/rudeness in the play, they

¹⁴ However, as Culpeper (2011a: 131) points out, “Impoliteness...casts a much larger shadow than its frequency of usage would suggest. Behaviors and expressions considered impolite are more noticed and discussed than polite ones (cf. Watts 2003: 5).”

¹⁵ Quotations and page references from this play are taken from Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (London: Vintage Books, 2001). The following discussion of Albee's play is based on a lecture given at the LIAR II Conference at Lancaster University, UK, June 30 to July 2, 2009. The lecture was entitled “How far can a theory of politeness be a theory of impoliteness? Illustrated from Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*”

outnumbered instances of politeness by 242 to 57—the opposite of what one would expect in real life. The action takes place after a party at the university where George teaches, and where Martha’s father is the principal. Apart from Martha and George, the only other two characters in the play are Nick, a new university appointee in biology, and his wife Honey; they are a couple who are invited home by Martha (much to her husband’s disapproval) for a late night drink. The play’s action (in three acts) lasts the whole night through, as Nick and Honey find themselves increasingly caught up in the drink-fueled vitriolic quarreling of their host and hostess. Finally Nick and Honey go home, and Martha and George reach some kind of reconciliation.

The extracts below follow the order of the maxim violations (M1)–(M10) in Table 8.1.

(M1) Violation of Generosity

Violations of the Generosity Maxim can take the form of threats and curses, where the speaker expresses the will to bring harm (rather than benefit) to the other person. Examples from *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are curses such as *Damn you* (Act 3, p. 107) and threats such as *You’re going to regret this* (Act 2, p. 79) and *You just wait, mister...* (Act 2, p. 79).

Both of these examples are “veiled” threats: they do not convey their illocutionary force clearly but leave it to *O* to interpret the utterance indirectly.

Curses and threats are illocutions specialized to impolite use, just as compliments and invitations are specialized to polite use.

(M2) Violation of Tact

The Tact Maxim constrains *S* to evaluate highly the wishes of *O*, and hence to soften, or mitigate, directives. The violation of Tact can therefore take the form of an unmitigated directive, such as Martha’s command to her guest Nick after hearing the door chimes:

MARTHA: Go answer the door.

NICK: [*amazed*] What did you say?

MARTHA: I said, go answer the door. What are you deaf? (Act 3, p. 103)

Nick here is amazed that Martha orders him to open the door. The hostess’s bald-on-record command, as if addressing a flunkey, is naturally contrary to a guest’s expectation that the Tact Maxim, like the Generosity Maxim, should be in force. Martha’s impoliteness is aggravated by her final question, with its implication that only deafness could explain Nick’s failure to obey her without question.

(M3) Violation of Approbation

Throughout *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha and George frequently trade derogatory remarks such as insults, accusations, and complaints. In this play, the

Approbation Maxim is violated more than any other maxim in the PP. At one point (Act 2, p. 72), for example, George addresses his wife as *YOU SATANIC BITCH!*, shortly afterwards she calls him *Murderer* (Act 2, p. 73). Elsewhere (Act 1, p. 3) George objects to Martha’s braying like a donkey. The animal metaphor is, of course, an aggravated insult.

(M4) Violation of Modesty

Here Martha is boasting of the immense benefit that George has gained in marrying her, she being the daughter of the university’s principal:

MARTHA: [*loud... to no one in particular*]: It *should* be an extraordinary opportunity... for some men it would be the chance of a lifetime! (Act 1, p. 14)

(M5) Violation of Obligation to O, (M6) Violation of Obligation to S

The two Maxims of Obligation can be illustrated by a single exchange in which Martha demands an apology and George refuses to apologize, implying (by means of his follow-up question) that he recognizes no offense to apologize for:

MARTHA [*to GEORGE*]: Well, aren’t you going to apologize? (M6)
GEORGE [*squinting*]: For what, Martha? (M5) (Act 2, p. 63)

(M7) Violation of Agreement

George and Martha’s domestic strife often takes the form of mutual disagreement or contradiction:

GEORGE: I wish you’d stop *springing* things on me all the time.
MARTHA: I don’t *spring* things on you all the time.
GEORGE: Yes, you do... (Act 1, p. 5)

Here George complains against Martha’s habit of doing things unexpectedly (in this case, inviting guests home at a late hour) without consulting him. She denies the accusation, and he in turn contradicts her. Both the Approbation Maxim (in George’s complaint) and the Agreement Maxim are violated.

(M8) Violation of Opinion reticence

Violating Opinion reticence is exemplified in the opinionated behavior (overvaluing one’s own opinion) that shows up in this ill-informed diatribe by George—who, as an undistinguished historian, has apparently only the vaguest of ideas about scientific research:

GEORGE: You’re the one! You’re the one’s going to make all that trouble—
making everyone the same, rearranging the chromozones, or whatever it is.
Isn’t that right?
NICK: [...] Not exactly: *chromosomes*. (Act I, p.18)

GEORGE: I read somewhere that [...] you people are rearranging our genes, so that everyone will be like everyone else. Now, I won't have that! (Act 1, p. 19)

George's last remark appears to claim that he, as a layman, can lay down the law about what scientists do. Obviously, George's attack on Nick's biological research is also a personal affront, again violating the Approbation Maxim.

(M9) Violation of Sympathy

In contrast to the Sympathy Maxim, which accounts for such polite illocutions as congratulations, good wishes, and condolences, the "Great Strategy of Impoliteness" manifests itself in direct expressions of antipathy—the opposite of sympathy—toward *O*. Martha says to George *You make me puke!* (Act 1, p. 6), and George returns similar insults, e.g., *You disgust me* (Act 3, p. 109).

(M10) Violation of Feeling reticence

The last maxim of the GSP, that of Feeling reticence, constrains speakers to avoid self-indulgence by playing down their own sufferings, rather than expressing them in exaggerated language. Violation of Feeling reticence, along with violation of Approbation, can be detected in this outpouring of self-pity, in which Martha laments the suffering she has undergone through marriage to George:

MARTHA: I have tried, oh God I have tried; the one thing... the one thing I've tried to carry pure and unscathed through the sewer of this marriage; through the sick nights, and the pathetic, stupid days, through the laughter... (Act 3, p. 121)

Martha's jeremiad concludes with reference to a much-loved and much-quarreled-over son who is apparently a figment of the combined imaginations of this childless couple:

... the one *person* I have tried to protect, to raise above the mire of this vile, crushing marriage; the one light in all this hopeless... *darkness* our SON. (ibid.)

In the play's script, Martha's lament just quoted occurs simultaneously with George's recitation of snatches of the Latin text of the Requiem—simultaneous speech being, of course, a violation of normal turn-taking practice that leads us on to another aspect of impoliteness: impoliteness of discourse management.

8.2.3 IMPOLITENESS IN TURN TAKING, FLOOR HOLDING, AND OTHER ASPECTS OF DISCOURSE MANAGEMENT

Like politeness, impoliteness is often manifest in the way interactants treat one another in the management of dialogue. For example, part of the neg-politeness that is claimed to be characteristic of Anglo societies lies in the avoidance of certain personal topics of conversation. Thus, to ask their age or how much they earn,

unless they are close acquaintance, is often felt to be a trespass on private territory; in terms of “conversational etiquette,” it is an infringement of the Tact Maxim. So, when George asks Nick (whom he has only just met) *How much do you weigh?* and *How old is your wife?* (Act 1, p. 18), Nick is understandably (as the stage direction says) “a little bewildered.” George goes on to make personal remarks about Nick’s wife’s physique—another sensitive topic:

GEORGE: Your wife *doesn’t* have any hips . . . has she . . . does she? (Act I, p. 20)

and to ask a question that again trespasses on private territory:

GEORGE: How many kids you going to have? (Act I, p. 21)

But when Nick later ventures to ask a question, in response to an anecdote George has been recounting, George commits the opposite offense, and bluntly refuses to answer:

GEORGE: I won’t tell you. (Act 2, p. 51)

This is the discourse-management equivalent of refusing a request—a violation of Generosity.

Another politeness violation that relates to the management of dialogue is the interruption of someone else’s turn. If we think of turn taking as the possession and passing to one another of a conversational good—the *floor*—then systematic turn taking, such as notably described by Sacks et al. (1974), is basically the observance of conversational etiquette—a conventionalized form of politeness.¹⁶ Such being the case, interruption of *O* in midflow amounts to seizing the floor—a good that strictly belongs to *O* until a signal of wishing to yield the floor is given. Among many examples in the play of this kind of impoliteness—another violation of the Tact Maxim—is George’s interruption of Nick in this exchange:

NICK: I think maybe . . .

GEORGE [*with great authority*]: SILENCE! (Act 1, p. 74)

A final aspect of discourse management to mention here is engagement and non-engagement in conversation. To initiate a conversation—often marked by a greeting (see 7.5.3)—is to indicate willingness to participate in a cooperative interaction with another human being. In contrast, in many contexts failure to engage in conversation with another person, particularly an acquaintance, is likely to be interpretation as a slight or snub, a form of impoliteness (M9) implying lack of concern for maintaining that acquaintance or friendship. At one point in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha calls out three times loudly from upstairs to George, who pointedly ignores her and continues with the interchange with Nick. On another occasion George withdraws from talking with Martha and the guests and

¹⁶ See Bousfield (2008: 223–260) for a well-illustrated account of impoliteness in turn-taking behavior.

reads a book, much to the outrage of his wife. The implicit meaning in both cases is “Socially interacting with you brings no pleasure or value to me”—an arguable breach of Approbation and Sympathy.

For a last example of transgressing discourse management etiquette, we go from *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* to another discourse illustrating impoliteness, the quiz program *The Weakest Link*, as analyzed by Culpeper (2005, 2011a). The quizmaster Anne Robinson dismisses losing players with the catchphrase *You are the weakest link goodbye*—and the finality of the dismissal is emphasized by the finality of the falling intonation pattern, as demonstrated by Culpeper (2011a: 169). *Goodbye* and its more informal equivalents *Bye* and *Bye bye* are normally spoken with a rising, level, or fall-rise tone. If spoken with a falling tone, particularly when it is emphatic, *Goodbye* has a decidedly impolite ring, almost as if the speaker were saying “Good riddance—I don’t want to see you again.” To avoid this implication, a rising tone brings a sense of nonfinality, and (as noted in 7.5.3) a farewell with an implication of a future meeting (such as *See you*) is often preferred.

8.2.4 WHERE POLITENESS AND IMPOLITENESS ARE NOT MIRROR IMAGES: A DEFINITION OF “RUDENESS”

Although the violation of the maxims of the PP as illustrated in 8.2.2 and 8.2.3 can account for a large proportion of the instances that would strike an audience of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* as impolite, this is not the whole story of face attack. As proposed earlier, we can attach the word *rudeness* to the offensive use of language that is not just a matter of expressing or intensifying impolite meanings, but of being blatantly offensive—that is, adding aggravating affront to impoliteness. For example, face attack can include the use of taboo language,¹⁷ such as the use of insulting animal metaphors or obscene expletives. The examples that follow break religious taboo by referring profanely to the Christian deity:

Oh Jack, stop dribbling **for Christ’s sake!** (BNC KBL)

... Oh **my god**, are you out of your mind? You’re serious? (LCSAE 159001)

Mergatroyd, look you have a problem, you haven’t done a **goddam** thing since you’ve been on this ship. (LCSAE 159001)

One sign of rudeness, in this sense, is that the expressions in boldface have no meaningful function apart from adding an aggressive emotive charge. If we deleted them from these examples, the utterances *Oh Jack, stop dribbling* and *Oh, are you out of your mind?* would have the same illocutionary force, minus the extra charge of rudeness. Taboo terms alluding to physical sex, bodily excretion, or other taboo topics¹⁸

¹⁷ On swearwords and taboo language, see Allen and Burridge (2006), Montagu (2001 [1967]), Lachenicht (1980), and McEnery (2006).

¹⁸ These are called by Allen and Burridge (2006: 41) “dirty words,” referring to “bodily organs concealed by bikinis and swimming trunks—because they are organs of sexual desire, stimulation and gratification and/or used for micturition and defecation.”

can be found aplenty in spoken corpora and other sources. They extend from the milder end of the scale (*piss, shit, bugger, balls*, etc.) through moderately offensive items (like *bastard*) to the more extreme end (*fucking, cunt, motherfucker*),¹⁹ the last group obviously having the most aggravating effect. Such swear words are used (in certain social contexts) to express a range of negative emotions—anger, irritation, annoyance, etc.—and when added to pragmalinguistically impolite utterances, like the accusation in this example, can exacerbate the face threat:

Matt: I don't see how you can **fucking** tell me barefaced lies like that. [BNC KDA]

Some swear words can be used alone as an impolite illocution, e.g., *Piss off!* ('Go away!') or *Bullshit!* (in the sense of 'What you say is nonsense!'); others need to combine with other expressions in a longer illocution. Perhaps the most telling demonstration of the impoliteness of swear words occurs where the utterance, without the added swear word, could be interpreted “innocently” with no implication of impoliteness. In other words, the swear word is in itself responsible (pragmalinguistically) for the impolite effect:²⁰

(1) I didn't **bloody** hear you! [BNC KD5]

(2) What **the fucking hell** are you doing? [BNC KC6]

If we compare (1), as a response in a dialogue, with *I didn't hear you*, it is clear that the added (British) swear word *bloody* tips the balance irrevocably in favor of an impolite interpretation—a complaint. A similar point could be made about (2).

Animal metaphors can also be offensive; for instance, *bitch, cow, rat*, and *pig* have well-known insulting overtones, when referring to a human being:

Oh, you're just **a bitch!** [LCSAE 144601]

You're such **a silly cow** [BNC KBE]

Oh you **unpleasant little rat!** [BNC KBL]

Have you eaten them all you **greedy pig?** [BNC KC6]

Quasi-vocatives²¹ typically consisting of *you* followed by an offensive nominal phrase are almost a verbal analogue of missiles thrown at the addressee. The

¹⁹ Recent studies have ranked swear words in terms of their overall degree of offensiveness. *Cunt* is the strongest-rated swearword in BrE (McEnery 2006: 36) whereas *motherfucker* is the strongest-rated swearword in AmE, and the second strongest in BrE (see Culpeper 2011a: 143). *Fuck* comes third in the British league table of obscenity. Obviously, however, the degree of offense depends greatly on context, and many of these swearwords are commonly used in banter among familiars (8.4), where no face attack is intended.

²⁰ As this example shows, and as is pointed out by Terkourafi (2008: 74), “swear words may semantically encode face-threat.” They are at the explicit end of the explicit-implicit continuum, in contrast to the implicit (implicated) impoliteness exemplified in Figure 8.1. Allen and Burridge (2006: 237) also document the finding that “Forbidden words are the most emotionally evocative of all language stimuli. . . . Taboo language has a special place in our neural anatomy.”

²¹ Exclamatory quasi-vocatives such as *You pig* or *you fat bastard* are distinct from vocatives although formally they resemble them (see Biber et al. 1999: 1102–1103, 1108–1113). Vocatives and quasi-vocatives can be combined in the same utterance and have clearly different functions, as in *You bastard, Hammond* (BNC GUG, from a written text).

nominal phrase can be an animal metaphor, as above, or another offensive expression: *you dirty slag, you bastard, you cunt, you liar, you dickhead*, etc. (We will return to the connection between verbal violence and physical violence below.) It is noticeable that many swear words and other taboo items are not specialized to particular illocutionary acts or to the breach of particular maxims of politeness. Rather, they are general-purpose emotional aggravators, which can be equally used, for example, to embellish a directive, an accusation, or a refusal.

Apart from swear words and animal metaphors, some special phraseologies are custom-built for offensive use. Whereas *Stop talking!* may be impolite in most contexts as a violation of the Tact Maxim, its effect can be aggravated by the substitution of more offensive equivalents such as *Shut up!* and *Just shut your mouth, will you!* whereby *O*'s silence is seen as the outcome of some kind of abrupt physical action. Like animal metaphors, dehumanizing metaphors referring to human beings and their body parts as if they are inanimate "things" (*Just can it! Shut your trap! Get your ass out of here!*) are among the staple weapons of verbal abuse.

A final, but important, device of verbal aggression is the use of prosodic and paralinguistic features such as loudness and pitch of voice and position of the intonation nucleus; see Culpeper et al. (2003: 1568–1577); Culpeper (2011a: 145–152; 2011b). Such features of the spoken language are naturally not available in the normal written form of a text. We cannot go in any detail into the role of intonation and paralinguistic features in conveying emotion and attitude here, and yet its importance in the expression and recognition of rudeness can hardly be overemphasized. To give the flavor of this topic, here is a summary (quoted by Culpeper 2011a: 149) of the acoustic and articulatory features associated with two emotions closely involved with impoliteness:

Anger (rage): slightly faster, much higher pitch average, wide pitch range, louder, breathy, chest tone, abrupt pitch changes on stressed syllables, tense articulation (Murray and Arnott 1993: 1103–1104, 1106)

Disgust (hatred, contempt, scorn): very slow speech rate, much lower pitch average, slightly wider pitch range, quieter, grumbled, chest tone, wide falling terminal contours, normal articulation (Murray and Arnott: 1104–1105, 1106).

In everyday language, these rather technical descriptions correspond fairly closely to "raising one's voice" or (more extremely) "shouting" as a sign of anger, and "snarling" or "growling" as a sign of disgust. As discussed by Culpeper (p. 150), listeners can be very sensitive to departures from the norms of articulation, any tendency toward extremes having potentially strong implications of emotive intensification.

8.2.5 CONCLUDING REMARKS ON RUDENESS

I have defined rudeness in negative terms—as the residue of offensiveness that still has to be explained when we have accounted for violations of the GSP—but in fact we can

give a more direct and positive account of “rude” linguistic forms. They may be called *violent* or *abusive* features of language in that they are associated with strong hostile or threatening emotions, especially anger, and have iconic characteristics close to physical violence, as with the raising of the voice to high pitch (close to yelling, screaming). And some imprecations mentally enact the violent actions they describe: SCREW YOU! (Act 1, p. 9 of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), and UP YOURS (Act 2, p. 62), rather like the verbal equivalent of the shaking of a fist. It is significant that the verbally aggressive characters in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* on occasions resort to nonverbal aggression, leading ultimately to physical violence. Thus in Act 3 (pp. 124–125), Nick seizes Martha, pinning her arms behind her back; Martha, in return, stares at him, then spits in his face.

One can detect a gradient running from the symbolic violence of swear words just mentioned, through vocal exclamatory noises like Martha’s NYAAAAHHHH (Act 1, p. 14), and through gestures such as spitting (Act 3, pp. 108–109), to actual physical assault, when George attacks Martha and is thrown to the floor by Nick (Act 2, p. 72).

Instead of thinking of rudeness as the negative pole of politeness, we could alternatively think of politeness as an institutionalized safeguard against rudeness: the self-serving aggressive emotion-driven use of language that all too easily tips over into physical violence.

8.3 Sarcasm or Conversational Irony

In 4.3.2 I introduced conversational irony (otherwise termed *sarcasm*) and banter (8.4) as second-order pragmatic principles that exploit politeness. What this amounts to, in the case of irony, is that *S* says something that is superficially interpretable as polite but is more indirectly or “deeply” interpreted as face attack—as impolite. Culpeper (1996, 2005) treats sarcasm (a word he prefers in this context to irony)²² as a category of impoliteness, which, in terms of face attack, it is. However, because of the different interpretative mechanisms involved, I have found it convenient to treat irony, or mock politeness, separately.

I have used “conversational irony” in the heading to this section, as a device for limiting the denotation, in this discussion, of the term *irony*, which is so broadly used in many contexts. Irony sometimes refers to nonverbal phenomena, as in “dramatic irony” and the “irony of fate.” Even focusing on verbal irony, the word has been used very broadly—for example, in literary studies—to indicate a rhetorical

²² As an alternative explanation of irony, an echoic theory of irony was influentially proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1981), though opposed to the “pretence theory” of Clark and Gerrig (1984). In later publications, Wilson has linked this theory to “expressing a mocking, scornful or contemptuous attitude” (Wilson 2012), so that the connection between irony and (im)politeness is implicitly made. Although not in conflict with the echoic and pretence theories, my account of conversational irony is functionally dependent on, and explained by, the theory of politeness.

device, a figure of speech, or a linguistic technique whereby two or more contrasting meanings confront one another. This sense of irony is related to that of conversational irony as used here, but on the other hand is still too broad. By contrast, the term *sarcasm* can be too narrow for the purpose, more or less limited to snide remarks and not applying to the whole gamut of effects that irony can allow. In this section, I use irony in the sense of “conversational irony” as captured in the Irony Principle.

8.3.1 THE IRONY PRINCIPLE: MOCK POLITENESS

In Leech (1983: 82) I stated the Irony Principle in the imperative mood as follows:

If you must cause offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't overtly conflict with the PP, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature.

This is a starting point, but I would like to go further in considering the function of (conversational) irony and the variety of effects it can have. In particular, this declaration does not explain why people opt for irony, rather than simply choosing direct face attack—impoliteness and rudeness. What is the conversational function of irony? To tighten up the definition, I will state the Irony Principle in a way that imitates the characterization of the GSP in 4.3.1:

In order to be ironic, *S* expresses or implies a meaning (let's call it Meaning I) that associates a favorable value with what pertains to *O* (*O* = other person(s), mainly the addressee) or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to *S* (*S* = self, speaker). At the same time, by means of Meaning I and the context, *S* more indirectly implies a second, deeper meaning (Meaning II) that cancels out Meaning I by associating an unfavorable value with what pertains to *O*, or associating a favorable meaning with what pertains to *S*. The derivation of Meaning II from Meaning I is by means of two paths of inference: first, Meaning I is infelicitous (i.e., pragmatically untenable in context, often because of violation of the Cooperative Principle) and therefore to be rejected; and second, given that the meaning is infelicitous and in accordance with the PP, the obvious way to make sense of it is to look for a related interpretation that is felicitous and not in accordance with the PP—which is what the Irony Principle provides.

The Irony Principle is a *second-order principle* because it is impossible to understand a remark to be ironic unless we understand it as superficially observing the PP.

As already argued in 4.4.3, the reason for treating an apparently polite utterance as impolite is that the polite interpretation is unsustainable—and is presumably meant to be so. The reasons for this are basically twofold: first, the polite interpretation is not felicitous in the context (because of exaggeration, understatement, manifest falsehood, etc.), and second, the demeanor of *S* contains signals

that the polite utterance is not meant to be seriously entertained and has a more face-threatening intention than appears from the words uttered. Additionally, the ironic interpretation may be reinforced by pragmaticalization, as for example

- (1) *You're a fine friend!* (modeled on Grice 1975: 53)

can have either a seriously polite or an ironic interpretation, the latter infringing the Maxim of Quality and implying that *H* is the opposite of friendly. But with the change of word order to

- (1a) *A fine friend YOU are!*

it is specialized to an ironic interpretation—an example of pragmaticalization. Notice that in this example the placement of the intonational emphasis on *you* adds to the ironic markedness of the expression. Thus (1a), with its marked features of expression, is an infringement of both Quality and Manner, making it more conducive to an ironic interpretation. (The extent to which the irony is pragmaticalized, especially with the change of word order, will however reduce or even eliminate the importance of Gricean inferencing.)

Apart from a straightforward breach of Quality Maxims as exemplified in (1), the infelicity of the overt meaning may arise from exaggeration (the rhetorical figure of hyperbole) and understatement (the rhetorical figure of meiosis or litotes). These two are breaches of Quality in the sense that they indicate an overstatement or understatement of the truth. Consider two examples from British TV. In the quiz program *The Weakest Link* (Culpeper 2005) the impolite quizmaster Anne Robinson is asking a contestant about his job:

- (2) ANNE ROBINSON: OK what do you actually do
 SHAUN: er put traffic cones in the road
 ANNE R: (very slow and emphatic, as if admiring and surprised) you
 DON'T!
 SHAUN: I do
 ANNE R: well **what an interesting person you turned out to be**

Robinson's first reply mimics a response of excited incredulous astonishment when someone tells you an amazing fact about themselves. The implication is that Shaun has a remarkably interesting job: the Approbation Maxim is observed. This is however, clearly an absurdly exaggerated view of the traffic cone maneuvering that he describes. The exclamation with which she follows this up (*well what an interesting person...*) emphatically underlines the same judgment. The covert ironic meaning is plain: Shaun's job is absurdly boring and totally uninteresting. The Approbation Maxim is implicitly violated.

There are two further observations on this example that apply generally to conversational irony. First, the ironic remark does not have to be interpreted as a proposition with a truth value. Although declarative in form, the response *you DON'T* is in no sense a denial of Shaun's information about his job. It is a backchannel similar in

function to less hyperbolic responses like *Oh!* and *Really?* but exaggeratedly implying that the information just given by *O* is so remarkably interesting as to appear unbelievable. Further examples illustrating irony with nonpropositional utterances include

- ❑ *Good afternoon, Sue*, taken from Holmes and Schnurr (2005: 138), where Sue has arrived late for a morning briefing meeting in a factory and is greeted ironically by the person in charge. (The exaggeration lies in the implicature that Sue has arrived in the afternoon—much later than she actually did arrive.)
- ❑ *Don't mind me!*—a formulaic piece of sarcasm typically uttered, for example, when someone barges into you in a crowd.
- ❑ *Sorry I asked!* and *Sorry I spoke!*—sarcastic apologies where the speaker has been humiliated for speaking out of turn.

All these examples (particularly the last two) are very likely to be spoken with a marked plaintively hostile intonation pattern. The tone is the opposite of what would be expected if the apology were genuine.

A second observation is that irony tends to be more complex, ingenious, witty, and/or entertaining than a straight piece of impoliteness. An advantage of this is that it boosts the face of the ironist while attacking the face of the target *O*. In plain language, *S* scores at *O*'s expense. Imagine the effect in (2) if Anne Robinson had replaced *interesting* by *boring*: *What a boring person you turned out to be*. The straightforwardly insulting remark would have been less likely to excite laughter, and would have been less entertaining to the viewers. More important, perhaps: the victim Shaun would have found it possible to regain face by rebutting the quizmaster's insult, and explaining why he was not the boring person she took him to be. As it was, this option was closed to him.

Irony comes in various degrees of subtlety and seriousness. It is often felt to attack the target with a rapier, rather than with the bludgeon of downright rudeness. But the weapon may be more or less humorous, and more or less hostile. On the periphery of irony is the use of threats such as those quoted in (6)–(8) in 8.2.3, from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* It struck me, when looking at threats in this text, that they were mostly disguised, or “veiled,” threats. The textbook template for a threat is a conditional proposition of this form:

If you do *X*,²³ then *Y* will follow.
(where *X* is an event under the control of *O*, and *Y* is an event damaging to *O*
and under the control of *S*)

Thus a prototypical threat is a means of controlling the behavior of *O* through *O*'s fear of what may happen if the illocution is ignored. However, none of the three

²³ There is also a negative variant of this template, which begins *If you do not do X...*, where *X* is the event under the control of *O*.

threats quoted in (1)–(3) in 8.2.2 makes any mention of the penalty to be inflicted, or the action that would trigger it: *You’re going to regret this; You just wait, mister; Before I’m through with you, you’ll wish...* In these examples, as often happens, the proposed action *X* and (especially) the damaging event *Y* are left implicit.

Why are threats so often “veiled”? One probable reason is that the threatener benefits from exercising freedom of choice as to how, when, and how far to carry out the threat. A vague threat can be thoroughly unsettling to the person threatened, who is likely to be influenced by the threat even (or especially) if its exact nature is unknown. Another reason cashes in on one of the advantages of irony, in that inexplicit threats can be relatively “innocent” in their overt meaning—they can be read, for example, as warnings for *O*’s benefit, which would observe rather than violate the PP, whereas the covert meaning roughly follows the pattern of the template, as in “If you do *X*, I will see to it that *Y* follows.” Clearly this contravenes the PP. On this interpretation, another function of a veiled threat is to boost the face of *S* (portrayed as the clever person in control of events) at the expense of *O*’s face, which again aligns threats with irony.

However, the irony of veiled threats is at the hostile end of the gamut of ironic effect. Other ironic remarks can be more benign and less serious. At the other end of the scale are comic remarks that are humorous and teasing in their effect, rather than hostile. A definition of teasing by Keltner et al. (2001: 234), quoted in Culpeper (2011a: 166) explains why such ironic effects can be relatively benign:

We define a tease as an intentional provocation accompanied by playful off-record markers that together comment on something relevant to the target.... Although the provocation itself can be delivered indirectly (as in ironic teasing), what typically makes the tease indirect and less face-threatening for both teaser and target is the accompanying off-record markers, which signal that the provocation is to be taken in jest.

An example might be the understatement in 8.3.2 below: *Well, you’re not exactly a bundle of laughs yourself* as a rejoinder to a remark that *S* is in a sulk. The “off-record” element is the comic negated exaggeration of “not exactly a bundle of laughs.”

To make a concluding point on the function of conversational irony: it works in favor of the speaker both offensively and defensively. Offensively, it achieves its impolite goal of a put-down of *O*, in a way that can be interpreted as face-depriving both by *O* and by other people present. Defensively, it means *S* cannot easily be accused of causing offense (because *S* can always claim or imply that the overt, “innocent” interpretation was intended). It can also not be easily revenged by overt impoliteness, so the escalation of rudeness toward verbal and even physical violence, illustrated by the children’s quarrel in (3) below, resulting in loss of face by both parties, is less likely to happen:

- (3) James: I sock you on the nose.
 Art: I sock you in the mouth.
 James: You gonna have a black eye you keep on.

Art: You gonna have a bloody nose, and a bloody mouth and knocks one of your teeth out. I'm gonna knock 'em down your throat.
(Culpeper 2011a: 243, quoted from Lein and Brenneis 1978: 301)

This kind of unrestrained slanging match could hardly happen if James and Art were ironists.

8.3.2 TWO TRIGGERS FOR CONVERSATIONAL IRONY: UNDERSTATEMENT AND ATTITUDE CLASH

Introducing irony in previous sections, I characterized its default “polite” interpretation as untenable in context—typically because of its manifest breach of the CP, and the conflict between what is said and the demeanor of the speaker (whether conveyed through tone of voice, intonation, or other nonverbal signals). Collectively, these can be regarded as “triggers” of the ironic interpretation, and I turn now to two triggers that need further illustration.

Understatement (or “meiosis,” as Grice calls it using a traditional rhetorical term) occurs where *S* makes a claim that is clearly inadequate, less informative than required, to describe some phenomenon. It is therefore a breach of the first Maxim of Quantity (Appendix, A1.2). Grice’s example (1975: 53) is instructive, as it shows how understatement can be a trigger of irony: “Of a man known to have broken up all the furniture, one says *He was a little intoxicated*.” It is clear, from the fact that violence and intoxication are generally negatively evaluated, that the understatement puts a mild, polite gloss on something that was in actuality a far more serious offense.

Understatements can occur with humorous effect in ordinary conversation. For a typical case, consider an exchange between two friends or partners where A has accused B of being sulky or ill-humored, and B replies, *Well, you’re not exactly a bundle of laughs yourself*. The intensifier *exactly*, with the phrase *a bundle of laughs*, places A’s mood at the highest pinnacle of good humor, but then the *not* negates that extreme, and seems to leave it open to the interpreter to read into the claim any degree of good or ill humor apart from the very highest. The trigger, however, would not be used unless A wanted to make a critical tit-for-tat rejoinder, and so in practice the interpretation goes toward the pejorative extreme: “You are in a (very) bad mood yourself.”

Understatement is also liable to occur in written texts, as seen in this critical remark from a literary review:

- (1) It is unfortunately doubtful whether the reader will be greatly helped by Mr. Auden’s introduction. (From the LOB Corpus, Text C12)

The signs of politeness are clear in the adverbs *unfortunately*—which functions as a kind of apology for a critical remark—and *greatly*—which seems to identify an extreme on the scale of helpfulness but in effect is negated by the words *doubtful whether*—implying that the writer is not sure of that extreme helpfulness. After all

this polite hedging, the impolite conclusion that we are likely to come to is that the reader is helped very little, if at all.

Attitude clash is the term I will use for an overt clash between “polite” and “impolite” parts of the same utterance. Culpeper (2011a: 174) deals with this under the heading of “verbal formula mismatches” and gives as his paradigm example *Could you just fuck off*, where the opening formula *Could you just...* introduce a polite, highly mitigated request, and the last two words *fuck off* say “go away” in the rudest possible way. An attitude clash is a case where the overt “polite” meaning and the “impolite” meaning of irony occur side by side in the same piece of language. *Thank you for nothing* might be given as a second illustration, where the “polite” *Thank you* and the “impolite” criticism *for nothing* occur side by side. It could be claimed that attitude clash does not conform to the earlier definition of conversational irony, because the “polite” and “impolite” meanings are both overt, co-occurring in the surface form of the text. However, it is significant that the “polite” piece of text tends to precede the “impolite” piece, so that if we run through the text in real time, there is an opportunity for the target of irony to be “led up the garden path” by the “polite” bit *Could you just...*, before being forced to retrospectively reinterpret it as ironical in the context of what follows (*fuck off*). There is no doubt that the impression *O* is finally left with is the impolite one.

A further example from Culpeper (2011a) is an anonymous letter of complaint, addressed on the internet to a cable company (p. 236). It begins *Dear Cretins*, and after a lengthy tirade ends as follows:

- (2) Have a nice day—may it be the last in your miserable short life, you irritatingly incompetent and infuriatingly unhelpful bunch of twats.

The polite formulaic opening of a letter *Dear X* is subverted by the insulting vocative that follows, *Cretins*, and likewise in the signing off, the polite good wish *Have a nice day* (7.5.3) is immediately followed by the curse *may it be the last*, and an elaborately insulting invective of *you... bunch of twats*.

8.4 Banter: Mock Impoliteness

I have described the Principle of Banter as a “second-order principle” in the same sense as the Irony Principle: they both exploit the Politeness Principle, but their functions are different. The two principles are also the converse of one another: in one case overt politeness leads to an impolite interpretation, and in the other case overt impoliteness leads to a “polite” (or rather, “camaraderic”) interpretation.²⁴

²⁴ I have invented the adjective *camaraderic* as a derivation from *camaraderie* (1.2.1, 4.4.3). The converseness of irony and banter would have been more convincing if I had followed B&L (1987: 102) in treating camaraderie or “claiming common ground” as a species of positive politeness. As it is, the

Camaraderie, as already explained (1.2.1, 4.4.3), is a relationship of rapport between people who feel themselves to be close in terms of both vertical and horizontal distance. Pragmalinguistically, it is at the opposite end of the bivalent politeness scale (1.2.1) from honorification, and is marked by the use of familiar/casual forms of language, including the use (in English) of first names, nicknames, and familiarizers such as *mate* (British, Australian, and New Zealand) and *bro* and *dude* (mainly AmE) as terms of address,²⁵ or (in many other languages) of familiar second-person pronouns such as the French *tu*. In addition to these and the use of swear words, banter (or mock impoliteness) is probably one of the main discriminators of camaraderie. The rationale behind this is that if two or more people find it possible to exchange insults and other impolite remarks, and at the same time to treat these as nonserious, or even amusing, they share a powerful way of signaling their solidarity. In addressing a person who is distant from *S* in vertical or horizontal distance, *S* could not risk using impolite language without serious risk of causing offense. Hence banter is not normally used between people who are of unequal power status, or who are strangers. And the use of banter itself can therefore be a signal of solidarity and camaraderie.

To give an example of a milieu in which banter occurs naturally, I quote an anecdote recounted by Deutschmann (2003: 23) toward the beginning of his book on apologies in English:

- (3) On my way to Lancaster University I was subjected to one of the frequent train cancellations which are so much a part of commuting in Britain nowadays. I was stuck in Preston with three hours to kill, and being tired of lukewarm, watery coffees served in polystyrene vessels, I ventured outside the railway station to look for some more wholesome refreshment; not surprisingly, I ended up outside the Preston Railway Inn.

On entering the pub, I found myself in the middle of an Irish evening that was reaching its climax. As I made my way towards the bar, burdened by bags and my overloaded briefcase, I felt rather out of place among Celtic United supporters and Guinness-swilling regulars, who were all chanting in unison to the lyrics of some, to me, obscure Irish folksong. I negotiated my way through the crowd while delivering a seemingly endless stream of “sorries”, “excuse mes” and “pardon mes”, and proceeded to try to catch the barman’s attention in a similar manner (unsuccessfully, I may add).

A man standing next to me enquired why I was apologizing all the time. I apologized again (for apologizing) at which he explained that “in there they were all mates and if I wanted a beer I’d better cut the

parallelism between irony and banter can be maintained up to a point: overt politeness is canceled out by covert nonpoliteness (irony), and overt impoliteness is canceled out by covert nonimpoliteness (banter).

²⁵ See Kuiper (2010) on the use of familiarizers such as *mate*, *bro*, and *guys* in the discourse of a New Zealand rugby team.

crap, put my fiver on the bar counter and state loudly and clearly what I wanted.” He demonstrated what he meant by addressing the barman with a “John, you dozy bastard. Give the man a pint.” The result was instantaneous; before I could say “face work,” a cold and well-needed lager stood before me.

We will note some fairly obvious things about the context before looking at the linguistic aspects of the banter itself. The gathering included a crowd of football supporters, of the same nationality, who had been drinking alcohol—all factors conducive to a convivial gathering and to camaraderie. The man at the bar declared that “they were all *mates*”—a term typically used in the UK for good friends, members of an “in group.” Exceptionally, he included the visitor (who incidentally was a young Swedish male) as one of the “mates.” But the Swede—Deutschmann—made the mistake of trying to reach his goal by politeness, and was rescued by a practitioner of banter, who had no difficulty in getting him served with what he wanted. All these features of the scenario are significant.

Looking at the impoliteness of the language itself, we notice first *I’d better cut the crap*: a fairly rude way of framing a directive. (This is reported in free indirect speech, so that what was said was probably “You’d better cut the crap”). The relative impoliteness of a directive using the formula *You’d better* was commented on in 6.3.2. In addition, with its use of the taboo term *crap*, *cut the crap* is a less-than-polite way of saying “stop being polite.” Further, when the Irishman goes on to order a drink at the bar, he addresses the barman by his first name *John*, indicating familiarity—but then goes on to add an insult *you dozy bastard*, ostentatiously breaching the Approbation Maxim. Finally, he uses a bald-on-record directive *Give the man a pint*, which in less folksy contexts would be considered a breach of the Tact Maxim.

One characteristic of this scenario that calls for comment is its masculinity. Although gender is not mentioned, it is likely that most members of the gathering, particularly of the crowd of football supporters, were male. There is, or at least has been in the past, a strong association between male gender and banter. The term camaraderie itself harks back to the strong bond of solidarity felt between military comrades-in-arms: until relatively recently, of course, such comrades would be all men. Culpeper (2011a: 211–212) discusses the ritualized insults that take place between supporters of opposing teams in football crowds—again, a predominantly male preserve—and relates this to “sounding”: the trading of ritualized insults between male black teenagers studied by Labov (1972). Interestingly, Mills (2003: 107) reports the unease she experienced in feeling a pressure to “do” banter and to join in with the dominant male culture in a teaching department, describing this as a necessary but rather tedious element in maintaining one’s position in the departmental hierarchy. An example of rather extreme banter she quotes between male professionals in this context is:

- (4) CHRIST ALMIGHTY (.) if one man could bugger me around more in two days than you have in the last two days I’d like to know his name Christ Almighty (.) Still all right. If I didn’t know you I would say it was on purpose.

Until the last somewhat mollifying last sentence, this could easily be read as an expression of explosive anger: the signs of banter are not clear, except from additional evidence from the context: this tirade was accompanied by laughter, and was followed by the addressee's response of *Have a drink*.

Yet banter is by no means restricted to the male gender. Culpeper (2011a: 207) notes the use of *bitch* as a term of address marking solidarity between women; and my own recent experience of being a hospital patient has taught me that banter among (largely female) nursing and ancillary staff is pervasive, as is banter between hospital staff and (some) male patients.²⁶

This leads on to the comment (made by Culpeper 2011a: 211) that banter, like humor more generally, functions as a "safety valve." Banter tends to occur almost ritualistically in certain communities of practice where individuals undergo emotional pressure, for example, in hospitals or in sports team events. Emotional pressure can reach a breaking point and result in uncontrolled aggression and violence. It seems likely that, in such situations, banter has a positive function in allowing aggression to be expressed, but also in defusing its violent effects by promoting an atmosphere of friendly jocularity.

8.4.1 A FINAL NOTE: A HIERARCHY OF PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLES?

Both conversational irony and banter, like politeness itself, can become highly pragmaticalized or conventionalized, as in (1a) *A fine friend YOU are* in 8.3 above (see Alba Juez 1998 on the conventionalization of irony). But there is one interesting respect in which irony and banter appear to differ. It seems possible that banter can exploit irony, whereas irony cannot exploit banter. That is, if we think of irony as a second-order principle deriving its force from the Politeness Principle (PP), then there is the possibility that banter can become a third-order principle deriving its force from the Irony Principle. If sarcasm is mock politeness and banter is mock impoliteness/rudeness, what we are now considering is "mock sarcasm" (a term borrowed by Bousfield 2008: 119). This can be better formulated in terms of implicature. Just as the politeness of an utterance can be inferred by way of the PP from the inapplicability of its face value meaning in terms of the Cooperative Principles (CP), so the impoliteness of an ironic utterance can be inferred by way of the Irony Principle from the inapplicability of its polite meaning (as in *A fine friend you are!*). A further step of derivation would be taken if we could demonstrate the inference of a nonimpolite meaning from the impolite meaning by way of the Banter Principle. In this case, the ironic interpretation of *A fine friend you are!* would be the default interpretation canceled out by a further inference whereby the impoliteness of the sarcastic remark is replaced by the nonimpoliteness of the bantering

²⁶ Gu (1997), in an article significantly entitled "Five ways of handling a bedpan," illustrates banter between staff and patients in a Chinese hospital ward.

interpretation. This would be the case, for example, if this remark, or a similar one *A fine partner you are!* was uttered in a bantering tone (accompanied by smiles, or laughter, or a comically annoyed expression) by one student A addressing a friend B acting as a partner in a card game, where B has undermined A's game by playing the wrong card.

Unfortunately it is difficult to identify instances of “ironic banter” such as this in real discourse data. But example (5) illustrates how such highly indirect interpretations can take place²⁷:

(5) That's right, Five! Always lay the blame on others!

This illustrates a fairly formulaic pattern for sarcasm: “That's right, (*X*). (Always) *do Y*”—where *X* is a vocative and *Y* is a “bad” action. This example, however, does not come from real life, but from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, chapter 8, where the gardeners, in the shape of playing cards (hence their names *Two, Five, Seven*) are quarreling over their task of painting the red roses white. It is preceded by Five's contribution: “*I couldn't help it,*” said Five, in a sulky tone; “*Seven jogged my elbow.*” Although there is no doubt of Seven's hostile intent in this conventional piece of irony, it is possible to find a scenario in which that formula “That's right, (*X*). (Always) *do Y*” is used in a bantering way, for example, in this extract from an online dialogue, where members of the Black Mustang (car) Club Forum joke about their car driving and navigating abilities:

(6) **96cobra**

03-14-2005, 09:40 PM

This means you are last in our caravan!!
hahahaha burnnn, Id say itd be better for her to be in the front, so if
we got lost we could blame it on her:p

CobraKim

03-14-2005, 09:44 PM

that's right **always blame the girl!!**

It seems likely that such mock sarcasm can occur only when the ironic remark is a conventionalized, semi-idiomatized routine: that is, when, through pragmaticalization (3.7), the irony has become the default interpretation.

In contrast, I have been unable to hunt down a context in which an ironic interpretation is inferred on the basis of a piece of banter. The Irony Principle has to precede the Banter Principle in a series of implicatures, not vice versa; there is apparently no “mock banter” corresponding to the “mock sarcasm” illustrated in

²⁷ For an account of the mock-sarcasm phenomenon with detailed illustration from an episode in the TV program *The Clampers*, see Bousfield (2008: 119–122).

(6). The suggestion, then, is that the Banter Principle is of a higher order than the Irony Principle. This leads me to postulate a hierarchy of pragmatic principles as follows (Table 8.2).

TABLE 8.2. A hierarchy of pragmatic principles.

Hierarchy	Name of principle	Phenomena it accounts for
Zero order:	Cooperative Principle (CP)	Basic communicative cooperation
1st order:	Politeness Principle (PP)	Politeness, impoliteness
2nd order:	Irony Principle	Conversational irony, sarcasm (Mock politeness)
2 nd /3rd order:	Banter Principle	Banter (mock impoliteness/rudeness; also, potentially: mock sarcasm)

PART THREE

Further Perspectives

Methods of Data Collection

EMPIRICAL PRAGMATICS

Part Three of the book presents three themes that are important for a comprehensive account of politeness in English, although they can be seen as extensions of the model presented so far. If there is one chapter of this part that is more fundamental than the others, it is the present one, on methods of data collection. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that this chapter, like the following two, provides no more than a broad-brush survey, omitting a great deal of detail.

Most of this chapter can apply to pragmatics in general, not just politeness; but on the other hand, much of the research in this area has been carried out with particular goals in mind, such as the investigation of how learners acquire the pragmatics of a foreign language (the main theme of Chapter 10), for which politeness is an important topic.

9.1 An Overview of Methods

First, let's consider the bases of our knowledge of pragmatics and of politeness. A generation ago, it would have been assumed by most practitioners of linguistics that the basic facts—about grammar and lexis, for example—would be introspectively available to people who had a good knowledge of the language concerned, more particularly native speakers. There was no need, therefore, to investigate language by collecting data from sources beyond the human mind. Even today, that position has some truth on its side. For example, native speakers of English can probably guess with reasonable confidence that young people are inclined to use stronger swear words than older people, and that men are inclined to use stronger swear words than women. But if we want to know with greater certainty—to avoid vagueness and guesswork—then those hypotheses need to be tested on the basis of data collected from observation. (And the observational evidence, in addition to supporting them, yields more detail.)¹ This need to collect data in order to arrive at soundly based generalizations or to test hypotheses

¹ For the gender evidence, see McEnery (2006: 34–36). See also the differentiation of male versus female, young versus old vocabulary in Rayson et al. (1997). McEnery shows, however, that the

becomes more evident as soon as we consider research questions for which individual introspection and experience offer no answers. For example, how do particular groups of speakers of a language—defined by geographical area, by gender, by age, by social class—differ in the way they use the resources of the language for politeness? How do such findings apply to their relation to sociopragmatic parameters influencing politeness, such as B&L’s P, D, and R?

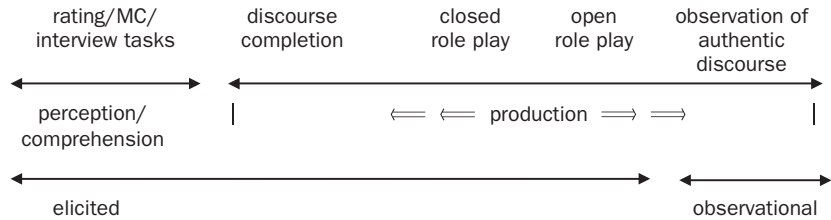
Observational methods for collecting pragmatic data are usefully represented in Kasper and Dahl’s diagram (Figure 9.1).

This diagram shows what can be more or less regarded as a methodological continuum, where the opposed left and right sides of the diagram can be described in terms of two contrasts: *comprehension* versus *production data*, and *elicited data* versus *observational data*. At the leftmost position, then, we find methods like the well-known multiple choice (MC) test, which elicits from the respondent a choice from among a closed set of possible responses to a discursive situation. This is arguably a comprehension task, as in this example:

1. A visiting student from another university is giving a presentation in the seminar room, but you can’t hear him/her very well, as it is quite noisy.
What would you say?

*Imagine the visiting student is of the same gender as you.

- A. Excuse me, would you mind speaking a bit louder?
- B. Speak a bit louder please.
- C. Can’t you speak a bit louder?
- D. Excuse me, why speak a bit louder?



Note: MC = multiple choice questionnaire

FIGURE 9.1 Data collection methods, represented as a gradient between elicitation and observation.

Note: From figure 1, Kasper, G., and M. Dahl. 1991. Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 13 (2): 217.

difference between male and female swearing is qualitative rather than quantitative. That is, men tend to use stronger swear words than women, but they do not use swear words more frequently. This illustrates the benefit of more precise formulation than simply saying “men swear more than women”: pragmatic data collection at least clarifies the grounds on which everyday intuitions of language usage are based.

At the rightmost pole we find, most typically, the collection of naturally occurring conversational data, for example from a corpus such as the BNC or the LCSAE. What we observe here are instances of real-life language production. A third pair of descriptive terms might also be used to characterize this continuum: *controlled* versus *uncontrolled*. Thus a typical MC test constrains a respondent to choose one of just four possible utterances or responses; no other responses are possible. In the BNCdemog (the demographically sampled subcorpus of the BNC), by contrast, when the conversational data were collected in the 1990s there were no determinable constraints on what the participants in a conversation were “allowed” to say to one another. So corpus evidence (usually) illustrates the *uncontrolled* end of the continuum.

Yet another contrast can be correlated with the three already mentioned: *contrived* versus *authentic*. That is, the data collected in a corpus are real-life, naturally occurring, uncued conversational evidence, whereas the response to an MC task is unreal and contrived, and based on what the respondent imagines he or she might choose to say in an imagined situation. Another way to look at it is to think of an MC questionnaire as providing metapragmatic evidence from a metapragmatic task, where the respondent judges the pragmatic appropriateness of four existing utterances A, B, C, and D. In any event, this MC task is far removed from the real language-use data that pragmatics in principle should investigate. As a summary, Figure 9.2 shows the four ways of characterizing the methodological continuum.

Between the two poles of the continuum we have been discussing, there are various intermediate methodologies, which lean more toward one pole or the other. I will discuss these below, and also consider more detailed variations of methodology within each category.

But let’s begin by briefly considering the advantages and disadvantages of the two extremes. It is obvious that the observation of real-life, freely occurring discourse scores heavily for authenticity, but on the other hand it loses out on what may be called *investigative precision*—that is, the tailoring of the data collection to particular research questions or goals. The MC test, in contrast, has a poor rating for authenticity but scores highly on the investigative precision scale. For instance, a particular set of MC items can pinpoint particular questions concerning (say) indirectness in requests, or responses to compliments, while varying systematically such contextual factors as the three politeness-influencing parameters of vertical

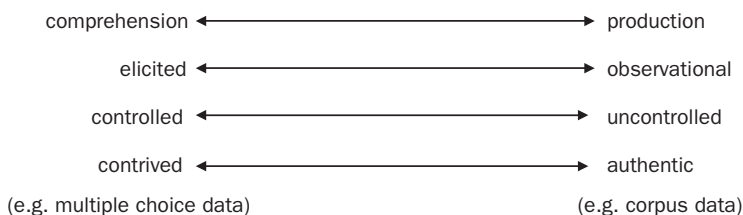


FIGURE 9.2 Four ways of characterizing the poles of the methodological continuum.

distance, horizontal distance, and cost-benefit. To find the instances of language use matching these variables in a corpus would be like looking for many needles in many haystacks.

Going back to Kasper and Dahl's diagram (Figure 9.1), we can now examine and elaborate on the different data collection methods by moving from the left side to the right side of the diagram.

9.2 Rating, Multiple Choice, and Interview Tasks

Although I have introduced the multiple choice (MC) test as the prototypical form of "closed option" task, there are various subtypes that can be considered. In some tasks where there is a closed set of options to be judged, the respondent has to rate the items on a scale such as a five-point rating (Likert) scale, making a judgment as to how (in)appropriate to the situation, how (im)polite, etc., it is. In other cases, a set of options is offered and the respondent orders the options: for example, he or she is given a set of utterances on cards that must be ordered in terms of politeness (Carrell and Konneker 1981; Tanaka and Kawade 1982).

One limitation of MC tests and their variants is that they test a very restricted area of pragmatic competence and cannot be easily generalized to more wide-ranging judgments of politeness. This type of test went out of fashion in the 1990s, as scholars became more interested in sociopragmatic factors governing politeness and rejected the thesis that politeness could be studied or judged out of context. However, I have argued that there is no reason to avoid comparing politeness out of context, so long as one is talking about pragmalinguistic politeness. In this way, we can use rating scales and enable subjects to focus on the default interpretation of speech events. I would therefore argue that some of these tests have a value and can take a respectable place among the battery of data collection methods. Walter (1979) found that English NSs (native speakers) and NNSs (nonnative speakers of English) generally agreed in these comparative judgments of politeness, and I have found the same in my own admittedly limited experiment along similar lines (see the next paragraph).

I asked forty-five native speakers of English to judge which of three utterances was most polite (= MP) and which was least polite (= LP). Seven tables illustrating major speech act types, such as the requests illustrated in Table 9.1, were presented as a questionnaire.

Respondents were asked to write MP (= most polite) or LP (= least polite) in the boxes alongside appropriate utterances. No explanation of "politeness" was given. The outcome was that for every pair of utterances of the same speech act type, there was an overall consensus of 89 percent as to which item was more polite than the other. This is, of course, a significantly higher percentage than the 50 percent that would be expected in a random grading task. It suggests that native speakers "know what they are doing" when asked to grade utterances in terms politeness

TABLE 9.1

A tabular design to elicit judgments of comparative (pragmalinguistic) politeness.

Just hold the line, will you?
 Could you possibly hold the line for a minute?
 Would you hold the line a minute?

out of context—that there is indeed something I have called pragmalinguistic politeness, or context-invariant politeness.² (Some readers may say: “Of course that sort of judgment can be made and native speakers can agree on it; it’s a trivial test, and no one can be surprised by the result.” To this I reply: “That’s precisely my point: it’s trivial and obvious, yet the dominant approach to politeness at the present time has been to reject it, by claiming that politeness can only be judged in context.” See 2.2.11, 4.2.2.)

Although Kasper and Dahl place these closed-option instruments on the “comprehension” side of the comprehension versus production divide, it cannot be said that they are clearly testing the addressee’s role rather than the speaker’s role in pragmatic interaction. We could equally well see them as testing the speaker’s ability to choose from a range of options in utterance production. It could even be argued that they are neither comprehension nor production tasks but belong rather to tests of communicative competence neutral between the two.

In Kasper and Dahl’s diagram, the category of *interview* tasks is rather oddly placed in the same perception/comprehension category as multiple-choice tasks. Interviews are related to MC-type instruments only in that generally the interview’s aim is to elicit subjects’ judgments or perceptions of pragmatic behavior. But an interview, even if closely controlled, is far more open-ended in conception and practice than the MC-type tasks already considered, and this leads to qualitative rather than quantitative outcomes. Typically, as in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), semistructured interviews are combined with other, more constrained types of data collection, such as a ranking test, an MC, or a DCT (see 9.3 below). Often it is a revealing procedure to interview respondents retrospectively after the elicitation test, in order to throw light on the responses they made, and to explore how they perceive these in relation to possible alternative responses.

² Kasper and Dahl (1991: 219) argue that pragmatic judgments out of context are unrealistic, and that in practice subjects invent a context in responding to an out-of-context judgment task. However, to my knowledge this has not been demonstrated. A more likely explanation is that people, faced with an out-of-context pragmatic task, construct a generalized context that helps them make the politeness judgment, rather than a specific set of contexts. It seems, in any case, that the notion of “default interpretation” (see 3.4, 3.6) can reliably operate without contextual information. In the task I have described, the comparability of syntactic and lexical content ensures that a similar context would be constructed for all three sentences in each table. Interestingly, only two of my forty-five respondents raised the unclarity or context variability of the concept of “politeness” as a difficulty in carrying out the task.

9.3 Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs)

Of all methods of pragmatic data collection, the *discourse completion test* (DCT)³ has been the most prevalent, but it has also lent itself to a great deal of controversy. (In this respect it reminds me of B&L's politeness theory.) The DCT was initially popularized by the influential CCSARP (Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project) research program in the 1980s (see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). It was devised as a means of comparing how members of a number of cultural communities and speakers of different languages handled the same task of speech-act production (focusing on requests and apologies).

An example of an item from a DCT questionnaire:

You are in a meeting. You want to take some notes, and need to borrow a pen.
A friend of yours (an American male) happens to be sitting next to you, and might have a pen.

You: _____

(from Sasaki 1998: 458)

The DCT could equally well be called a “stimulus-driven production task.” The stimulus is typically given in the description of a dialogue scenario, often with an utterance to which the respondent is asked to give a response. Sometimes a reply to the respondent's utterance is also given. It is clear that the DCT is strictly constrained in eliciting a response to a particular scenario, which specifies details of the interlocutor and the context. It is less constrained than the MC-type instrument, however, in that the respondent can fill the gap in any way, by composing an appropriate utterance or sequence of utterances. In practice, here another constraint kicks in: the DCT has traditionally and typically been delivered in the form of a written questionnaire, containing a number of items, which can be as many as twenty or so. Thus the respondent (a) has a limited amount of white space to fill and (b) may also be subject to time constraints; further, fatigue may set in, so in practice responses will be fairly short.

The most frequent criticism of the DCT is that it is an artificial exercise, not producing authentic discourse but reflecting the respondent's imaginary judgment of what he or she might say in that context. It may even be that the respondent has to imagine responding in the persona of someone else (for example, where the student pretends to be a sports manager) in a situation he or she has never confronted in the past and is unlikely to confront in the future. A related criticism is that (in its usual written form) the DCT is in the wrong medium: the subject responds on paper, instead of speaking as he or she would do in real life.⁴

³ DCT is also used to stand for “discourse completion task,” with the same general meaning.

⁴ Some writers, such as Beebe and Cummings (1996), have compared written with oral responses and shown that written responses tend to be shorter than oral ones.

Against this, however, researchers have found the DCT a convenient methodology with the merit of being able to produce a large amount of closely targeted data with comparatively little effort, as compared with other instruments. A test can be administered, and subsequently coded and statistically analyzed, for a large number of respondents (say, a hundred students sharing the same course). This can be enough to enable a number of relevant variables (such as respondents' age, gender, and L1 background; power, distance, and cost-benefit variables in the DCT items) to be researched with significant results. A DCT can even be administered by making the questionnaire available on the internet, reaching a large number of respondents who can complete the task and submit it in their own time. There is an advantage, on the other hand, in administering the DCT under classroom conditions, where factors such as time and the demographic composition of the respondent group can be strictly controlled.

Various methods have been tried to overcome some of the drawbacks of the DCT. One possibility (made easier by modern technology) is to administer the DCT and record the response both in spoken form. This overcomes the objection that a written DCT is an unrealistic way of representing how people would react in the spoken medium. Greater realism, again, can be achieved by using both visual and auditory input; it helps if the voice and face of a suitable interlocutor are encountered against a suitable background scenario (see Suzuki 2007 for an example; also see Schauer 2009: 68–69 on multimedia instruments). It can be argued that in responding to such a stimulus the respondent achieves a natural online spontaneity that would not be attainable in a written DCT.

9.4 Closed and Open Role Play

Moving further to the right in Figure 9.1, we come to the category of data collection termed *role play*, which Kasper and Dahl (1991) and others have subdivided into *closed role play* and *open* (or *open-ended*) *role play*, of which the former is more constrained, and less like natural discourse, than the latter. In a role play, the respondent and at least one other person enact a piece of dialogue. “Closed role play” applies to an enactment that is tightly constrained to elicit a particular kind of speech event (e.g., Rintell and Mitchell 1989). In fact, there appears to be no difference between a verbal-stimulus DCT, if it is provided with audio or visual input, and a closed role play; in both cases an interlocutor initiates an exchange, which is completed by a reply from the respondent. In a closed role play, the respondent normally acts in her or his own persona—a measure that reduces the element of artificial play acting to a minimum. But to use this as the defining feature of open role play is to ignore the fact that open role plays can equally well take place between imaginary protagonists. The distinguishing characteristic of an open role play is, rather, that the respondent has the opportunity to interact with the other player(s) realistically (as in House 1996), leading if required to a series of exchanges, and to a “richer data source” (Kasper and Dahl 1991: 228) than the DCT.

The accompanying box gives an example of a transcribed role play (from Sasaki 1998: 467).

Situation. You are walking on campus. A friend (an American male) invites you to come to a party at his house the following Sunday. You cannot go to the party because you have three final exams next Monday, and his place is very far from your place.

Participant (P): Oh yes, I hope, but ahm your house is far from my house.

Brian (B, interlocutor): Hmmm.

P: And I have three examination on Monday.

B: Yeah.

P: So I can't.

B: OK, I understand.

P: Sorry.

B: Oh maybe next time.

Compared with a DCT, a role play (particularly an open one) is closer to natural, uncued, authentic language use, but is still, of course, an artificially contrived performance—a piece of play acting that mimics, but does not constitute, real-life spoken interaction. On the other hand, it has been pointed out (see Eisenstein and Bodman 1993: 66–67) that politeness-sensitive speech events such as thanking are often negotiations involving two active players, and in role plays, as in real life, these elaborated exchanges can be captured. For example, in thanking someone for a present, the recipient will need to respond in part to “prompts” by the giver, such as *I hope it fits* or *I hope you like it*.

On a more practical note, one disadvantage of role plays, as with oral DCTs, is that the linguistic data have to be recorded and transcribed, which means it is hard to collect usable data from a large number of respondents. Further, if linguistic/pragmatic analysis of the responses is required, the heterogeneity and variability of responses means that categorization of responses (often termed “coding”), and subsequent quantitative comparisons, are more difficult and time-consuming.

9.5 Observation of Authentic Discourse

In a broad sense, this category of data collection applies to all cases where the researcher does not set out to elicit pieces of discourse in artificial “laboratory” conditions but simply collects data that have occurred without the intervention of the researcher. In that sense, this method of data collection is *authentic*. But there are various restrictive conditions, even so, to the collection and usability of such “found” discourse.

We are surrounded and confronted every day with plentiful amounts of spoken discourse, and yet it is frustratingly difficult to put one’s finger on instances of spoken discourse we would like to study and compare for purposes of pragmatic

research. Perhaps the best way to approach this pinpointing of pragmatically relevant pieces of real discourse is to imagine the ideal observational situation—what I will call the “God’s-eye view.” We imagine the all-seeing, omniscient Deity as capable of observing and recording (with the help of a recording angel) everything that people say to one another in the world, what these utterances mean, what their illocutionary goals are, and in what contexts—in as much detail as required—they occur. So, if God wants to examine how humans use compliments, it will be easy to identify these communicative events in their millions, though for humans to do so can be hugely problematic. Yet this task has become much more feasible in recent decades with the evolution of audio- and videorecording, together with the availability of powerful computers that enable us to store and search corpora, and to some extent analyze what we find.

I will mention three main ways of collecting records of authentic discourse, each with its own strengths and weaknesses. The three headings I use are *field notes*, *discourse analysis*, and *corpus analysis*. Each method is associated with an intellectual tradition: field notes are traditionally associated with *ethnography* as a branch of anthropology; discourse analysis is associated with the careful painstaking analysis of real dialogue interaction, such as we encounter par excellence in the more specialized methodology known as *conversational analysis* (CA); and corpus analysis is associated with the field of *corpus linguistics*, which has developed as a computational methodology for studying language through (typically) very large collections of spoken and written textual data.

9.5.1 FIELD NOTES

Given that the God’s-eye view is an unobtainable ideal, one way to obtain sufficient authentic examples of a given pragmatic phenomenon is to keep a notebook in which one records with as much accuracy as possible as many and as varied examples encountered as possible. This can best be done by a whole body of fieldworkers, which, in a realistic modern context, often means a whole body of students of the same class or year. By such a method Wolfson and Manes collected more than twelve hundred examples of compliments (see Manes and Wolfson 1981; Wolfson 1989). To collect data, class members can be set a task, either to recall and record instances of the speech event type under scrutiny that they have encountered recently or to note any future instances as they come across them. For the latter, a variant methodology is for students or researchers to keep a diary, in which they record examples of the speech event as and when they occur. From these methods, a large body or “corpus” of recorded instances can be amassed—but it is not a corpus in the sense that applies to corpus linguistics (see 9.5.3), as it is a collection of specially selected relatively brief examples, rather than a collection of continuous textual materials.

The chief weakness of the methodology of taking field notes is the danger that the encounter in question may be only sketchily remembered before it is recorded. The field worker typically cannot predict when a particular encounter of interest

will occur, and so an auditory recording is hardly possible. The memory of the observer, in that case, is the only guarantee of the accuracy of the record, which should ideally include not only the words spoken but details of the speakers, other contextual details, and prosodic and paralinguistic observations.

9.5.2 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In recent years, particularly among practitioners of the postmodern or discourse analytic school of politeness studies (see 2. 2.11), the tendency has been for researchers to use recorded stretches of discourse, sometimes quite extensive stretches, as a basis for examining and illustrating the discursively unfolding nature of politeness. In this school of thought, only by a careful ethnographic style of analysis of the data of discourse can one get near to an understanding of politeness phenomena. This is, for example, the practice of Watts (2003), Mills (2003), and Locher and Watts (2005). The meticulous transcription methodology of conversational analysis (CA), helping researchers to discern the normally overlooked patterns of interaction observed, as for example in turn taking, is an important underpinning for such analytic work.

Although one cannot fault the attention to accuracy and detail of transcription associated with this approach, there is also a negative side. In practice, only a few passages of discourse can be analyzed in detail, and the choice of passages is often determined by the particular interests of the analyst. There is nothing wrong with this, except that it is unsatisfactory to generalize from the analysis of a few discourse extracts to pragmatic phenomena of politeness in general. In this, the discourse analysis approach has both the strengths and the weaknesses of a detailed qualitative approach to data analysis. But the increasingly extensive use of video-recording will ensure that in the future the preservation of discourse data in sound and vision, as well as in transcribed form, will add both breadth and depth to the analysis of speech in context.

9.5.3. CORPUS ANALYSIS

In a modern linguistic sense, a corpus is a collection of (normally) large electronic bodies of naturally occurring textual or discoursal data that can subsequently be searched and analyzed with computational help. Corpus linguistics began to take off in the 1970s and 1980s, at about the time when the pragmatic study of politeness took off. But these two newly developing subdisciplines only belatedly began to work together. Even in her more recent surveys of data collection methods (2000, 2008), Kasper does not refer to electronic corpora as a source of data. But arguably, electronic corpora, as they have developed over the past twenty-five years, provide the most readily available instrument for “observing authentic discourse” and should take their place at the extreme right of Kasper’s diagram in Figure 9.1. A general reference corpus such as the BNC may be taken as the nearest thing we

have to the God's-eye view of language use mentioned earlier, since the aim of the BNC (as of other general reference corpora) is to represent the language use of a broadly defined cross-section of a language community—in the case of the BNC, British speakers and writers of English in the 1990s.

Whereas the earliest electronic corpora of English were solely of the written language, by the time the BNC was created (1991–1995) corpora of speech were becoming an established means of studying the spoken language, and prominent among oral corpora was the ten-million-word subcorpus of speech that was the spoken part of the BNC. This spoken BNC, again, contained the subcorpus of 4.2 million words I have referred to elsewhere as BNCdemog, because of the demographic method of sampling employed in its collection, intended to represent a balanced cross-section of the British adult population, in terms of age, gender, locality, and social background. This, together with an American counterpart, the LCSAE (Longman Corpus of Spoken American English), is the corpus I have used most extensively as a source of authentic language use in earlier chapters of this book (especially Chapters 5 to 7).

The 153 native speakers of English (termed “respondents”) who recorded the data for this subcorpus were drawn from across the geographical spread of the UK, from age groups (excluding under-sixteens), from male and female genders, and from social classes A–E, sampled (as nearly as could be achieved) in due proportion.⁵ Each respondent was provided with a high-quality portable tape recorder (a Walkman, as it was called in those days), which they carried around for a period of up to a week, switching on the Walkman to record any discourse they engaged in. In this way, the project was reasonably successful in collecting a large representative cross-section of British conversation, with no interference from any researcher's preference to record and study data of particular kinds. Thus from the BNCdemog (and also the LCSAE, collected in a similar fashion in the United States) it is possible to compare frequencies of occurrence of politeness phenomena, both between and within corpora, without the fear that the data collected would be biased toward particular outcomes.⁶ BNCdemog is in this respect a good model of how corpus linguistics aims to eliminate bias in data collection, and to achieve a large representative sample of a population or subpopulation of language users. Nevertheless, it

⁵ In practice, this was not in every respect a balanced sample. Thus the BNC team collecting the corpus found it difficult to obtain respondents for social classes D and E, with the result that the BNCdemog subcorpus is somewhat biased in favor of the upper levels of the social class spectrum.

⁶ Despite the element of sampling bias noted in note 5, it is a simple matter to normalize frequency counts to a standard measure, such as occurrences per million words, so that such biases are in effect neutralized. It should also be mentioned that the BNC additionally contains more than six million words of so-called *context-governed* spoken data, collected by a different method: sampled according to communicative events, rather than individuals' demographic profiles. It includes such genres as interviews, sales demonstrations, lectures, and sports commentaries, and is subdivided into four major domains: business, educational/informative, leisure, and public/institutional. See the online *Reference Guide* (Burnard 2000: 12–16).

has to be admitted that it does not completely live up to this ideal⁷; the respondents were, of course, not allowed to make recordings without the permission of those whose conversation was being recorded. They were required to make lists of the personal data (age, sex, employment, etc.) associated with each participant in the conversation. But practical constraints meant that these “metadata” is variable in detail.

BNCdemog also has other weaknesses. Unlike the discourse analysis paradigm, the corpus linguistic paradigm has a mixed record of quality of transcription practice: in general, the larger the corpus of spoken language one considers, the worse its transcription practices are, owing to the large amount of time, expertise, and expense required. It is not surprising, considering its size, that the spoken part of the BNC, like the LCSAE, is toward the “poor” end of the quality scale, scoring rather badly in both accuracy and detail. Other, smaller corpora—such as the London-Lund Corpus (now part of the Diachronic Corpus of Present-Day Spoken English or DCPSE),⁸ the Santa Barbara Corpus of spoken American English⁹ and the Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English or HKCSE¹⁰—are superior in this respect. In particular, these corpora incorporate prosodic transcription representing intonation and other suprasegmental and paralinguistic features of spoken English.

Another corpus to mention is the International Corpus of English [ICE], which is in fact a growing *collection* of English-language corpora from a number of nations, each corpus compiled according to a common design and consisting of both written and spoken data, totaling in all approximately a million words. Twenty-five of the ICE corpora are at various stages of completion, and ten of them (from Canada, East Africa, Great Britain, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Singapore) are available in their completed form. It is clear from this list that ICE already provides a unique resource, still largely untapped, for studying New Englishes around the world, and for investigating variation in politeness phenomena across different English-speaking cultures.¹¹

Corpora can be searched easily enough, using concordancing software to find instances of character sequences such as ... *Thank you*... and ... *Could you*..., displayed

⁷ For example, the BNCdemog suffers from an underrepresentation of the young age groups 0–14 and 15–24. It also has imperfect proportionate sampling of the other demographic factors of gender, social class, and region.

⁸ See <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/english-usage/projects/dcpse/>. The DCPSE consists of two subcorpora: one from the 1960s and 1970s (also called the London-Lund Corpus), and one dating from the 1990s, which was collected as part of the British component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-GB). The LLC was used by Aijmer (1996) for her analysis of politeness-sensitive speech acts such as requests, thanks, and offers (see especially 6.6).

⁹ The Santa Barbara Corpus of Spoken American English currently consists of circa 250,000 words. See: <http://catalog.ldc.upenn.edu/LDC2003S06>.

¹⁰ The Hong Kong Corpus of Spoken English currently consists of circa 900,000 words and is explained and analyzed in Cheng et al. (2008).

¹¹ Some of the corpora can be downloaded from the ICE website, <http://ice-corpora.net/ice/>. Further background is provided by Greenbaum (1996) and Hundt and Gut (2012).

with their linguistic context and relevant metadata. Less easily, more abstract patterns (such as syntactic patterns) can be searched for if the corpus is suitably annotated and appropriate software is used. Totally successful retrieval of a speech event such as compliments is beyond the realms of possibility, although syntactic templates such as those of Manes and Wolfson (1981)—see 7.2—can lead to the identification and display of likely compliment locations.

Corpora of spoken language differ in their coverage of naturally occurring dialogue. The BNC's coverage is good, including not only the informal, spontaneous conversational data predominant in BNCdemog but a wide range of context-defined genres. But smaller and more carefully transcribed and annotated corpora, such as the London-Lund Corpus, are generally more limited.¹² More specialized corpora, such as the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE), have obvious strengths, but also obvious limitations of genre. There are other corpora, such as the Louvain International Database of Spoken English (LINDSEI), that consist of learners' spoken English. It is worth noting, too, that not all spoken corpora are non-elicited: an extremely well-supported corpus of American telephone speech, SWITCHBOARD, was compiled by a very open-ended elicitation method, from conversations between people who did not know one another and undertook to hold a conversation on predetermined topics (for example: "Discuss with the other caller whether there is something seriously wrong with our public school systems today, and if so, what can be done to correct it"). The general conclusion, then, is that oral corpora, while providing unprecedented access to natural spoken dialogue, have limitations that need to be taken into account before they can be successfully used for pragmatic research into politeness.

We are now in an age where the large-scale collecting of electronic texts from on-line sources has become relatively easy, and where new, varied kinds of corpora can be created. Although politeness is typically associated with the spoken language, it cannot be denied that written texts also have polite features of both bivalent and trivalent politeness; for example, politeness is important in personal or business letters, in email messages, and even in academic writing (see Myers 1989). The twenty-first century has further seen the burgeoning of computer-mediated communication (CMC) of many kinds, and genres that share features of speech with those of writing—for example, email, blogs, social media, and text messages—can be fruitful both for politeness and impoliteness studies.¹³ Corpora of such new genres exist, but more importantly it

¹² For example, the London-Lund Corpus, although it covers a range of genres, when it was collected between 1958 and 1977 was restricted to "educated speakers," especially, it turns out, speakers associated with a London university environment. At that time, mobility for "corpus fieldwork" was limited because of the need to rely on heavy reel-to-reel recorders.

¹³ The topic of courtesy in internet communication (known as "Netiquette") has been extensively discussed and codified since the 1990s; see especially Shea (1994), <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/book/index.html>. Among the factors making CMC a particularly hazardous medium for politeness is the easy assumption that one can threaten "face" with impunity in a context where face-to-face confrontation can be avoided. The threat of *flaming* (sending heated, rude, impolite messages) is one manifestation of this (see Dery 1994 and Graham 2008).

should be stressed that individual researchers can now create their own corpora, and CMC genres are an appealing domain to investigate.

9.6 Conclusion

The preceding survey of data collection methodologies has made it clear that we are very far from attaining the God's-eye view: access to data relevant to politeness studies is problematic, whether we use the elicited, precisely targeted methodologies of MC tests and DCTs, or the more diffusely focused methodologies of observation of authentic discourse.

Additional issues so far ignored in this chapter are the ethical and legal requirements of confidentiality and intellectual property that impinge on the collection of discursual data. The ethical principle of "informed consent" means that researchers are required to obtain permission from human subjects whose spoken or written data are to be used in their research. This requirement arises across the gamut of methodologies, but it is particularly problematic in relation to collection of spontaneous spoken dialogue data, where seeking permission from participants for recording can change the nature of the dialogue—making it less spontaneous and more self-conscious—a special case of the "Observer's Paradox" (Labov 1972c: 209).

Each methodology has its strengths as well as its drawbacks, and in some research projects, such as that of Schauer (2009), two or more different methodologies have been used together, so that their strengths can be combined and their problematic features counteracted (see also Kasper and Dahl 1991: 232–239). Some studies have also compared the results of using different methodologies on the same research topic: see Sasaki (1998), Yuan (2001), Golato (2003), and Félix-Brasdefer (2007, 2010).¹⁴ Yuan's comment "Choice of a data-gathering method for a particular study should be based on the research questions and objectives of the researcher" is a salutary plea for appropriateness in selection of data collection instruments.

In the long run, combining different methodologies and media is no doubt the best way to achieve a more secure empirical foundation for politeness research.

¹⁴ I am grateful to Nicola Halenko for bringing these studies to my attention. Some studies have compared the results of using different methodologies on the same research topic; see Sasaki (1998), Yuan (2001), Golato (2003), and Félix-Brasdefer (2007, 2010).

Interlanguage Pragmatics and Politeness Across Languages and Cultures

The term *interlanguage pragmatics* (ILP) has come to be applied to the study of how nonnative-speaking (NNS) learners of a language acquire pragmatic competence in their target language. (I will also call them L2 learners, as they are learning a second language, as opposed to their native language, or L1.) In this chapter, in keeping with the thematic focus of the whole book, I will confine my attention mainly to politeness and to learners of English. Consider, for example, the process by which students who are native speakers (NSs) of Chinese or of German become proficient in the pragmatics of English. Part of this acquisition process involves learning how to be suitably polite (or on some occasions, perhaps, impolite) in the target language.

Before we examine the background and methods of ILP, it is worth reflecting briefly on the goal of L2 learning. Traditionally it has been assumed that the goal of L2 learning, whether the L2 is English or some other language, is to communicate in an L2-speaking environment where the learner's target linguistic behavior is, ultimately, that of the NS. However, the present-day status of English as an international *lingua franca* means that it is becoming more and more likely that an L2 speaker of English will be communicating with other NNSs of English, as well as with NSs, as an L2. The competence of the native speaker is no longer necessarily the "gold standard" toward which all L2 learners are assumed to be striving. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993: 3–4) discuss "emerging intercultural styles," the converging variants of language use adopted by both NNSs and NSs when conversing in an international arena. The growing study of ELF (English as a *lingua franca*) in the present century has popularized the idea that the international use of English does not have to be anchored to the standards set by inner circle¹ countries such as the United States and the UK. In this global context, it can likewise be assumed that achieving appropriate politeness is a two-way street, whereby

¹ Inner circle countries, according to Kachru's well-known trichotomy of the English-speaking world (1985), are those in which English is predominantly used as a native language.

interlocutors adapt to one another, rather than a one-way street on which the L2 learner aims to achieve NS-like competence. If “nativeness” is no longer the absolute goal, let it also be granted that advanced NNSs of English are becoming more and more likely to attain a high level of competence that equals or even exceeds that of comparable NSs and can be regarded as a model of English speaking for other NNSs. Swales (2004) is not the only one who has suggested that, in an ESL/EFL context, having a high level of expertise or experience is more relevant than being a NS. Nevertheless, tacitly if not overtly, ILP research typically still has in mind the NS’s competence as the target, and in what follows I will continue to use NS (= native speaker) in this way, although the equation NS (= nativeLIKE speaker) is probably more appropriate.

10.1 Background to Interlanguage Pragmatics

Whereas a considerable body of research in second language acquisition (SLA) has pursued this study of *interlanguage*² from the point of view of “core linguistics” (for example, phonetics, grammar, and lexis) since the 1950s, interlanguage *pragmatics* was virtually a new subject in the 1980s. In an early contribution to the field, Thomas (1983) published an influential article called “Cross-cultural pragmatic failure,” which suggested that the nature of pragmatic language learning was considerably different from the learning of (say) grammar. Whereas it is possible to talk about errors in grammar learning, it is by no means clear that the same applies to pragmatics. In Thomas’s view, it is reasonable “to speak of grammatical error, since grammaticality can be judged according to prescriptive rules (prescriptive for language-teaching purposes, at least), whereas pragmatic competence entails probable rather than categorical rules” (94). After all, the failure to convey the appropriate degree of politeness in accepting a present can be due to either participant—the giver or the receiver—or to both. Therefore it would be better, in referring to an achievement deficit of NNSs, to talk not of “pragmatic error” but of “pragmatic failure,” which of course could be due to deficits on both sides.

But this should not lead us to regard pragmatic failure as peripheral and inessential to language acquisition. Interestingly, there is evidence that NSs regard pragmatic failure as more serious than grammatical error.³ This is partly, no doubt, because it is difficult to detect the difference between pragmatic failure and a social offence such as failure to communicate concern, sensitivity, or consideration of others—failings

² The term *interlanguage*, however, did not gain currency until the 1970s (Selinker 1972). It caught on because it counteracted the “deficit” view of L2 acquisition that had previously held sway, i.e., the assumption that L2 learners’ use of the L2 was characterized by negative qualities such as errors and other failures to reach NS competence.

³ Schauer (2009: 106–107) found that both her English NSs and German learners studying abroad judged pragmatic violations as more severe than grammatical errors or infelicities. She also refers to other studies with similar findings.

that in the politeness domain might be labeled impoliteness, underpoliteness, or overpoliteness (see 8.1). As Thomas (*ibid.*) points out, pragmatic failure can be due to either pragmalinguistics or sociopragmatics, and learning to communicate successfully (including politely) in a foreign language is partly a matter of linguistic appropriateness, and partly a matter of cultural adaptation or accommodation.⁴

The learner, in the environment of a foreign culture, will need to adapt to that culture, albeit partially and gradually, if the pragmatics of communication is to be successful. For learning English, this may require pragmalinguistic adjustment—for example, learning to use indirect directive formulae such as *Could you give me a cup* rather than relying too heavily on the imperative *Give me a cup*. It can also require sociopragmatic accommodation, such as learning to respond positively rather than negatively to a compliment. The sociopragmatics of politeness in two distinct cultures can be so different that what is normal in one language, if translated into another, may be face-threatening (either for *S* or for *H*). A learner, wishing to communicate like an NS in English, may feel under pressure to acquire new “face,” something that impinges on her/his very identity.⁵

The concept of *pragmatic transfer* (Kasper 1992; Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993: 10–11) has become widely employed in discussing ILP. It refers to the phenomenon whereby the learner transfers features of the L1 to the L2. Strictly speaking, pragmatic transfer includes “positive transfer,” where no problems arise because the L1 and L2 have the same properties, as well as “negative transfer” (otherwise called “interference”) where the two languages have contrasting properties. Negative transfer can be an explanation for much of the learner’s failure to attain pragmatic competence; one study (see Bergman and Kasper 1993: 98) suggested that 55 percent of the difference between (American) NSs and (Thai) L2 learners in an assessment of apologies could be very tentatively attributed to negative transfer. Just as learners can transfer grammatical or lexical properties of their native language inappropriately to a foreign language, so they can transfer pragmalinguistic schemata such as the use of *please* as a response to thanks (for example, uttered by a waiter on bringing food).⁶ Often more persistent and insidious is sociopragmatic transfer: imagine, for example, the case of a Chinese speaker who, invited home for

⁴ Such adaptation can be explained by Communication Accommodation Theory (see e.g., Giles et al. 1991; Coupland and Giles 1988).

⁵ An example that has recurred in my own experience is that of doctoral students I supervised who continued to address me as *Professor Leech*, even though they know that in the prevailing culture of British universities it is normal (even for undergraduates) to address me by my (abbreviated) first name *Geoff*. These students come from countries where a high degree of vertical distance exists between senior academics and students, so that calling me *Professor Leech* is the form of address they are happiest with. In my experience, the supervisee often at a certain point (e.g., once the thesis is submitted) will “take the plunge” and adapt to prevailing cultural practice. Others will not. This is a case where I feel that the pragmalinguistic gap between the L1 culture and the L2 culture is great, and that the adaptation threatens to involve loss of face (embarrassment) either to *S* or to *H*.

⁶ This utterance used to be widely current in Europe (e.g., in Germany and Belgium) in the 1960s to 1980s, but my impression is that this instance of pragmatic transfer has now declined. Another

a meal by an English speaker, declines the invitation decisively in the expectation that it will be renewed. This may give the wrong signal to the would-be host, suggesting that the invitee does not wish to accept the invitation. Hence the invitation may not be renewed, thus giving the wrong impression to the invitee—viz. that the host does not sincerely mean to invite her! These failures, at an abstract level, can be attributed to a stronger force of the Generosity Maxim in Chinese cultures than in English-speaking cultures.

Notice, too, that pragmatic failure can give rise to productive as well as receptive failures of communication. Productive failures—that is, not communicating an openness to acceptance (on the part of the NNS) and not the renewing invitation (on the part of the NS)—may be easier to detect, but receptive failures (the NS's impression that the NNS is unresponsive to an invitation; and the NNS's impression that the NS is not genuinely hospitable) may be more damaging in the long run, because of their likely implication that the other person has been impolite. Such examples suggest that lack of pragmatic competence is more difficult to identify, but just as important as lack of “core” competence, if not more so.

This illustration has incidentally shone a light on two aspects of ILP (see Eisenstein and Bodman 1993: 71): (a) the fact that both *S* and *H* are mutually involved in the communication process, and (b) the fact, associated with (a), that interpretation of a dialogue exchange is subject to some negotiation and readjustment of meaning. For example, often a pragmatic failure can be redeemed by suitable rapport management (for example, by smiling, propitiatory gestures, illocutionary repair, and clarification).

10.2 The ILP Paradigm of Research

The typical experimental paradigm for research in ILP involves administering questionnaires, tests, or role plays (see Chapter 9) as instruments for investigating the pragmatic performance of a group of NNSs (often one or more classes of students). The task can be receptive (for example, evaluating a set of utterances for appropriateness or politeness) or productive—as in completing a discourse completion test or DCT; see 9.3. For convenience, we can take the DCT, originally developed for CCSARP, as the most characteristic type of elicitation instrument used, in spite of its faults and limitations. The kinds of research questions that can be asked are:

- I. In what ways does the learners' performance differ from that of a comparable group of NSs?

example, cited by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993: 9) is the transfer from German *Entschuldigen Sie, bitte* to English *Excuse me, please*, rather than the more natural native English *I'm sorry*.

- II. What features of their performance can be attributed to pragmatic transfer from their L1 (mother tongue)?
- III. What changes are observed in learners' performance over a certain period of learning/instruction (of a specific kind)?
- IV. How far (if at all) does a particular learning environment bring about an improvement of performance?

All these questions have relevance to how the pragmatics of the second or foreign language (L2) should be presented to the learner, and how it should be taught (if at all). They are also relevant to an understanding of what problems will be faced by learners from particular L1 backgrounds in acquiring pragmatic competence in English.

In the case of Question I (concerning NNS-NS comparison), an instrument to test one learner group's performance might be sufficient, if there are highly competent L2 speakers who can act as judges (known as "raters") of the success of the learners' pragmatic acquisition. However, this is far from ideal. A better methodology, if it can be implemented, is comparative, that is, to administer the same test material to a group of L2 native speakers who, apart from the NS-NNS difference, match the test group as closely as possible. Then the test performance of the experimental group will lead to an investigation of how they perform in comparison with the group of NSs. An alternative, less objective, method is to select a group of raters who are highly competent in the language, and to give each of them the task of rating or evaluating the performance of each individual in the learner group. The degree of consensus of the raters can be determined, and this can be treated as the basis for an assumed target "norm" or yardstick against which the performances of the learner can be measured.

In answering Question II (concerning transfer from L1), again it is possible to carry out a test on a single group, and for a researcher competent in both the L1 and the L2 to analyze the performance of the learners; but again, a less fallible and more objective method is to administer the same test instrument to a second group, in this case a group of NSs of the learners' native language closely comparable to the experimental group, except that the testees will respond in their own NL. In this case, also, of course, the test instrument instructions and the test items will need to be presented in the learners' L1. The comparison of the two groups will show up areas of negative pragmatic transfer, where the NNSs have carried over characteristics of the pragmatics of their native language into the target language. To make this comparison more secure, if practicable, it is best to administer the test to a third group, a group of NSs of the L2 (here, English). On the basis of this three-way comparison (L1—IL—L2), where the two languages differ it is in principle possible to see what proportion of the pragmatic interlanguage of the learners resembles the native language (pragmatic transfer) as opposed to resembling the target language. Examples of such three-way comparisons are Bergman and Kasper's comparison (1993) of data from Thai NSs, Thai IL, and AmE NSs, and Trosborg's (1987) comparison of data from Danish NSs, Danish IL, and BrE NSs.

In response to Question III (regarding observation of change over time), the ideal method is to apply the same test *longitudinally* to the same group of learners, at various stages of the learning program (repeating the test, say, with a one-year gap, so that the danger of retention of specific details of the test in their memory will have faded). A variant of this is to apply a test to a comparable group of learners at different stages of their learning program or curriculum (Trosborg 1987 compared three sets of Danish students at diverse levels of proficiency). Obviously it is possible to repeat such tests, so that a record of the change of performance can be built up over a number of years.

There are pitfalls associated with each of these research designs: for example, in the comparison of two different groups of students—either speakers of two native languages, or learners at two stages of learning—special care would be needed to minimize uncontrolled variables, such as a difference of teachers, or of syllabus, or of students' pretest language attainments or their pretest exposure to the target language.

In the case of Question IV (learning environment), the most common research goal is to investigate the difference between students who have spent an appreciable time studying in an environment where English is spoken (e.g., Japanese students who have spent a year abroad studying in the United States), and those who have not. Roughly this corresponds to the distinction traditionally made between EFL learning (where English is learned in the L1 home environment) and ESL learning (where English is learned in an English-speaking environment, or more particularly, where English is the medium of instruction). As an extension of this research design, it is revealing also to administer the same test instrument to a comparable set of NSs of the L2. This research design is illustrated by Schauer's investigation (2009) of the pragmatic attainment of German learners of English. She carried out parallel tests of (1) German students learning English at home in Germany; (2) German students learning English abroad, in the UK; and (3) English-speaking students in the UK. It is not surprising, in this study and others, that the study-abroad students of English achieve a closer approximation to the performance of English native speakers than the stay-at-home students.

In discussing these comparative research paradigms, I have not highlighted politeness as a major issue. However, it is difficult to avoid engagement with politeness when investigating acquisition of speech act competence, which is the most fully researched area of ILP. Most of the work undertaken with these research designs has emanated from the CCSARP tradition, which essentially follows the Brown and Levinson politeness model. In this tradition, research is focused on particular speech act types, typically directives and apologies (although other politeness-sensitive speech acts, such as thanking and complaining, have also attracted researchers' attention). In practice, politeness cannot fail to be an issue in the use of these speech acts, and one way to investigate how far learners develop general politeness skills in the L2 is to choose test items that vary systematically according to B&L's P, D, and R parameters (as does Schauer 2009). From the results, one can gain a picture

of how far learners are approximating to the native speakers' pattern (in terms of vertical distance, horizontal distance, and cost-benefit) in their adjustment toward the norms of the target language. I would also see this as giving a way into the investigation of other sociopragmatic factors such as the relative strengths of various maxims such as Tact and Generosity. For example, in formulating requests, learners from a culture where the Tact Maxim is relatively weak in comparison with Generosity will tend to err on the side of being insufficiently indirect in comparison with English NSs.

More directly, however, these tests supply information about the pragmatolinguistic facet: the use of appropriate speech act semi-formulae for requests, for apologies, for compliments, and so forth, and the means by which these are mitigated or intensified by appropriate pragmatic modifiers. Following the CCSARP research program (House and Kasper 1981, 1987; Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka 1982, 1987; Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989), ILP investigators such as Trosborg (1995) and Schauer (2009) have categorized directive speech acts according to the main division of strategies into direct, conventionally indirect, and unconventionally indirect (hints), as I did in 6.3, using B&L's terms *on-record* and *off-record* as equivalent to "conventional" and "nonconventional." They have also subdivided these into individual strategies such as "suggestory formulae," "strong hints," and "obligation statement," and also provided classifications of pragmatic modifiers, both internal and external (cf. 6.4). Supportive moves such as "offer of repair" in apologizing (cf. 5.1) are also classified.

The CCSARP classificatory scheme (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 273–293) has the advantage that it has been largely maintained by later researchers, and therefore the results of tests can be compared across a range of diverse research settings. It is possible to find out, for example, how learners of different native languages fare in acquiring the indirect strategies and pragmatic modifiers so typical of English requests. However, the CCSARP coding scheme and its more recent variants are not ideal for investigating politeness, even for requests, for which the classificatory scheme has been most fully worked out. First, some categories are vague (how does one draw the line between "strong hints" and "mild hints"?).⁷ Second, some categories are inaccurately labeled; for example, as a syntactic downgrader, the *if*-clause in *I was wondering if you could present your paper a week earlier than planned* (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 283) is described as a "conditional clause," whereas here the *if* introduces not a conditional clause but a subordinate interrogative clause where *if* is equivalent to *whether* (and hence closely linked to interrogative strategies such as *Could you present . . . ?*). Thirdly, the categories are distinguished on the basis

⁷ Trosborg (1995: 205) uses these examples (of nonconventional requests to borrow a car) to illustrate "mild" and "strong" hints:

I have to be at the airport in half an hour. (mild)
 My car has broken down. (strong)
 Will you be using your car tonight? (strong)

of different linguistic levels: a modifier category such “past tense” is grammatically defined, a category such as “willingness” or “permission” is semantically defined, and a category like “suggestory formula” is pragmatically defined.

Further, the classification is not sensitive to the subtler degrees of politeness. For example, *Could you hand me the paper, please?* and *Can't you hand me the paper?* are treated alike (Trosborg 1995: 210) as questions with downtoners, whereas in English the negative question *Can't* is distinctly face-threatening compared with the oblique hypothetical question with *Could*. Hence, although the classification of test responses based on CCSARP can tell us some useful things related to pragmatic competence (such as whether students are progressively learning to employ a wider range of indirect strategies), it would have to be combined with politeness-sensitive qualitative analysis before firm conclusions about acquisition of appropriate devices of politeness could be reached.

Unless there can be some overt measurement of politeness, this general paradigm cannot tell us how far learners are acquiring appropriate “politeness competence.” From the pragmalinguistic point of view, they can achieve a competence in using devices of varying politeness (such as request strategies and modifiers), and this can be measured if, once learners have completed a test, raters judge the degree of politeness of what they have produced on (say) a five-point Likert-type scale. However, this is insufficient for finding out if their responses are *appropriately* polite or not. For example, learners may learn to use a greater range of devices of politeness, but they can use these inappropriately in being overpolite, just as they can underuse them and be underpolite. Although the notions of politeness and appropriateness are difficult to pin down in test conditions, the combination of evaluating politeness and appropriateness on separate scales can bring about a reasonable assessment of how closely learners' responses approximate to nativelike performance, which is a measure of learners' progress.⁸

Ideally, then, all four research questions I–IV considered so far require a panel of raters who are NSs of, or are highly competent in, the L2. The recruiting and selection of raters is, however, a problem, as it can be difficult to find a suitable set of “experts” who are competent and willing to undertake this time-consuming task in an objective frame of mind.

To me, these examples simply reflect the difficulty of making a principled distinction between these two types.

⁸ The use of the word *appropriate* can be avoided by asking raters, for example, to choose the most “preferred,” “likely,” or “natural” response. I am not aware of any published research into English politeness that used both these rating scales, but Suzuki (2007: 5) has applied them to the investigation of politeness in Japanese relative to age and gender. In his research design, raters were invited also to add comments on the reasons behind their judgments on these two scales. Among Suzuki's findings were first that older Japanese speakers achieved a higher level of politeness and appropriateness than younger Japanese speakers, and second there was a highly significant correlation between “politeness” and “appropriateness” in the subjects, responses (ibid.: 287–288), the latter finding suggesting that pragmalinguistic attainment and sociopragmatic attainment in politeness are closely related.

As a variant of Question IV, another function of the ILP research design is to discover how far the manner of learners' conscious exposure to and engagement in pragmatic information has an impact on their pragmatic attainment. In particular, there has been much consideration (Kasper and Rose 2002, Koike and Pearson 2005, Félix-Brasdefer 2008) of whether pragmatic competence, including "politeness competence" in an L2, is best attained by students who are explicitly instructed in pragmatics, being made aware of the devices and strategic means for achieving politeness in English, or whether the acquisition of pragmatic competence can be achieved more informally and implicitly, for example by exposing students to suitably selected conversational learning materials, but not making them overtly aware of the pragmatic choices to be made. Most studies have indicated first that study in the native-language environment is advantageous, and second that it is also advantageous for students to receive explicit instruction in the pragmatics of the L2.

10.3 Research on Different L1 Groups Learning English

Here is a brief and selective survey of various native language groups that have participated in research on the ILP of learners of English. These are among the major studies, -, some of which investigate productive ability, and some receptive ability (for further detail, see Schauer's survey (2009: 29-59):

- A. *Arabic* Scarcella (1979) on requests.
- B. *Chinese* Yu (1999) on requests. Rose (2000) on requests.
- C. *Danish* Trosborg (1995) on requests, complaints, and apologies.
- D. *Dutch* Hendriks (2008) on requests.
- E. *German* Kasper (1981) on various speech acts. House and Kasper (1987) on requests.
- F. *Japanese* Tanaka (1988) on requests. Takahashi and Beebe (1993) on correction, disagreement, and other FTAs. Matsumura (2003, 2007) on advice. Taguchi (2008) on refusals and opinion giving. Hill (1997) on requests. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003) on requests. Woodfield (2008) on requests.
- G. *Spanish* Cenoz and Valencia (1996) on requests.
- H. *Turkish* Otçu and Zeyrek (2008) on requests.
- I. (*Various native languages*) Eisenstein and Bodman (1993) on thanking. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) on suggestions. Cook and Liddicoat (2002) on requests. Garcia (2004) on requests, suggestions, corrections, and offers.

It is noticeable that there has been heavy concentration on certain speech events that are important for politeness—especially requests.

10.4 Methodologies of ILP Data Collection

Most of the research of relevance to politeness in ILP has been conducted using test instruments of the kind found toward the left-hand side of Figure 9.1 (p. 248), that is, methods where the data is elicited under relatively controlled conditions. The use of discourse completion tests (DCTs) has been very popular (see e.g., Sasaki 1998), either in the traditional written form or in more natural spoken or multimedia variants. Role plays and judgment tests have also been used. It is observed by Eisenstein and Bodman (1993), who apply both methods, that role plays can produce very different results from those of DCTs and are more realistic in showing that even an apparently simple speech act like thanking has an interactive component that a DCT cannot capture. Whereas DCTs and role plays are productive, receptive methods of data collection have also been used. For example, Bergman and Kasper (1993) used five-point rating scales to find out how various contextual factors in a set of offense contexts were assessed by Thai learners of English, as compared with NSs of American English, and how these factors influenced the choice of apology strategies.

At the other end of the controlled-uncontrolled methodology spectrum, on the right-hand side in Figure 9.1, are methodologies of “observation of authentic discourse.” Here there has been rapid development of *learner corpora*, that is, electronic collections of freely written (or spoken) interlanguage data (see 9.5.3). The lead in developing these corpora was taken by Sylviane Granger (1993, 1998), who with her team at Louvain-la-Neuve initiated and developed a large-scale research programme to which EFL tertiary education teachers from many countries and with many L1 backgrounds contributed their own data. The result was the International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) consisting, in its recent version of 2009, of comparable “subcorpora” from students of sixteen mother-tongue backgrounds (Bulgarian, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Tswana, and Turkish)—see Granger et al. (2009). At the Centre for English Corpus Linguistics (CECL) at Université Catholique de Louvain, where the ICLE project and related projects are administered, many further developments have taken place, notably a corpus of NS students’ writing in English (LOCNESS⁹) as a target-language analogue to the learner corpora, and a corpus of spoken learner English (LINDSEI¹⁰) to complement the written data of ICLE. A longitudinal corpus of learner English is also under way. Moreover, many learner corpora have developed outside the magic circle of ICLE, providing systematically collected and digitized data from learners of diverse mother tongues, ages, levels of competence, and other variables involved in the study of interlanguage.¹¹ There is no need to explore them further

⁹ The “Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays.”

¹⁰ The “Louvain International Database of Spoken English Interlanguage.”

¹¹ An extensive tabulated list including such corpora can be found on the CECL website at Louvain, <https://www.uclouvain.be/en-cecl-lcworld.html>.

here. However, because of technological progress, it is now feasible for EFL and ESL teachers, with the cooperation of their students, to create their own learner corpora, and to engage in collaborative research with other teachers and academics of similar interests.

Despite these promising developments, the learner corpus movement has so far contributed rather little to the study of politeness. As with NS corpora of English in general (see 9.5.3), learner corpus research suffers from a preponderance of written data, due to the extra expense and effort needed to produce spoken corpora. The result is that spoken learner corpus resources tend to be much smaller and more limited than written learner corpora.¹² This is unfortunate for our present topic, as politeness is clearly much more a phenomenon of spoken language than of written language. Nevertheless, there are some signs that the methodology of learner corpora is yielding results relevant to politeness. This applies particularly to corpora of some more specialized types of writing: for example Upton and Connor's investigation (2001) of a corpus of letters of application written (in English) by Americans, Finns, and Belgians. Corpora of specialized kinds of spoken discourse also have the potential to yield results relevant to politeness, as in Reinhardt's study of directives in a corpus of office hour consultations (2010).

10.5 ILP Research in Relation to Politeness

In spite of the increasing body of research devoted to ILP, particularly relating to politeness-sensitive speech events, in practice rather little ILP research has focused on the phenomenon of politeness itself. There have, however, been many studies of requests making use of the CCSARP distinction between direct, conventionally indirect, and nonconventionally indirect speech acts (hints), and analyzing learners' performance of requests in terms of the use of various strategies, external modifiers, and internal modifiers.

The general findings of ILP research include the following. Learners at a lower level employ shorter responses and less indirectness than students at a higher level (e.g. Rose 2000; Scarcella 1979). Students at a higher level, in their turn, show shorter responses and less indirectness than NSs (e.g. Hill 1997), but after several years they may approximate NS usage (e.g. Otçu and Zeyrek 2008). This is also an indication that higher-level students are pragmatically more advanced in approximating to NS performance than lower-level students. A common finding, applicable to a range of mother-tongue backgrounds, is that the simple imperative, as a direct and often underpolite request, is overused by ESL/EFL students particularly at earlier stages of learning. This may arise because the simplicity of the English imperative (being invariable and uninflected) makes it easy to learn at an early stage,

¹² However, one of the latest additions to the Louvain family of corpora is LOCNEC (Louvain Corpus of Native English Conversation), which is a spoken counterpart of LOCNESS.

in contrast to indirect request formulae such as *Could you X*, *Would you mind Xing*, etc. that are more typical of English. On the other hand, it may also reflect pragmatic transfer from the learners' L1, assuming that in English a direct imperative is more likely to be judged impolite than is the corresponding construction in many other languages (cf. Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989). In corroboration, the majority of studies that examine the proportion of direct versus indirect responses find that ESL/EFL learners use a greater proportion of direct requests than NSs (see, for example, House and Kasper 1987).

Similar differences are observed between students who stay at home and those who spend part of their study time abroad, in an English-speaking country. On the whole, the students who study abroad reach a pragmatically more advanced level than the stay-at-home students. For example, Schauer (2009: 196) found that her stay-at-home German students tended to stick to a smaller range of request strategies, whereas her study-abroad students generally increased their range. Another difference (ibid.: 197) was that the study-abroad students made much more use of downtoners—internal modifiers such as *maybe* or *possibly* that soften the force of the directive. Not surprisingly, the length of stay in the L2 country also makes a difference; the longer learners stay in the foreign environment, the more advanced they show themselves to be.

The principle that students begin by favoring less complex structures and later acquire more complex ones can also explain other findings. For example, learners use a smaller range of internal modifiers than NSs; they also take longer to acquire the use of syntactic internal modifiers (such as the use of past tense for politeness), as opposed to lexical ones (such as the use of downtoners; Otçu and Zeyrek 2008; Hendrik 2008). It seems likely that syntactic modifiers, which require an adjustment of grammatical construction, may need more time to acquire than lexical modifiers, which normally require no more than the addition of a word or formulaic expression to a more basic construction.

Somewhat at variance with this is the “waffle phenomenon” (Edmondson and House 1991), which is supposed to show that EFL learners are wordier (more verbose) in their speech act performance than English NSs. However, some studies show the opposite, while one study (Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper 1989) indicates that earlier (lower intermediate) learners use fewer words than NSs, whereas more experienced (upper intermediate) learners use more words. This finding again suggests that less-advanced students do not yet have the ability to produce complex utterances, whereas the more advanced students, who have acquired the necessary proficiency, tend to “play safe” (or maybe “show off”?) by saying more than is needed, thereby producing “too much of a good thing.” Part of the explanation for this, as some reports suggest, is that learners at a certain stage overuse external modifiers (6.4.2), for example adding apologies (*Sorry!*) or thanks (*Thank you!*) to reinforce a polite request.

In judging levels of politeness, the finding of Carrell and Konneker (1981) was that ESL/EFL learners are oversensitive to (or overanxious about?) politeness

distinctions, compared with NSs. However, this is at variance with some more recent studies, which suggest that NNS learners fail to recognize the subtler aspects of politeness. For example, in one study in the United States, Wolfson (1989) found that NNSs responded too briefly to compliments, failing to recognize the importance in American culture of compliments not just as speech events of pos-politeness (1.2.2) but as social lubricants. Especially in AmE, they can be valuable aids to interaction by opening up conversation—thereby leading to topic exploration and the enlargement of common ground. This finding again seems contrary to the “waffle” phenomenon.

Despite my misgivings about the CCSARP-based classification schemes they use, the book-length studies by Trosborg (1995) and Schauer (2009) can be recommended as thorough and well-organized investigations of ILP with relevance to politeness.

However, I have to conclude this section with a rather negative conclusion. The results that have been obtained from the ILP elicitation research paradigm, as from the learner corpus paradigm, are less than earth-shattering. To a great extent, they confirm what any researcher or teacher in the field is likely to believe to be the case. For example, it helps to know that a period of study abroad leads to improvement in pragmatic proficiency. (In particular, it is reassuring for national educational funding bodies such as the DAAD in Germany and Monka-sho in Japan to know that the money to support study abroad is being well spent.) But few would have believed otherwise. Similarly, it is not surprising that learners tend to first acquire simple illocutionary forms (such as directives in the form of imperatives), and then go on to acquire the use of more indirect, complex, and (pragmalinguistically) polite forms with the addition of internal and external modifiers.

10.6 ILP and the Politeness Principle

A possible reason for the limited light that ILP research has shed on (im)politeness learning is that most of the research has been done within, or under the influence of, the CCSARP research paradigm, which is in turn much influenced by B&L's model of politeness. The breakdown of responses into major categories of response (direct, conventionalized direct, nonconventional direct), categories of internal and external modifiers, and so on often overlooks subtler elements of choice to achieve (appropriate) politeness, as I have already suggested in 10.5.

In thinking of how future research projects could avoid this weakness, I have not surprisingly considered the potential advantages of the GSP model presented in Chapter 4 and elsewhere in this book. On the whole, the GSP approach of Leech (1983) has not been taken up in ILP research, but it has sometimes been used in cross-cultural politeness comparisons, which have a close relationship with ILP.

For example, my model develops the idea that speakers have to cope with competing constraints, represented by different maxims of the GSP, or indeed different

principles (the PP and the CP). As is noted by Spencer-Oatey, Ng, and Dong (2008), three papers by Chen (1993), Ye (1995), and Yu (2003) have studied responses to compliments in Chinese in relation to English, in terms of my 1983 explanation of the dilemma between the two competing maxims, the Modesty Maxim and the Agreement Maxim (Leech 1983: 137). Recall that compliments, and responses to compliments, can conflict with the CP, specifically the Maxim of Quality, in that it will be difficult to accept them as sincere if they are manifestly exaggerated. Therefore three maxims (Agreement, Modesty, and Quality) are in play in responding to compliments. Traditionally, the preferred compliment response in Chinese, as in Japanese, is to decline or deny the compliment, thus showing the higher power of Modesty. Spencer-Oatey, Ng, and Dong (2008) take up this approach, comparing students' attitudes to compliment responses in terms of categories of "acceptance," "rejection/deflection," and "evasion/self-praise avoidance."

I should comment, in passing, that in my view these studies and others (for example, Holmes 1995) unfortunately conflate both "agreement with the compliment" and "thanking for the compliment" as kinds of acceptance, whereas I maintain (see 7.2.1) that thanking is a metalinguistic response that is a long way from agreement. There is a big difference, that is, between saying "I agree with your complimentary remark," which clearly goes against the Modesty Maxim, and saying "Thank you for your compliment," which expresses appreciation of the remark itself and avoids both agreement and disagreement.

Among the findings of Spencer-Oatey et al. (2008: 102, 112) are (1) that agreement responses were evaluated somewhat more positively by the British than the Chinese, (2) that rejection/disagreement responses were much rarer in English than in Chinese, and (3) that the English (British) speakers evaluated rejection responses more negatively than the Chinese. These differences are in the direction one expects, if the Modesty Maxim is more highly rated in China than in the UK, as has been assumed (see Gu 1990). On the other hand, the difference is not so significant as one might expect, and among the reasons for this might be first that Chinese culture is moving toward giving less value to Modesty than was traditionally the case, especially among younger speakers of Chinese, such as the students in this experiment; and second that the effect of the CP Maxim of Quality is that people judge rejection of a compliment poorly (as insincere or even conceited) if it is manifestly "phony."¹³ Other relevant studies making use of the GSP model of politeness include Atawneh and Sridhar (1993), Brookins (2005), and Ruhi (2006).

¹³ The study by Spencer-Oatey et al. (2008) also compared response preferences of Hong Kong Chinese with Mainland Chinese, and it elicited comments from each group of students, which throw light on the reasons for avoiding particular responses, particularly disagreement responses. Chinese respondents often criticized the traditional modest response by suggesting it was insincere (i.e., contravened the Maxim of Quality). British respondents, on the other hand, often seemed puzzled by the disagreement responses, thinking that refusing to accept the compliment suggested lack of confidence. Generally, the responses suggested that the Modesty Maxim had more power among Chinese respondents than British, even though the Chinese were inclined to criticize excessive or phony modesty.

10.7 ILP and Cross-cultural Pragmatics

As studies of ILP using the GSP approach are few, this chapter will continue by considering the kinds of studies using the GSP model that are suggested by some cross-cultural pragmatic research, and that invite further ILP empirical investigation in the future. Cross-cultural pragmatics is a highly active research area, and I cannot hope to cover here more than a minute part of its voluminous literature.

Cross-cultural pragmatics has become a generally applicable term for research comparing and contrasting politeness phenomena in diverse languages and cultures.¹⁴ But here we have to be careful. As Culpeper (2012: 1128) warns:

[...] it is all too easy to give the impression that “one language equals one culture,” not least of all because the label for the language becomes a convenient label for the culture (e.g., “English and Japanese compliments compared”). But of course we all know that within one language there are many different cultures, however that tricky notion of culture is conceived.

He could have added, on the pragmalinguistic side, that within one language there are many dialects, something that is especially true of English in a global perspective. Also, within one general culture (say, what we might vaguely term “the culture of the United States”) there are many subcultures according to ethnicity, geographical region, gender, and so on. In other words, it is a gross generalization to talk about “the pragmalinguistics of the English language” or “the sociopragmatics of English-speaking cultures.”

Yet in spite of all this, there does appear to be a close correlation between the pragmatic (e.g., politeness) resources of a language and the characterization of associated communicative culture. The obvious example of this is the rich repertoire in English for expressing indirectness and neg-politeness in making requests, and the particular importance of the Tact Maxim in motivating the mitigation of imposition in English-speaking societies.¹⁵ Parallel observations can often be made about the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic facets of other languages. Wierzbicka (2003) points out the very different cultural values associated with requests in Polish and English, contrasting the Poles’ proclivity for spontaneity, warmth, sincerity, and hospitality with the Brits’ proclivity for reserve, privacy, and

¹⁴ Although *cross-cultural pragmatics* is now the established term, to my mind *contrastive pragmatics* (Puetz and Neff van Aertselaer 2008) is preferable, as it matches the even longer-established term *contrastive linguistics*, and does not suggest any bias in favour of sociopragmatics as opposed to pragmalinguistics. For a book-length survey of contrastive pragmatics, see Trosborg (2010).

¹⁵ As I have suggested in more than one footnote, this connects up with Hofstede and Hofstede’s finding (2005) that dominantly Anglo societies (such as the United States, the UK, and Australia) are at the *individualistic* extreme of the scale of collectivism-individualism. This presumably motivates their high evaluation of the autonomy, freedom, and privacy of the individual, as well as their low evaluation of unequal hierarchical relations and discrimination between one person and another on grounds of supposed inferiority or superiority.

nonimposition. More relevantly, she also points out, as a manifestation of these values, the limited repertoire of indirect requests in Polish (34):

The expression *Would you mind* has simply no equivalent in Polish. I do not wish to imply, however, that Polish never uses the interrogative form in requests. It does, but in comparison with English, the possibilities are heavily restricted [...] one could not ask people to do something by using literal Polish equivalents of the phrases *Would you do it*, *Won't you do it*, *Why don't you do it*, *Do you want to do it* or *Would you like to do it*. Pseudo-questions which ostensibly inquire about the addressee's desire and which in fact are to be interpreted as requests (*Would you like to*, *Do you want to*) seem particularly odd and amusing from a Polish point of view, as transparent acts of what looks like naïve hypocrisy.

Wierzbicka also points out a similar tendency in the speech event of advice giving. Since giving advice, although apparently altruistic, can be seen as a kind of imposition (an implied imposition on *O*'s freedom of action), in English advice is often given in an indirect, mitigated form (see 7.4.2). In Polish, however, says Wierzbicka, advice is typically offered in direct language:

Ja ci radzę powiedz mu prawdę. 'I advise you: tell him the truth.'

This example (op. cit.: 31) illustrates two impositive devices (IFIDs) of the most brusque and explicit kind: an unhedged performative followed by an imperative.

As we have already seen, the imperative mood is used considerably more in other languages than in English. This is true not only of Polish but of Spanish, of Japanese, and of many other languages. In fact, it appears to be a near universal of relations between other languages and English, which shows up regularly in ILP studies of requests: learners of English as an L2 have to "unlearn" the more liberal use of imperatives of their mother tongue in order to adjust to the English habit of avoiding direct directives, as a typical manifestation of the Tact Maxim.

A further speech event on which Wierzbicka comments in a similar way is the expression of an opinion. She observes that compared with the directness of Poles, English NSs are indirect in prefacing the expression of an opinion with a hedging device such as *I think*, *I guess*, *I reckon*. In thus paying observance to the Opinion-reticence Maxim, they avoid seeming opinionated, that is, imposing their views on others. In these ways Anglo cultures show an inclination towards neg-politeness, a reluctance to impose one's will or to invade the "private space" of the other person. This chimes with the claim made by a number of scholars (e.g., Sifianou 1999, focusing on English and Greek) that Anglo cultures are characterized by negative politeness (in the sense of B&L) compared with many other cultures—such as, in general, those of Eastern and Southern Europe—that are characterized more by positive politeness. Among the characteristics of positive politeness (which here coincides with my pos-politeness) is a high value assigned to Generosity as contrasted with Tact. Whereas in English it is often felt advisable not

to be too direct in making an offer or an invitation (see 7.1), in Polish this could be felt to be ungenerous or worse.

On Russian, which in many ways has a similar communicative culture to Polish, Larina (2008: 16) states:

Offers and invitations are...vivid examples of how differently imposition is viewed in English and Russian communicative cultures. An invitation urges the invitee to accept rather than leaving them a comfortable way of rejecting it. As a result such English invitations as *It would be nice to have tea together, but I am sure you are very busy* (an example of English politeness strategies given by Scollon and Scollon 2001: 51) or *I was wondering if you would like to come over to me for a meal this Saturday evening. I know it's fairly short notice. So please don't worry if you have other plans* (from real communication) would sound rather impolite and even offensive to a Russian speaker.

Larina goes on to suggest that Russians prefer to use a direct strategy, especially an imperative, in invitations as this demonstrates the sincerity of *S*'s desire to see and entertain *O*. Also, let me add, it demonstrates the dominance of Generosity over Tact.

An important linguistic resource for pos-politeness, almost totally lacking in English, is the availability of morphological diminutives, which are characteristic of the Slavic languages of eastern Europe, as well as in Greek, Spanish, and other languages of southern Europe. In softening impositive speech acts, these provide an alternative strategy to indirectness, by conveying the sense of closeness and affection between *S* and *O*, as well as indicating the smallness of the imposition. This applies both to offers and requests, as is illustrated in these Polish examples from Wierzbicka (2005: 51–52; DIM = morphological diminutive):

Weż jeszcze śledzika! Koniecznie! 'Take some more dear-little-herring-(DIM)! You must!' [DIM = diminutive]
Jureczku, daj mi papierosa! 'George-DIM-DIM, give me a cigarette!'

Larina similarly provides an example of treble diminutivization in Russian (op. cit.: 36):

Dochen'ka, prinesi mne, pozhaluysta, stakanchik vodichki.
 'Daughter-DIM, bring me a glass-DIM of water-DIM please.'

We can see in the existence and use of diminutives how a feature of the language can lend itself to the expression of meanings congenial to the culture associated with that language; that is to say, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics march in step with one another. This reflects the essential functionality of languages: they evolve in such a way as to facilitate expression of the meanings that their speakers have developed the need to express. However, it also has to be borne in mind that pragmaticalization (3.7) leads to the diminution of the force of polite forms, so that

(for instance) the routine use of *Could you...* in English no longer conveys the deference and obliquity it once must have once expressed.

Moreover, the influence is not all in one direction: just as culture influences language, so language may influence communicative culture. For example, the English language, unlike most European languages, has no way of expressing deference or familiarity toward the addressee through an almost obligatory¹⁶ *T/V* choice between second-person pronouns (see 11.4); nor does it have the more elaborate obligatory honorific devices of address as in Japanese and Korean. It is easy to conceive that the situation in English, whereby one does not have to declare anything about the relation between *S* and *H* in spoken discourse, could have had, in the last hundred years or more, a role in the Anglo trend of democratization (see 11.4–11.5). By calling democratization a phenomenon of *communicative* culture, I am pointing to a tendency to decrease or eliminate overt linguistic discrimination that does not necessarily affect underlying power factors. For example, the use of indirect requests appearing to consult *O*'s wishes, as in *Would you like to help me? Do you want to get the coffee?* does not necessarily mean a reduction in the *real* power differential between *S* and *O*.

On the level of the individual learner, similarly, the English native speaker learning a language such as Greek or Polish has to learn to make use of a resource—diminutives—that is virtually unavailable in their mother tongue, and thereby to acquire a type of expressiveness that is not available in English.

From the ILP point of view, on the other hand, we can discern how, for the learner whose mother tongue is rich in diminutives, adapting to English has a particular drawback: the virtual lack¹⁷ of diminutives in English means that negative pragmatic transfer in this case is impossible, and the danger of seeming underpolite is a real one, until the learner has learned to develop the strategies of indirectness that are so characteristic of English.

However, there are limits to the value of contrasting pos-politeness and neg-politeness cultures. Communicative cultures in general do not fit neatly into such pigeonholes. For example, Chinese culture gives a high value to Generosity (as we see from the elaborate ritualization of invitations and gift giving) and at the same time, like Japanese culture, traditionally gives a high value to Modesty (for example, the self-abasement in referring to oneself goes with Approbation in referring to the high status of the addressee). Both in China and in Japan, an important factor here appears to be a marked regard for the vertical distance (*P*) between *S* and *O*.

¹⁶ “Almost obligatory” in the sense that it is virtually impossible to carry on an everyday conversation of any length in French (say) without opting for one of the pronouns *tu* or *vous*.

¹⁷ Diminutives exist in English but are relatively infrequent, unproductive, and marginal to everyday usage (*booklet*, *auntie*, etc.). They also generally lack the connotations of diminutives in other languages.

Apologies and thanks also cut across the contrast between pos-politeness and neg-politeness. Although in Chapter 4 I classified apology as a manifestation of pos-politeness (because strength of apology, like greater pragmlinguistic politeness in general, is associated with intensification rather than mitigation), there is also a strong link between the neg-politeness of Modesty and the pos-politeness of the Obligation-to-*O* Maxim that motivates apologies and thanks. Both Modesty and Obligation-to-*O* encourage a degree of self-abasement by the speaker. However, as briefly noted in Chapter 4, the speech events of thanking and apologizing represent a special kind of pos-politeness that is remedial; the speaker in uttering an apology (and to a lesser extent in thanking) purports to recognize that she is in the self-deprecating state of “owing” something to *O*. Hence the self-abasement associated with apology is close to the self-abasement associated with Obligation-to-*O*, and it is to be expected that communicative cultures in which Modesty is strong, such as Japan, will also have a tendency to give high importance to being apologetic. This is supported by the particularly frequent use of the apologetic term *sumimasen* in Japanese, which occurs in many situations where thanks rather than an apology would be expected in English:

“*Sumimasen* is used to express gratitude when one didn’t expect the act in question or when one feels one should not expect it. In such cases it is regarded as more polite to apologize for having caused so much trouble than to simply thank the other.

—Mizutani and Mizutani (1987: 37)

Mizutani and Mizutani (1987: 38) further report that when saying goodbye to a host family, a Japanese guest will not only thank them but use an expression such as *Ojama-(ita)shimashita* (literally “I’m sorry I disturbed you”) or *Ojikan-o torimashite* (“I’m sorry I took your time”). This, together with the traditional response of denial or disagreement to a compliment, underlines the unusual prominence of apology in Japanese interaction.¹⁸

The point I wish to make here is that it is too easy to think in terms of binary stereotypic comparisons. From the British point of view, Japanese shows a particularly high evaluation of Modesty, and this may include apologetic behavior

¹⁸ If further illustration of Japanese Modesty in responding to compliments is needed, an example provided by Noriko Tanaka (pers. comm.) is indicative. The expression *kyooshuku* (“shrinking in awe”) is a formal but commonly used expression of modesty used by adults when *O* (especially their senior) evaluates their job highly. “It doesn’t mean that they are really embarrassed but that they are happy to hear that, implying the evaluation is too much though.” Another culture in which Modesty is strongly represented is that of Iran. Sharifian (2008) investigates the use of the L1 (Farsi) and L2 (English) and how they are informed by “the cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* ‘modesty’,” which “motivates the speakers to negate or scale down compliments, downplay their talents, skills, achievements, etc. . . . The schema also encourages the speakers to reassign the compliment to a family member, a friend, God, or another associate. . . . The results revealed that speakers of Persian instantiated the cultural scheme of *shekasteh-nafsi*, in varying degrees, in their responses to compliments both in their L1 and L2” (ibid.: 55).

and negative (disclaiming) responses to compliments. However, Tanaka et al. (2000) show that at least among one class of Japanese speakers—students—there are tendencies in the opposite direction: in her comparison with British and Canadian students, there were no significant differences in apologies, and the English-speaking students were actually more inclined to apologize when the supposed offense was not their fault. In another study relevant to Modesty surveying a range of cultures, however, Chen (2010) found that rejecting compliments (the characteristically “modest” response) was most strongly associated with East Asian cultures, whereas the opposite response, of accepting compliments, was most strongly associated with varieties of Arabic and of English-speaking cultures, with continental European cultures (such as German and Spanish) taking an intermediate position. However, this study, like others I mentioned above in 10.6, adopts the common but unhelpful practice of dividing compliment responses into essentially three classes—acceptance, evasion/deflection, and rejection—lumping together as acceptances the very distinct responses of agreeing with the compliment and thanking *O* for it. It is important to distinguish these, as only the former, agreement, implies a low regard for the Modesty Maxim.

10.8 ILP hypotheses informed by the GSP model

Given the amount of research already undertaken in interlinguistic or cross-cultural pragmatics relevant to politeness variation, it is possible to suggest reasonable hypotheses to test with the GSP model. A pragmatolinguistic hypothesis informed by the GSP and its Maxims will be tested against the relative frequency, indirectness (in the case of neg-politeness), or intensity (in the case of pos-politeness) of various strategies or linguistic devices for certain speech events. For example, suppose it is found that in very similar situations, the degree of intensity in thanking employed by population A is higher as compared with population B. (It should be noted that “degree of intensity,” in the case of pos-politeness, may include “zero intensity,” that is, not thanking at all.) This will be evidence that the Obligation-to-*O* Maxim is stronger in population A than in population B.

It should always be borne in mind, incidentally, that we are not comparing populations (whether speakers of different languages, or L1 and L2 speakers of the same language) in the expectation that population A will be demonstrated to be “more grateful or thankful” than population B, but that the comparison is based on communicative culture—that is, how strong is the tendency to use thanks (including routine or insincere thanks) as a communicative move.

A sociopragmatic hypothesis relates to the various evaluative scales of politeness and influencing politeness discussed in 4.5.2. They include:

- (i) The maxims of the GSP: Tact, Generosity, Modesty, Approbation, Obligation to *O*, Obligation to *S*, Opinion reticence, Agreement, Feeling reticence, Sympathy

- (ii) The three scales corresponding to B&L's P, D, and R factors (vertical distance, horizontal distance, and cost-benefit), including both quantitative and qualitative differences
- (iii) Additional factors that (as I argued in Chapter 4) can be subsumed under cost-benefit, notably the extent to which the rights of *S* or *O* are judged to be infringed or upheld by the speech event, the extent to which the speech event accords with *S*'s/*O*'s duties or responsibilities

These hypotheses most obviously apply to cross-cultural comparisons involving different languages. But they also apply to ILP if we add some hypotheses regarding L2 learners' progress that have been largely confirmed by existing research (see 10.5–10.6) above:

- (A) That L2 learners particularly at lower levels of competence are influenced by the mother tongue via (negative) pragmatic transfer
- (B) That at more advanced stages they progressively accommodate to communication in L2, so that negative pragmatic transfer diminishes
- (C) The learners who spend time in an L2-speaking country have an advantage in pragmatic accommodation over learners who have stayed at home in the L1-speaking country
- (D) That the longer the stay in the L2-speaking country, the greater the advantage mentioned in (C)
- (E) That implicit and (even more) explicit instruction in the pragmatics of the L2 contributes to improvement of L2 pragmatic ability

Of course, there are other factors that affect individuals' speed of acquisition, such as personality factors, but in general, as we have seen, these hypotheses are well supported.

10.9 Conclusion

The discussion of the last section has led to conclusions that can be summarized as follows:

- ❑ Hypotheses can be derived from cross-cultural or interlinguistic studies.
- ❑ Statements of the kind "In Chinese culture, the Generosity Maxim has a higher value than in British/American culture" are sociopragmatic hypotheses and can be tested, for example, from data of offers and invitations (commissives).
- ❑ Statements of the kind "In the Greek language more intensified or insistent commissive speech acts (invitations, offers) are used with great frequency/force than in BrE or AmE" are pragmalinguistic hypotheses, and can be tested, e.g., with data from offers, invitations, intensifying features (including pragmatic modifiers, exclamations, etc.), and repetition (rejection of *O*'s declining the invitation).

- ▣ With ILP, to this can be added to another hypothesis, that pragmatic transfer by learners at lower levels of competence is considerable but diminishes over time as learners accommodate to the L2.

These assumptions may be assumed to hold except in special cases, which would need special investigation. There is much still to be done.

Politeness and the History of English

This chapter will present a brief historical sketch of politeness in the English language. There has been comparatively little research on this subject, and there are vast gaps and unclear areas remaining to be explored. Yet I hope to show it is a field of great potential interest. Using the models of B&L and Watts, Jucker (2012), a leading figure in the field, goes so far as to sketch a history of the changing culture of politeness by associating periods with differing conceptions of politeness:

Old English—*discernment politeness* [equivalent to Watts's notion (2003) of "politic behaviour"—see 2.2.11]

Middle English—from *discernment politeness* to *deference politeness*

Early Modern English—*deference/positive politeness*

Eighteenth century—*compliment culture* ["compliment" used in the broader sense than today]

Present-day English—*non-imposition politeness*

This is an appealing, if (as Jucker admits) oversimplified, picture that will find some echoes in the sketch to be given here.

11.1 Historical Pragmatics and Politeness

The field of research to which the subject matter of this chapter belongs is **historical pragmatics**: a newish subdiscipline that draws on the techniques of pragmatics in the study of linguistic change. Historical pragmatics, more evidently than other aspects of diachronic linguistics, relies heavily on understanding texts in their historical context. This applies particularly to the study of politeness.

The burgeoning interest in English historical pragmatics since the 1990s has been greatly helped by the availability of corpora and digital text collections or electronic archives that can be automatically searched by computer. In fact, of all the methods of collecting data explained in Chapter 9, the method of investigating naturally occurring textual data is the only one that can be applied to historical data. For periods from which we no longer have living speakers, there are obviously

no “respondents” who can fill in DCTs, be interviewed, or perform role plays. So we have to rely on the texts that have survived from those earlier periods. Now, however, use of textual resources has been immensely advanced by the availability of large corpora such as the Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC)¹ and its more recent extensions, by the Corpus of English Dialogues (CED),² and by enormous electronic archives such as the Old Bailey corpus (a record of the spoken proceedings of the UK’s most important criminal court),³ and Early English Books Online (EEBO),⁴ a massive collection that at the latest count consisted of more than a billion words.

What about the history of linguistic politeness? In contrast to the above, one can only say here that research has been patchy, and driven to some extent by ideological concerns. Ehlich (1992) traces politeness back several thousand years, whereas Watts (2003) focuses on politeness as coming into its ideological own in the eighteenth century, when it became an instrument of power in the hands of the middle-to-upper classes. In part Watts’s interest has been channeled by his own decision to confine his studies to “politeness₁” (see 2.2.11), that is, the folk-concept of politeness, as reflected in people’s ordinary usage of the term, rather than any theoretically developed interpretation of politeness. In associating politeness₁ so firmly with hegemonic power (ibid.) Watts concentrates on an elitist interpretation of politeness that became fashionable and influential in the eighteenth century, where it was almost a shibboleth for membership of “polite society.”⁵ From this it is easy for him to argue for the continuation of “the elitist and socially exclusive nature of politeness systems” up to the present day, linking it to the British social class system and the evolution of standard English.

Fitzmaurice (2010), on the other hand, argues that there was a split, in the eighteenth century, between the Spectator’s (Addison’s and Steele’s) view of politeness extending to the up and coming middle class, and the more “egotistical” elitist view associated with the Earl of Chesterfield, whose influence brought the concept into a certain amount of disrepute and satirical ridicule from later writers—a trend from which “being polite” has arguably not fully recovered today. Fitzmaurice quotes a

¹ The Corpus of Early English Correspondence (CEEC), compiled at Helsinki, has developed into a “family” of corpora containing about twelve hundred letters written by individuals in the period 1400–1800.

² See Culpeper and Kytö (2010). The Corpus of English Dialogues, compiled at Uppsala and Lancaster, contains 177 texts chosen to represent, as realistically as possible, the language of spoken interaction in the period 1560–1760.

³ The proceedings of London’s Central Criminal Court, 1674–1913. See Huber (2007).

⁴ According to a recent estimate, undertaken by Jonathan Culpeper and Alistair Baron, EEBO contains three billion words, not all of which have yet been transcribed.

⁵ It is symptomatic of the gap between *politeness* as understood in the eighteenth century and as understood today that Jonathan Swift’s work known as *Polite Conversation* (1738) has little to do with the present-day sense of *polite*, being a satirical work illustrating, through dialogues, the banal small talk (liberally mixed with puns and catchphrases) of supposedly fashionable conversationalists of the day.

definition from the Huguenot author Abel Boyer, influenced by La Rochefoucauld, in the early eighteenth century: politeness is “a dextrous management of our words and actions whereby we make other People have better Opinions of us and themselves” (*The English Theophrastus*, 1702). Despite the cynicism reflecting its time and its origin, this definition is a recognizable antecedent of modern accounts of politeness in terms of face.

This kind of debate, however, is really about the evolving meaning of the word “politeness,” in keeping with Watts’s decision to embrace politeness₁ rather than politeness₂. I am more interested here in politeness₂; in tracing the history of politeness according to the model of politeness as “communicative altruism,” as I called it in 1.1. There is little doubt that the eighteenth century was a key period in the cultural history of politeness, when the growing power and influence of the middle class encroached on the upper class preserve of “polite society.”⁶ But here we take a more panoramic view, looking back over the whole history of the language since Old English.

11.2 Politeness in Old English (before 1100)

Kohnen (2008a, 2008b) finds little evidence of politeness in the language of directives and in the use of address terms, two of the more obvious places to look for politeness among the Anglo-Saxons. On the other hand, this passage from *Beowulf*, translated into Present-Day English, illustrates the courteous interaction between Hrothgar, King of the Danes, and Beowulf, a prince of the Geats (another Germanic tribe). Beowulf says (in Alexander’s alliterative verse translation)⁷:

- (1) Health to Hrothgar! I am Hygelac’s kinsman
 And serve in his fellowship. . . [lines 407–408]
 To you I will now
 Put one request, royal Scylding,
 Shield of the South Danes, one sole favor
 That you’ll not deny me, dear lord of your people, . . . [lines 426–429]

Hrothgar replies:

- (2) So it is as to fight in our defence, my friend Beowulf,
 And as an office of kindness that you have come to us here!
 [lines 457–458]

⁶ Ehlich (1992) discusses the “appropriation” of politeness by the German bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century. No doubt a similar development took place in Great Britain. Watts (1992) writes of Augustan politeness (quoting Sell 1992: 110) that “politeness was a sign of good breeding and high social status” and claims that “politeness was inextricably linked to social class and socio-political power.”

⁷ The original Old English of the *Beowulf* quotations is given in the Addendum at the end of this chapter.

.....

Yet sit now to the banquet, where you may soon attend,
Should the mood so take you, some tale of victory. [lines 489–490]

As we see, on his arrival at Heorot, the royal hall of the Danes, Beowulf greets the king, paying him homage in honorific address terms, and makes an offer of help, expressed politely in the form of a request for a favor. There are signs of both pos- and neg-politeness (1.2.2) here; the Maxims of Generosity, Tact, and Approbation are all in play. Almost immediately after this courteous exchange, however, Hrothgar's evil counselor Unferth engages in a slanging match⁸ with Beowulf, demonstrating the impolite end of the Anglo-Saxon spectrum. We could imagine this to be partly triggered by the somewhat boastful words previously uttered by Beowulf in vaunting his warrior prowess in previous encounters:

(3) These men knew well the weight of my hands.
Had they not seen me come home from fights
Where I had bound five Giants—their blood
was upon me— [lines 418–421]

It is well known that in the heroic-age literature modesty had little place in the verbal repertoire of the Germanic warrior, who was apt to challenge his foes through ironic denigration and self-praise. There is one sign of modesty in this passage, however, where the King himself admits inferiority to his dead brother:

(4) The son of Healfdene had hastened from us,
my elder brother; a better man than I. [lines 467–469]

As Beowulf's response to Unferth further shows, the warrior's self-praise could be associated with mock politeness (that is, irony) in denigrating his foe:

(5) I thank my friend Unferth, who unlocks us this tale
of Breca's bragged exploit; the beer lends
eloquence to his tongue. [lines 530–532]

11.3 Politeness in Middle English (1100–1500)

Moving from Old to Middle English brings us to the era of courtly love (Lewis 1936), associated with a more elaborated and refined code of courtesy and honor among aristocrats, as is well illustrated by the great alliterative poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (later fourteenth century). In this extract (in the modern verse translation of Simon Armitage, 2007⁹) King Arthur's nephew Sir Gawain is

⁸ This kind of versified exercise in boastfulness and insult is found particularly in the Old Icelandic sagas and is the literary forerunner of the *flyting*—the verse contest in obloquy which reached its apogee in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Scotland; see Jucker and Taavitsainen (2000).

⁹ The original Middle English text of the quotations is given in the Addendum at the end of this chapter.

a guest at a castle where he resists an attempted bedroom seduction by the lady of the court:

- (1) The man in the bed said ‘Good morning, ma’am.
 I’ll contentedly attend whatever task you set, (Generosity)
 And in serving your desires I shall seek your mercy, (Tact)
 Which seems my best plan, in the circumstances!
 And he loaded his light-hearted words with laughter.
 ‘But my gracious lady, if you grant me leave, (Approbation, Tact)
 Will you pardon this prisoner and prompt him to rise, (Obligation to O)
 Then I’ll quit these covers and pull on my clothes,
 And our words will flow more freely back and forth.’
 Not so, beautiful sir,’ the sweet lady said. (Approbation)
 ‘Bide in your bed—*my own plan is better*.
 I’ll tuck in your covers corner to corner,
 Then playfully parley with the man I have pinned.
 Because I know your name—*the knight Sir Gawain*,
 Famed through the realm whichever road he rides, (Approbation)
 Whose princely honor is highly praised (Approbation)
 Amongst lords and ladies and everyone alive.
 [lines 1213–1229]

Alongside the lines of verse, I have indicated the maxims of the PP that are observed here. The maxim of Modesty is missing (unless Gawain’s referring to himself as a *prisoner* is counted as such). But modesty is observed in Gawain’s self-deprecating response to the lady’s flattery:

- (2) ‘in good faith,’ said Gawain, ‘such gracious flattery,
 though in truth I’m not nearly such a noble knight.
 I don’t dare to receive the respect you describe
 And in no way warrant such worthy words.
 [lines 1241–1244]

If we move forward another century, we come to yet another cultural milieu, though like the *Gawain* poem, much influenced by high medieval court culture of the continent, particularly France and Burgundy. In the twenty years 1470–1490, William Caxton, a member of the emerging class of merchants and entrepreneurs, wrote prologues and epilogues to the books he printed (mostly translations), in which he adopted a conventional pose of humility toward his public, and above all toward his (hoped-for) patrons. Here is an example, showing his extreme deference in daring to address the mother of the reigning monarch:

- (3) Unto the right noble, puissant and excellent princess, my redoubted¹⁰ lady, my Lady Margaret, Duchess of Somerset, mother unto our natural and sovereign

¹⁰ *Redoubted*: “feared, respected.”

lord and most Christian king, Henry the Seventh, by the grace of God King of England and of France, Lord of Ireland etc., I William Caxton, his most **indyng**,¹¹ **humble** subject and **little servant**, PRESENT this **little** book unto the noble grace of my said lady; which book I late received in French from her good grace, and her commandment withal to reduce and translate it into our maternal and English tongue;... .

—from the Prologue to *Blanchardin and Eglantine*, c. 1489¹²

I have used different font and case choices to illustrate the maxims of the PP employed here: underlining for Approbation; **bold**, Modesty; SMALL CAPS, Generosity; and *italics*, intensifiers of Approbation and Modesty. I have assumed a broad interpretation of the Approbation Maxim, to include honorific titles such as *lady*, *Duchess*, and *King*.

Later in the same prologue (Blake 1973: 58) the following show of Modesty is typical of Caxton in disparaging his ability to use the English language:

- (4) Beseeching my said lady's bounteous grace to receive this **little** book IN GREE¹³ of me, her **humble servant**, and to *PARDON* me of the **rude** and **common** English, whereas shall be found **fault**; for I **confess me not learned ne knowing the art of rhetoric ne of such gay terms** as now be said in these days and used.

In addition to the manifestations of the PP in Approbation and Modesty signaled as before, the italic small caps for *PARDON* represents an apology—an observance of the Obligation Maxim (that is, *S's* obligation to *O*).

One of the recurrent honorific devices shown in both the quotations above from Caxton is the use of third-person address. For Caxton, it would have been unbearably presumptive to address the Duchess using a second-person pronoun “thou” or “you” (see 11.4 below). The honorific value of third-person address is found in third-person pronoun forms in modern European languages such as German (*Sie*), Italian (*Lei*), and Spanish (*usted*), and of course also in highly restricted ceremonial address forms in present-day English such as *Your Majesty* and *Your Grace*.¹⁴ In

¹¹ *Indynge*: “unworthy.”

¹² With modernized spelling, but otherwise from Blake (1973: 57).

¹³ *In gree* = “graciously.” Here, as is not unusual even in modern English—cf. *Can I get you a drink?*—ostensibly Caxton appeals to the addressee to be generous or gracious enough to accept his gift; that is, the Generosity Maxim is reinforced by the Tact Maxim.

¹⁴ The cultural reality behind the honorific avoidance of second-person address comes home even today in a statement in a recent British guide to protocol and the correct use of titles:

A writer not personally known to the Queen or other member of the Royal Family should address his letter to the Private Secretary, Equerry or Lady in Waiting of the person concerned, asking that the subject of the letter be made known to Her Majesty (or to His or Her Royal Highness). (*Titles and Forms of Address: A Guide to Correct Use*. 22nd ed. London: A & C Black, 2007, p. 1.)

In other words, there is still a sense that it is presumptuous for a private citizen to address the Queen or a member of her family directly.

Caxton's time, such devices of third-person address could be elaborated into a form of flattery: examples from (4) and (5) above are *the noble grace of my said lady; her good grace; and my said lady's bounteous grace*.

11.4 Politeness in Modern English (after 1500)

If there is one difference in politeness that distinguishes the late Modern period from all previous historical periods of English language, it is the sharply diminishing importance of the vertical distance axis (the P of B&L's P, D, and R). From the medieval period onward, in many contexts we notice the great gulf between the low status of the speaker and the high status of the addressee, which (by present-day standards) manifests itself in extremely deferential communicative behavior, giving enormous weight to the Approbation Maxim and (to a lesser extent) to the Modesty Maxim. This applies, for example, to the dedications, often taking the form of a letter, prefaced to published books. The praise lavished on the dedicatee, in such epistles, as well as the humility claimed by the author, became conventional and was also, of course, a self-serving device, helping to ingratiate the author with influential patronage. However, the elaborate expression of approbation became almost an art form in itself, in such famous examples as the dedication to King James I of the King James Bible (1611), in which the translators begin their eulogy as follows:

- (1) Great and manifold were the blessings, most dread Sovereign, which Almighty God, the Father of all mercies, bestowed upon us the people of England, when he sent Your Majesty's Royal Person to rule and reign over us.

As the centuries moved on, dedications became shorter and more perfunctory, symptomatic of the gradual leveling out of overt social distinctions—a process that has been referred to as *democratization*, although its implications are not so much that social differences of power and status no longer matter as that they are not explicitly shown and referred to—for example, by the use of honorific devices. The perfunctory endpoint of this process can be a simple phrase such as *To my Mother* (the dedication of Gerald Durrell's *My Family and Other Animals*, 1956).¹⁵

Another symptom of the decreasing vertical distance between *S* and *H* is observable in the forms of salutation used by letter writers over the centuries—a topic that has been studied in some depth, using the impressive range of data available in the CEEC, by Nevala (2004), Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), and

¹⁵ However, something of a reversal of the unequal relation between author and dedicatee is observed as early as 1755 in Samuel Johnson's rejection of the Earl of Chesterfield's bid to be his patron and the dedicatee of Johnson's famous *Dictionary*. Johnson's rebuttal in a personal letter was later published and became known as the "Celebrated Letter." It used mock deference to ridicule his Lordship, showing that here, at least, the author could claim a public status equal, if not superior, to that of his aristocratic would-be patron. (See Leech 2008: 86–103.)

TABLE 11.1

Examples of private letter salutations 1420–1570.

[1420–1500]	a) Worshipful sir
	b) Right worshipful and my right singular good master
[1500–1570]	c) Reverent and worshipful sir and my special friend and gossip
	d) My very good lord
	e) Worthy sir

Raumolin-Brunberg (1996). Up to and including the Renaissance period, opening address formulae of private letters were apt to take the form of elaborate honorifics, depending of course on the social relationship between writer and addressee. Examples from Raumolin-Brunberg (1996), with the periods within which they occurred, are in Table 11.1.

Endearments after 1570 were more common (*Dear brother*, *Loving Uncle*), and after 1630 address formulae started to become simpler: *Sir* and *Madam* were used for a range of ranks. *Noble sir* and *Good sister* still showed the habit of prefixing laudatory adjectives. Like Kopytko (1995), Raumolin-Brunberg (1996) proposes a general tendency for negative politeness to give way to positive politeness. However, bearing in mind my criticism of B&L’s positive-negative politeness distinction (see 1.2.2), I would not describe the change from respect and deference toward familiarity/endearment in these terms. I see it, rather, as a gradual change from a hierarchical society toward a more egalitarian one, marked by a decline in the use of elaborate honorifics manifesting the Approbation Maxim, and leading to a simplification of address terms. As the vertical distance between interactants diminished, the way of showing consideration to *O* would be to use friendly or affectionate address forms (in keeping with the movement toward *camaraderie*; see 11.5).

It is significant that from earliest surviving texts the way to express oneself properly and politely in addressing an inferior was to use epithets that are complimentary without implying any sacrifice to one’s own status. For example, King Alfred the Great began his address to a bishop (c. 890) about his educational plans for improving literacy and learning as follows: *King Alfred bids Bishop Wærferð be greeted in his own words lovingly and friendlily*. The two adverbs *lovingly* and *friendlily* indicate the positive relation of esteem and affection a king could afford to show his important subjects in such a way as to enhance rather than demean his own kingliness. Similarly, the Chancery letters of the fifteenth century, issued in the king’s name by the civil service of the day, not only bestowed a compliment but showed affection: *Right trusty and well-beloved* was the conventional opening phrase of address.

Naturally, trustworthiness and valor are among the qualities a monarch or leader feels entitled to expect among his or her subjects or subordinates. In Shakespeare’s *Othello* (1604), the Duke of Venice opens his address to the Moor Othello with

Valiant Othello. When Othello has to justify his courtship of Desdemona, he replies more elaborately to the oligarchs of Venice:

- (2) Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approv'd good masters (*Othello* I.iii.77)

The inequality of the address forms is clear, as the difference in status and the requirements of the situation would in any case recommend. Yet it is also noticeable that there is politeness in a superior's addressing his inferior by paying a compliment to "valiant Othello": the Approbation Maxim is at work bidirectionally.

This is a point to emphasize: in Shakespeare's day, as in earlier times, politeness was not just a unidirectional tribute paid by the lowly to the rich and powerful but also had a reciprocal element. In this connection, it is worth turning to the issue that has been in the forefront of historical discussions of politeness in Europe: the choice, in addressing one person, of singular versus plural second-person pronouns in Indo-European languages such as French, German, Spanish, and Italian, and (historically) in English *thou* and *you*. Brown and Gilman (1960, 1989), in their seminal articles on this topic, distinguished between *T* (singular) and *V* (plural) pronouns in terms of a "power semantic" and a "solidarity semantic," which in the present treatment correspond respectively to vertical and horizontal distance (B&L's P and D). Brown and Gilman trace the respectful/deferential use of *V* for a single addressee back to the fourth century, when *V* began to be used in addressing the Roman Emperor, since "plurality," as Brown and Gilman note (1960: 254), has been "a very old and ubiquitous metaphor for power." This asymmetrical use of *V* in talking "up" in contrast to *T* used in talking "down" spread gradually across European languages: in English the first singular use of *ye* (the nominative form) or *you* (originally the oblique form) dated from the thirteenth century (*ibid.*: 267). *Ye* and *you* began to be used reciprocally in respectful address between individuals. In more recent centuries the "semantic of solidarity" kicked in, with people tending to use *T* reciprocally to show solidarity or mutual intimacy. The *T/V* issue is therefore a canonical example of what I have called bivalent politeness (1.2.1), where the choice of a pronoun addressing one person is determined by (1) vertical distance (asymmetric use) and (2) horizontal distance (symmetric use), irrespective of the cost-benefit factor. Eventually *you* was used among upper classes, and eventually all classes reciprocally, while *thou* retreated into private and dialectal use.¹⁶ Brown and Gilman (1960) discuss how in other European languages the reciprocal solidarity use of *T* has increasingly been winning out against the asymmetric use of *T* and *V*, another manifestation of "democratization" in the broad sense of reducing or eliminating the overt socially discriminative use of language. In English, on the other hand, there was an early loss of the *T* form in general usage, and the *V*

¹⁶ See Nevalainen (2006: 78–80) for a discussion of the *T* and *V* pronouns in EModE. A well-known exception to the obsolescence of *thou* in the seventeenth century is the use up to the present day of *thee* by members of the Society of Friends (or Quakers), as discussed by Brown and Gilman (1960: 267–268).

form *you* survived as both a singular and a plural pronoun, extending its usage to second-person address in general. This change took place in Early Modern English, but it was still possible for Shakespeare to signal the unequal relation between master and servant by the *T/V* contrast, as in this exchange from *Richard III*:

- (3) *Clarence*: Where art *thou*, keeper? Give me a cup of wine.
Second Murderer: You shall have wine enough, my lord, anon.

The Duke of Clarence chooses *thou* in addressing someone he thinks is a servant. But the “servant” (who incidentally is about to drown Clarence in a butt of Malmsey wine) uses the polite *you*.

There was, however, a great deal of fluctuation and flexibility in the use of *T* and *V* during the Tudor period. Two examples showing this rather dramatically are quoted by Nevalainen (ibid.). The first is from *The Trial of Sir Walter Raleigh* (1603), where the Attorney General, Sir Edward Coke, attacks the defendant (a leading courtier), insultingly using *thou* as if addressing a menial. He underlines the insult by using *thou* as a speech act verb (cf. present-day German *duzen* and French *tutoyer*):

- (4) *Raleigh*. I do not hear yet, that **you** have spoken one word against me; here is no Treason of mine done: If my Lord *Cobham* be a Traitor, what is that to me?
Attorney: All that he did was by **thy** instigation, **thou** Viper; for I *thou thee*, **thou** Traitor.

The second example contrasts startlingly with this in several ways. First, it shows a consistent use of the “polite” singular pronoun *you*, reflecting the modern usage of singular *you* that still obtains in standard English today. Second, although the author is the English sovereign, this pronoun is embedded in a highly polite piece of discourse that incorporates greeting, thanking, complimenting, and offering, while adding intensification (*with all my heart*, *great pain*) to this combination of several kinds of pos-politeness:

- (5) *Mine own good Cardinal*, I recommend me unto you with all my heart, and thank you for the great pain and labor that you do daily take in my business and matters, desiring you (that when you have well established them) to take some pastime and comfort, to the intent you may the longer endure to serve us; (CEEC, *King Henry VIII*, 1520s ORIGINAL I, 269).¹⁷

Further, the letter is written “down” the social ladder by a reigning monarch to one of his subjects (albeit a very powerful and important subject), in the relatively early period of the 1520s. yet perhaps the most surprising thing is that the letter is written by the king later most reviled among English monarchs for his tyrannical

¹⁷ Quoted from Nevalainen (2006: 80), with modernized spelling.

behavior. It seems that in respect of the *T/V* choice, Henry VIII was a pioneer of modern usage.

In the nineteenth century, there are still obvious signs of the deferential and respectful style inherited from earlier periods, especially evident in styles of address. Jane Austen's eponymous heroine of *Emma* is outraged (apparently with the approval of Austen herself) when the vulgar Mrs. Elton refers to Emma's honored friend (and future husband) Mr. Knightley as "Knightley" without the titular prefix:

- (6) "Knightley!—I could not have believed it, Knightley!—never seen him in her life before, and call him Knightley! (*Emma* [1816], Chapter 32)

Victorian novelists like Dickens and Trollope routinely provide examples of wives addressing their husbands by titles and/or surnames, as *Mr. Micawber* (used by Mrs. Micawber in *David Copperfield*) and *Archdeacon* (used by Archdeacon Grantly's wife in the Barsetshire novels), something that would be unimaginable at the present day. The use of given names, whether abbreviated or not, was far more restricted than today, being typically a mark of affection or solidarity in addressing, for example, either close friends or junior family members and young coevals.

At another extreme of overpoliteness, Mr. Carker (Mr. Dombey's villainous manager in Dickens's *Dombey and Son*) employs an obsequiously polite style in attempting to ingratiate himself with Florence Dombey, his boss's daughter, on whom he has designs:

- (7) "I beg pardon", said Mr Carker, "a thousand times! But I am going down tomorrow morning to Mr Dombey, at Leamington, and if Miss Dombey can entrust me with any commission, need I say how very happy I shall be?" (*Dombey and Son*, Chapter 24)

Carker begins his apparent goodwill offer with an exaggerated apology (for daring to open a conversation with Miss Dombey). Another mark of polite respectful distance is the avoidance of *you* (as we saw in 11.3, the second-person pronoun could be considered too direct) and its replacement by third-person address—*if Miss Dombey can entrust me...* The offer ends with an intensified expression of Carker's gladness to help "Miss Dombey" (combining the Sympathy Maxim and the Generosity Maxim).

11.5 Recent and Current Developments

The most recent history of politeness in English can again illustrate the tendency toward increasing democratization—defined by Fairclough (1992: 98) as "reduction of overt markers of power asymmetry"—which shows up notably in the decreasing use of honorifics, particularly *Sir*, *Madam*, *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, and *Miss* over the last hundred years. In the eighteenth century, as recorded in Boswell's *Life of Dr Johnson*,

Johnson and his close friend and boon companion Boswell routinely addressed one another as *Sir*, but more recently the use of this honorific vocative has dwindled to one-sided use in addressing a man conceived of as of higher status (for example, a customer being served in a hotel).¹⁸ Between 1961 and 1991, in an AmE corpus study reported in Leech et al. (2009: 259–261, 313), the frequency of use of *Mr.* dropped by approximately a third, while the frequencies of *Mrs.* and *Miss* each declined by more than two-thirds. The decline was statistically highly significant in all cases. There was a similar drop in BrE, where these titular nouns were however generally far more frequent. In another study based on a sample of conversation from the BNC and the LCSAE (Leech 1999), I found that vocatives in the form Titular Noun + Surname were many times less frequent than given names such as *Susan* and *Stephen*, and (especially) abbreviated familiarizing given names such as *Sue* and *Stevie*. Table 11.2 (from Leech 1999: 113) breaks down the frequency of vocatives into these and other categories.

TABLE 11.2
Proportional use of vocative types in a sample of American and British conversation.

Categories of vocative	AmE		BrE		Total		(SUMMARY)
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	No.	Percent	
A. Endearments (e.g., <i>darling</i> , <i>honey</i>)	12	5.26%	9	5.00%	21	5.15%	SOLIDARITY FUNCTION 92.90%
B. Kin terms (e.g., <i>mom</i> , <i>granny</i>)	4	1.75%	37	20.56%	41	10.05%	
C. General familiarizers (e.g., <i>guys</i> , <i>dude</i>)	50	21.93%	8	4.44%	58	14.22%	
D. Given names (familiarized; e.g., <i>Chris</i>)	89	39.04%	29	16.11%	118	28.92%	
E. Given names (e.g., <i>Benjamin</i> , <i>Christine</i>)	53	23.25%	88	48.89%	141	34.56%	
F. Title + surname (e.g., <i>Mr. Lee</i> , <i>Dr. Day</i>)	8	3.51%	0	0.00%	8	1.96%	HONORIFIC/ DEFERENCE FUNCTION 2.70%
G. Honorific nouns (<i>sir</i> , <i>madam</i> , <i>ma'am</i>)	2	0.88%	1	0.55%	3	0.74%	
H. Other (e.g., <i>boy</i> , <i>Aunt Margaret</i>)	10	4.39%	8	4.44%	18	4.41%	OTHER 4.41%
Total	228	100.01%	180	99.89%	408	100.01%	

¹⁸ This does not take account of the ironic use of *sir*, as in this example from the LCSAE:

Oh. Nobody would marry you. You're, you better keep the one you've got [laugh]. You're in the same boat as I am, *sir*.
It is reported that the honorifics *sir* and *ma'am* are used more generally in the Southern United States, where "southern politeness" prevails.

It is notable here that vocatives in Categories F and G, which have an honorific function, however weak, account for less than 4 percent of the AmE sample, and less than 1 percent of the BrE sample. On the other hand, vocatives that have a familiarizing or solidarity-building function (categories A–E) account for more than 90 percent of both regional subsamples. Given names account for more than 60 percent of each subsample.

It is obvious that the overwhelmingly major function of vocatives is to serve the “solidarity” function rather than the “deference/honorification” function. This seems to vindicate the view that bivalent politeness, in BrE and even more in AmE, is giving way to “camaraderie” (friendly solidarity building; see Lakoff 1990, 2005) as a rapport management strategy (see 11.6).

A last main topic to consider in the history of politeness in English is the growth of indirect directives. Given that present-Day English seems to be strongly if not exceptionally associated with indirect requests (manifestations of the Tact Maxim; see 6.3.3, 6.4.1), it is of interest to consider how far back in history this tendency can be traced. In a series of papers, Kohnen (2000a, 2000b, 2002, 2007, 2008a) has used corpora to investigate the historical realization of directives. He has found that performatives (*I command you*, *I beseech you*, etc), which are often felt to be too explicit and confrontational in present-Day English, were more frequently used in Old English. He also observes that indirect requests in interrogative form, generally the most common kind of request in present-Day English (*Can you...? Will you...? etc.*), are not easy to find before the Early Modern period. The past hypothetical forms such as *Could you* and *Would you* are also not much in evidence before the nineteenth century (Culpeper and Demmen 2011). Yet the Tact Maxim appears to have taken over a key position in the politeness of present-day English.

It appears, then, that the most notable changes to politeness in English in late Modern English are, first, the decline and virtual obsolescence (in general use) of honorific forms of address, and second, the growth of indirect forms of polite request. It is tempting to ask: Can these two trends be associated with one another? The answer can only be speculative, but in their questionnaire results Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) measured national characteristics according to four statistically derived factors including (1) power distance and (2) collectivism versus individualism. The lowest *power distance index* was found among German-speaking, Nordic, and inner-circle English-speaking countries, and also in Israel.¹⁹ The highest individualism index was found among predominantly English-speaking countries, with the United States in first position out of seventy-four countries, followed by Australia (second), Great Britain (third), and Canada (fourth; *ibid.*: 78). One of the characteristics of individualist societies is that everyone is assumed to have a

¹⁹ It will be noted that these are all predominantly Germanic-language-speaking populations, with the exception of Israel, where, however, there is a strong Yiddish-speaking subculture and substratum, Yiddish being a Germanic language.

right to self-determination and privacy (ibid.: 109).²⁰ Hence as a society embraces the ideology of individualism and democracy, it lays greater store on the right of individuals to make their own choices—which is surely the motivation for interrogative requests such as *Could you...*, *Would you mind...*, and so on (see 6.3.3), which purport to allow the requestee independence of choice.

In another type of cross-national sociocultural research, Wouters (2007) studied Dutch, German, British, and American etiquette books, tracing a process since 1890 of *informalization*, whereby people claim increasing freedom and informality in their interpersonal relations—with the result that “displays of superiority and inferiority” are becoming “tabooed” (3). In contrast, “the boy of early Victorian days was a ceremonious creature. He called his parents ‘Sir’ and ‘Madam’, and would never have dreamed of starting a conversation at table, and scarcely of joining in it” (Armstrong 1908, quoted by Wouters 2007: 168). From his evidence, Wouters depicts this informalization process as accelerating in recent years, and an associated trend is seen in an increasing *colloquialization* (the tendency for written language to move toward spoken norms) in the use of English (see Leech et al. 2009: 239–249). Wouters brings together the discriminative attitudes of “racism, sexism, ageism, nationalism, ethnocentrism, etc. “under the new conceptual umbrella of ‘superiorism’” (220). The expression of such “superiorism” is becoming more and more outlawed from modern societies, especially Western societies. Informalization, democratization, and individualism go together in giving a high value to the independent identity of the individual self (see also Culpeper and Demmen 2011).

From this picture of an increasingly informal, individualistic society, it is not surprising that bivalent politeness based on unequal vertical-distance relationships has all but disappeared, except in rather ceremonious situations. The asymmetric use of the Approbation and Modesty Maxims, emphasizing inequality in the relation between *S* and *H*, has lost most of its influence in polite behavior.²¹ In contrast, it is understandable that indirect requests have grown in frequency and elaboration, as the Tact Maxim (allowing *O* power over *O*’s own “space”) has become more powerful.

²⁰ According to Hofstede and Hofstede (2005: 76–78), in individualist societies, the basic unit is the nuclear family (increasingly including one-parent families) rather than the extended family. In the low-power-distance society of the Anglosphere, there is less emphasis on obedience, and children are expected to take control over their own affairs early: they are encouraged to be independent (ibid.: 52). So there appears to be a correlation between high individualism, low power distance, and independence.

²¹ Other possible signs of avoidance of overt authoritarianism have been noted in the declining use of *must* in the sense of obligation (Leech et al. 2009: 87–89), cases where more politeness is shown by “powerful” people than “less powerful” people (e.g., Eisenstein and Bodman 1993: 67; Tanaka 2000), and the use of “hypocritical” request forms *Would you like to get me an ice cream?* (see 6.1), where powerful people (such as parents and teachers addressing children) “pretend” that a chore may be a pleasant treat for the addressee.

11.6 Concluding Remarks: The Decline of Politeness?

After this historical sketch, a question to be asked is, Is politeness on the decline? In asking this question, I seem to be bowing to the popular belief in habitual degeneration in standards—the belief that things are always getting worse, for example, that the English language is declining into indiscipline and incoherence, that children are getting more ill-behaved, that crime is increasing, that educational standards are declining, and so on. But the argument that politeness is on the decline may have a more serious basis.

Robin Lakoff (1979, 1990, 2005) argues that a new trend toward the adoption of *camaraderie* as a principal strategy of rapport enhancement began in California in the 1970s, and from there spread toward the east of the United States, and presumably (following well-known Americanization trends) to other parts of the English-speaking world. I have borrowed Lakoff's term *camaraderie* for the type of rapport enhancement where, instead of maintaining politeness along with distance (vertical and/or horizontal), speakers aim to minimize the implication of distance, so that bivalent politeness becomes less appropriate as the norm for distance on the P and D scales diminishes.

However, this is diminution on the bivalent politeness scale, rather than on the trivalent politeness scale (see Figure 11.1).

Some signs of the diminution of bivalent politeness are:

1. Declining use of respectfully polite titles such as *Mr.*, *Mrs.*, *Miss*, *Dr.*, etc., along with the increasing use of given name and familiarizing vocatives, especially familiarized versions of given names as in *Sue*, *Bill*, and *Sam* (see 6.4.2 (c)). Similarly, increasing use of familiarizing vocatives such as *guys*, *dude* (AmE), and *mate* (BrE).
2. Increasing use of familiar greetings, such as *Hi* (especially in AmE) and *Hello* (especially in BrE), rather than the more formal greetings like *Good morning* and *Good evening*. Similarly, increasing use of familiar farewells like *Bye (bye)*, *See you*, and *Cheers* (BrE).
3. Opening a conversation with the peremptory interjection *Hey*, rather than some more polite attention getter such as *Excuse me...*
4. In written messages, e.g., in email, an increasing avoidance of introductory *Dear X*, which is often replaced by *Hi X*, or simply *X*.
5. In written letters or email messages, closing letters with signatory phrases like *best wishes*, *all the best*, and *best* rather than the more formal and traditional *Sincerely (yours)* (especially AmE), *Yours sincerely* (especially BrE), and *Yours faithfully*.

What appears to be relatively new is the use of given (or first) name address even with strangers. I find myself, on first contacting (for example) an editor or publisher, beginning a letter with *Dear X (if I may)*, where *X* is a given name. This reminds

me a little of the growing habit of premature thanks (see 7.3). It is an irrational anticipation in the sense that the writer first uses given name address and then retrospectively asks permission to do so.

The modern habit of first-name address very probably was an earlier trend in the United States and has gone further there than in the UK. I remember being surprised on my first visit to the United States in 1964, when an insurance agent on first meeting me addressed me by my given name. He was interviewing me about health insurance, and after asking my name, immediately continued with *Well, Geoffrey...* This habit has now persisted so far that internet providers (such as PayPal, Twitter, and Facebook) address me as *Geoffrey*, although as an individual I am completely unacquainted with the person (or perhaps digital avatar) addressing me.

In my comparison of vocatives in AmE and BrE (see Table 11.2), using data from the BNC and the LCSAE, I found (in a limited though varied sample subcorpus) the occurrence of given-name vocatives was 20 percent higher in the American sample than in the equivalent British sample. Moreover, familiarized given names like *Sue* and *Bill* were much more common in AmE conversation than full given names such as *Susan* and *William*. Familiarizing vocatives (chiefly *man*, *bro*, and *guys*) were also much more common in the AmE sample corpus than in the BrE sample corpus.

This seems to show, on the one hand, a tendency toward greater familiarity (*camaraderie*) in the United States, and on the other hand a greater trend there for an increasing use of given names to signal the recognition of the addressee as a known *individual*, therefore again contributing to camaraderie, in keeping with the individualistic tendency of modern Anglo societies. As a greeting to a co-worker we pass in the corridor, *Hi* is simply a greeting, whereas *Hi Dave* is also a recognition of the other person's identity and individuality. Here a piece of mixed workplace dialogue from the LCSAE illustrates a dense use of vocatives, especially given name vocatives, which appears characteristic of AmE (vocatives are in *italics*):

- (1) A: Good morning, *Ben*. You're on your own for two weeks.
 B: Yeah, can you believe that, *man*. How do you get out of that?
 A: So what's up *Ben*? There's no hot water in the house. I'm going nuts.
 B: Did they? Oh my gosh. [*laugh*] Good morning *Betty*. Good morning *Mr* [name]
 D: Hey *Ben* how are you.

The recent increasing preference for given name address indicates a movement from "polite respect language" to "familiarity language," giving some support to Lakoff's camaraderie thesis.

But does it indicate a general decline of politeness? I would argue not. The growth of the camaraderie ethos can be seen just as the continuation of the trend

toward reduction and elimination of vertical distance that has been observed in communicative behavior over recent centuries in the history of English. If there is a relatively new development, it is that in communication, not only vertical distance but horizontal distance has been radically reduced. That is, in the “egalitarian society” of today, everyone is equal and can claim instant solidarity with other individuals. This is closely associated with another trend that Lakoff invokes: “that quintessential American trait, *niceness*” (Lakoff 2005: 26). Camaraderie, in the general sense of building solidarity and closeness as a rapport strategy, in practice bifurcates into two scales: “camaraderie proper,” typical of solidarity between males (casual in its style of interaction, easily tipping over into banter and swearing), and something we may call “endearment,” typical of solidarity where one party or both are female. Endearment (characterized by vocatives like *love*, *dear*, *honey*, and *darling*) is associated with the expression of strong attitudinal warmth or affection. It can be seen as the verbal analogue of gestural signals of closeness and affection—smiling, embracing, kissing—that have also become increasingly conventional in social encounters and in public personae projected through photographs, video clips, etc. (Compare the wide smiles on the TV faces of politicians these days with the straight “dignified” faces that stared from press photos sixty years ago.) Both camaraderie proper and endearment have been encroaching on bivalent politeness or honorification as a grand strategy for rapport enhancement. Unlike the implied inequality of honorification, they express the attitude “Neither of us is superior to the other; we are just great friends.”

However, if camaraderie is associated with the decline of bivalent politeness, this is not the whole story. My argument is that although bivalent politeness has long been on the decline in English, trivalent (or transactional) politeness is largely unaffected by this. The two kinds of politeness can be independent of one another, as this piece of Australian dialogue suggests:

- (2) E: Hey, you're not going up to the canteen by any chance, are you?
 C: Yeah... 'bout five minutes...
 E: You couldn't just pick me up a roll or something, could you?
 (from Conlan 2005: 139)

This is low on the bivalent politeness scale, as E's attention getter *Hey* indicates, but is high on the trivalent politeness scale, in that E shows a preference for very indirect request strategies—particularly the use of a negative statement *You couldn't...?* (see 6.4.1 (f)). Camaraderie does not in general conflict with observant use of the maxims of the GSP in requesting, inviting, thanking, apologizing, and the like.

At this point, it is worth revisiting the suggestion of Kopytko (1993) and, following him, of Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg (1995), that some aspects of the history of politeness in English can be seen as a change from negative politeness to positive politeness. Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg study the address forms in the private correspondence in the CEEC and come to the tentative conclusion that a change of

this kind has taken place (see especially 1995: 541, 591). However, they use the positive and negative politeness categories of B&L (1987) and equate the negative-positive change to a “shift away from deference to greater intimacy.” As I made clear in 1.2.1, however, I do not find B&L’s positive versus negative politeness contrast convincing. If it is applied to the history of politeness in English, then the shift from negative to positive claimed for the CEEC period (1400–1800) cannot be easily reconciled with the growing importance of indirectness in directives in later Modern English (see 11.4), a canonical case of negative politeness in the B&L model. A similar argument leads me to disregard Lakoff’s claim (2005: 33) that there has recently been a victory of positive politeness over negative politeness in the United States.

Hence I believe that the explanation in terms of negative and positive politeness should be replaced by one already offered in this chapter: that the change from honorific to more intimate or casual address forms is due to the decreasing importance of vertical distance and (later) of horizontal distance. In more general terms, the decline of bivalent politeness has brought camaraderie into the ascendant.

The question “Is politeness in decline?” needs a subtler answer. A simple answer may be sufficient to describe the situation in private conversation, the home ground of politeness: “Bivalent politeness has declined, but trivalent politeness has not.” But in the world of the media, including electronic media, new challenges to politeness have arisen. Lakoff (2005: 26–35) lists nine cases where she feels politeness is under pressure in the United States:

1. Sexual coarseness in public
2. Violence in the media
3. Agonism (“unwillingness to acknowledge the middle ground in debate,” as in adversarial politics and the adversarial legal system)
4. Uncontrolled displays of hostility (e.g., “road rage,” “air rage”)
5. Negative political advertising
6. Cursing and other bad language
7. “Flaming” (hostile and abusive interactions between internet users)
8. Loss of polite conventions (*please*, *thank you*, etc.)
9. Invasions of privacy

Many of these challenges have arisen from new communicative possibilities available in the mass media or electronic media. What is particularly new here is the frequency and multiplicity of interactions among people (between *S* and *O*) who can protect their anonymity while communicating familiarly with their interactants. In such situations, politeness no longer constrains the perpetrator of rude and violent verbal behavior, since face threat is no longer a deterrent where there is little or no likelihood that *S* and *O* will enter into any kind of future social relations. Informalization is another reason why formerly observed polite conventions are no longer so constraining. Thus camaraderie can lead to an impression of rudeness if a younger speaker, for example, employs a solidarity tactic in a situation where an older addressee expects a certain degree of politeness. A further source of impoliteness, especially in

predominantly English-speaking countries such as the UK and the United States, is the adversarial systems that are strongly institutionalized in the domains of politics and the law, as well as in interviews and discussion forums on TV and in other media.

Against these trends toward impoliteness and rudeness (see 8.2) can be placed one trend in the opposite direction in the public media. The triumph of consumerism means that the “consumer,” who is nowadays virtually any person served by a public or commercial organization, is wooed by the organization concerned, which in the highly competitive world of commerce needs to demonstrate itself as full of concern for the needs of the consumer. Hence ordinary citizens are the addressees of polite spoken and written messages in which they have little interest. One example is the farewell speeches delivered by airlines to passengers on their arrival at their destination, often containing a flurry of civilities: *We hope you enjoyed the flight... Thank you for flying XX Airlines/Airways... We look forward to welcoming you on one of our flights...*, as the case may be. But more generally, this trend is found in advertising and public relations in all their manifestations.

There is therefore no easy assessment of the issue of the decline (or otherwise) of politeness. I remain convinced, however, as I stated in Chapter 8, that impolite use of language is a minority phenomenon, which is felt to be prominent and marked when it occurs but is considerably less common than the polite use of language. I also remain convinced, despite the challenges listed by Lakoff (above) and the sources of impoliteness explored in Chapter 8, that politeness is a phenomenon functionally too important to human society to be discarded.

Addendum to Chapter 11: Original Old English and Middle English versions of quotations in 11.2 and 11.3²²

BEOWULF

- (1) Wæs þu, Hroðgar, hal! Ic eom Higelaces
mæg ond magoðegn;
.....Ic þe nu ða,
brego Beorhtdena, biddan wille,
eodor Scyldinga, anre bene,
þæt ðu me ne forwyrne, wigendra hleo [lines 426–429]
- (2) For gewyrhtum þu, wine min Beowulf,
ond for arstafum usic sohtest. [lines 457–458]
....

²² To aid intelligibility, the text for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is taken from A. C. Cawley's edition (London & New York: Dent, 1962), where there is some modernization of spelling: the letters *i* and *j*, likewise *u* and *v*, are differentiated as vowel and consonant; also *þ* is transcribed as *th*, *ȝ* as *y*, *gh* or *w* according to context, and final (*t*)*ȝ* as *s*.

- (3) Site nu to symle ond onsæl meoto,
sighreð secgum, swa þin sefa hwette [lines 489–490]
- (4) forþan hie mægenes cræft minne cuþon,
selfe ofersawon, ða ic of searwum cwom,
fah from feondum, þær ic fife geband,
yðde eotena cyn ond on yðum slog [lines 418–421]
- (5) Hwæt! þu worn fela, wine min Unferð,
beore druncen ymb Brecan spræce,
sægdest from his siðe. [lines 530–532]

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

- (1) ‘God moroun, Sir Gawayn, sayde that gay lady,
‘Ye are a sleeper unslyye, that mon may slyde hider.
Now are ye tan astyt, bot true uus may schape,
I schal bynde yow in your bedde, that be ye trayst.’
Al laghande the lady lauced tho bourdes.
‘Goud moroun, gay,’ quoth Gawayn the blithe,
‘Me schal worthe at your wille, and that me wel lykys,
For I yelde me yederly and yeye after grace;
And that is the best, be my dome, for me byhoves nede.’
And thus he bourded ayayn with mony a blithe laghter.
‘Bot wolde ye, lady lovely, then leve me grante,
And deprece your prysoun and pray him to ryse,
I wolde bowe of this bed and busk me better,
I schulde kever the more comfort to karp yow wyth.’
‘Nay, for soothe, beau sir,’ sayd that swete,
‘Ye schal not rise of your bedde. I rych you better:
I schal happe yow here that other half als,
And sythen karp wyth my knight that I kaght have;
For I wene wel, iwysse, Sir Wowen ye are,
That alle the worlde worchipes, quere-so ye ride.
Your honour, your hendelayk is hendely praysed
With lords, wyth ladyes, with alle that lyf bere.
[lines 1213–1229]
- (2) ‘In god faith,’ quoth Gawayn, ‘gayn hit me thynkkes,
Thagh I be not now he that ye of speken;
To reche to such reverence as ye reherce here
I am wyye unworthy, I wot wel myselfen.
[lines 1241–1244]

APPENDIX

Pragmatics and Neg-politeness

THE BACKGROUND

This appendix was originally planned as an early chapter of the book. Its purpose was to build the foundation of the model of pragmatics now presented in Chapters 3 and 4. However, from the viewpoint of the average reader of this book, I thought it suffered from three drawbacks. First, it had to be admitted that politeness was not the major concern of the chapter. It dealt largely with a background that springs from the early work of Austin, Searle, and Grice, philosophical forerunners of the pragmatics paradigm that has flourished since the 1970s. It ended up adopting a “neo-Searle-Gricean” point of view. Second, the focus was on neg-politeness (see 1.2.2), ignoring pos-politeness, as neg-politeness emerged early as an area of concern in pragmatics, when the difficulties of analyzing indirect speech acts came to prominence in the 1970s. Third, and most importantly, it dealt with a pragmatics background much of which is likely to be common knowledge to the many students and teachers who have studied pragmatics at some stage in their university career. However, I believed that to explain the philosophical underpinnings of the book, the material of this essay needed to be covered somewhere. Some readers may decide to skip it, but they might still want to return to it at a later stage for reminder or clarification as the need arises. I have therefore decided to relegate this essay to the end of the book as an appendix, where it can be consulted when readers want or need to check or refresh their knowledge of this area.

For readers familiar with Grice and Searle, section A2 presents a new “take” on this familiar ground and is therefore recommended even for those who feel at home with the classic texts and thinking.

A1 The Precursors of Modern Politeness Studies: A Brief Sketch

I will need to discuss that seemingly remote period of the 1970s, as pragmatics and politeness are still intimately engaged with the philosophical and linguistic problem

of *indirect speech acts* (ISAs) that became crucial at the time: How is it that in using language, we often mean, by implication, something quite different from what we say? For example, when someone says something negative like *You couldn't just pick me up a roll or something, could you?* they actually mean to convey something positive like: "I want you to pick me up a roll or something similar."¹

For Austin, the lack of fit between contextual meaning and structure was especially obvious in the case of *performative* utterances (Austin 1962) such as *I order you to be silent*, which "looks like" a statement but has the pragmatic force of an imperative. Lack of fit between contextual meaning and structure was the gap of explanation that eventually led to a pragmatic account of indirection—that is, of ISAs—and by a further explanatory step, of politeness.

Difficulties became apparent when consideration was given to ISAs, many of them apparently motivated by politeness, such as:

- (1) Can you hand me the phone? [LCSAE 122001] (a directive/request in the guise of a question)
- (2) I'd love a cookie. [LCSAE 123201] (a directive/request in the guise of a statement)

Here we stumble across a fundamental issue: both semantics and pragmatics are concerned with meaning, so what is the difference between them? In detail, the line is difficult to draw (see Horn 2003), but the principle is clear: semantics concerns the dyadic relation between a piece of language and its meaning, while pragmatics concerns the triadic relation between a piece of language, its utterer (or speaker), and its meaning. Or schematically:

SEMANTIC MEANING: *L* means *M*

PRAGMATIC MEANING: *S* means *M* by *L*.

[*L* = linguistic entity; *M* = meaning; *S* = speaker]

As both semantics and pragmatics investigate meaning, they are closely interrelated. Pragmatics adds, as it were, a dimension to semantic meaning. Somehow, the semantics of an utterance has to be incorporated into the understanding of its pragmatics. However, once the speaker *S* is allowed into the picture, it is difficult to exclude other elements of the speech situation: the addressee *H* is arguably as important as the speaker *S*, since in language use, just as much depends on the addressee's ability to interpret as on *S*'s communicative goal or intention. Also not to be excluded is the presumed shared *knowledge of context*, which usually provides a key to the addressee's interpretation. So another, possibly equivalent, way to characterize the difference between semantics and pragmatics is to associate semantics with "meaning out of context" and pragmatics with "meaning in context." Further, the expression whose meaning is under consideration is also

¹ The example is from Conlan (2005).

seen from another perspective once the speaker's role is admitted. It is characteristic that in semantics the expression is considered to be a word, or (more relevantly here) a *sentence*; whereas in pragmatics, the linguistic entity is considered to be an *utterance*. The main difference here is that the utterance is considered to be embedded in a communicative situation (also including *S*, *H*, and the linguistic and extralinguistic context), whereas the sentence is considered as having meaning in abstraction from such factors.

The particular difficulty about ISAs like *Can you post this letter?* was that, from the meaning viewpoint they were imperative (or rather *directive*),² while the evidence for treating them *syntactically* as imperative rather than interrogative was extremely tenuous. From the syntactic-semantic point of view that was current in the early 1970s, it was necessary to suppose, for example, that directives masquerading as questions (Sadock 1974) underwent some kind of implausible transformational derivation from the underlying structure of a directive or command to the surface structure of a question. To support this, Sadock and others (see various contributors to Cole 1975) seized on one or two imperativelike characteristics of these hybrid sentences, such as their ability to accept the discourse marker *please* before the main verb, as in (3b) compared with (3a):

- | | | |
|------|----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| (3a) | Can you close the window? | (directive or rogative) |
| (3b) | Can you please close the window? | (directive only) |
| | Compare: (4a) Close the window. | (directive only) |
| | (4b) Please close the window. | (directive only) |

First, let's recognize that, out of context, (3a) is ambiguous between the directive and interrogative interpretations: this sentence can either mean "I am simply asking whether you are able to close the window" or "I request that you close the window." However, this ambiguity is eliminated by the addition of *please* in (3b), which can have only the directive meaning. Sadock claimed (1974: 90) that a sentence apparently very close to (3a) in meaning, namely (5a), could not have the same insertion of *please*, and this clearly marked it as unambiguously interrogative:

- (5a) *Are you able to close the window?*
 (5b) *(*)Are you able to please close the window?*
 (5c) *(*)Is it possible (for you) to please close the window?*

A hybrid sentence like (5b) would be marked by Sadock with an * to show its unqualified ungrammaticality (Sadock 1974: 78, 90), with which I am almost prepared to agree, as there were no examples of this kind in the corpora I checked, including the BNC and the LCSAE. The likely explanation for this, in my view, is that *Are you able...?* is not sufficiently "routinized" or *pragmatized* (see 3.7) as a directive

² "Directive" is used as the pragmatic correlate of the syntactic term *imperative* (see p. 63). It is used in speech act theory—for example, in Searle (1976)—roughly, to refer to a speech act whereby *S* intends to induce *H* to perform some action.

formula in English to be able to co-occur with the overt directive pragmatic marker *please*. However, it would be wrong to suggest that *Is it possible...?* and *Are you able...?* cannot be used as directives, as is shown by these corpus examples, which in their contexts clearly have a directive force:

- (6) Is it possible to speak to Pete please? [BNC KB9]
- (7) Is it possible to lay the table, do you think, for me? [BNC KBW]
- (8) Is it possible just to have a glass of water? Lovely, thanks. [BNC KP5]
- (9) Are you able to give us an estimate of the time that elapsed between breaking the door in <pause> and being called away by your team leader? [BNC JNE]

Examples (6)–(8) are clear cases of a request as the telltale expressions *please*, *for me*, and *Lovely, thanks* show. Example (9) is perhaps less clearly a request: it comes from the formal setting of a courtroom, where the speaker seems to be trying to elicit an estimate. But the formula *Are you able to...* can also be interpreted literally as an information question: “Are you capable of supplying this estimate?” This is an example of the “hinting strategy” (see 6.3.5(b)), where a question about *H*’s ability is actually an overt indicator of an implicit directive.

A weakness of the generative approach was its insistence, as syntactic models used to insist at that time, on sharp boundaries of grammaticality and ambiguity, whereas more flexible concepts of degrees of acceptability and of ambiguity or ambivalence would have been more appropriate. Though (3b) *Can you please...* is perfectly acceptable and unambiguous as a directive, (6) shares characteristics of both an information question and a directive, such that *H* could interpret it with more emphasis on one or the other. And (9) is overtly a question, but by implication a directive (which however *H* could interpret “innocently” as no more than a question). These subtle, scalar differences cannot be rendered by an account that insists on full grammaticality or full ungrammaticality.

In fact, a scale relevant here is the one that I have discussed as the scale of *pragmaticalization* (see 3.7).³ Synchronically, we can recognize a scale of pragmaticalization, in that different expressions have reached different stages of habituation to a pragmatic function. For example, *Can you...?* in (3a) is more habituated to the directive function (or more “pragmaticalized”) than *Is it possible...?* in (6)–(8) or *Are you able...?* in (9). Pragmaticalization, like the related diachronic process of grammaticalization (see Hopper and Traugott 2003), is often accompanied by higher-frequency usage and a tendency for the forms concerned to become idiomatized and phonetically reduced. But, also like grammaticalization, pragmaticalization can easily coexist with a persisting unpragmaticalized usage,⁴ as evidenced by

³ Other terms that can be used, with slightly different emphases, are *conventionalization*, *routinization*, and *idiomaticization*.

⁴ This is the phenomenon that grammaticalization theorists call *layering* (cf. Hopper and Traugott 2003); that is, there are different linguistic “layers” relating to the same field of meaning at a given time period.

the interrogative meaning of (3a). As pragmaticalization is a gradual process, it can now be seen more clearly how the approach of Sadock and others, when applied to cases like *Can you...* in (3a) and *Are you able to...* in (5a), compelled an inappropriate yes-or-no syntactic account of a scalar pragmatic phenomenon.

A1.1 PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES TO PRAGMATICS: (A) SPEECH ACTS

We now need briefly to take a further step back in time, to explore the philosophical background to pragmatics as it developed in the 1970s.⁵ J. L. Austin, H. P. Grice, and John R. Searle were three ordinary-language philosophers in the Oxford⁶ tradition who provided an intellectual underpinning for the first two decades of pragmatics as a newly fledged branch of linguistics. (The key readings are Austin 1962; Grice 1957, 1975; and Searle 1969.)

The notion of a *performative sentence/utterance*,⁷ as developed by Austin, was used to open up a wider philosophical pursuit of meaning than had been provided by the tradition in which meaning and logic were rigorously tied to truth and falsehood, and therefore to propositional meaning. Austin's initial examples of performatives illustrate the kind of utterances that look like statements but (according to Austin) have a quite different nature and cannot be judged true or false:

- (10) "I name this ship *Queen Elizabeth*"—as uttered in smashing the bottle against the stem.
- (11) "I give and bequeath my watch to my brother"—as occurring in a will.
- (12) "I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow."

(Austin 1962: 5)

Instead of truth conditions, a performative's appropriate use according to Austin is governed by *felicity conditions*, such as the conditions (i) that the author of (11) owns a watch and (ii) has a brother and (iii) that the document is duly signed by the named testator and a witness; or the condition that the person who utters (12) intends to pay the addressee sixpence, provided that the addressee has accepted the bet and that it rains tomorrow. Another difference between (10)–(12) and sentences expressing a proposition like "It is snowing" is that the proposition clearly purports to describe some state of affairs, whereas the meaning of a performative utterance might be better characterized as an action that *S* performs. Speech acts such as placing a bet or making a request are utterance events that happen in real time, which is another reason for regarding a speech act as a phenomenon belonging to

⁵ To find the original of the concept of speech act, one would need to go even further back in history; see Jaszczolt (2002: 309–310).

⁶ Searle, although an American, studied under Austin at Oxford.

⁷ The choice between "performative sentence" and "performative utterance" (the former implying a syntactic treatment, and the latter a pragmatic one) was cleverly sidestepped by Austin: (1962: 6): "I propose to call it a *performative sentence* or a performative utterance, or, for short, 'a performative'. Where convenient, I will follow the same non-committal practice of calling such entities simply 'performatives'."

pragmatics (coming, incidentally, from Greek *pragma* “deed, action”) rather than to semantics.

In a later part of the same work (pp. 101–110), Austin comes to the conclusion that all utterances, after all, involve action. He makes a distinction between three kinds of speech act that may be involved in a single utterance: a *locution*, an *illocution*, and a *perlocution* (also called “locutionary act,” “illocutionary act,” and “perlocutionary act”). Using the amiable example

(13) Shoot her!

Austin says that

the *locution* is the act of saying “Shoot her” and meaning *shoot* by “shoot” and *her* by “her”

the *illocution* is the act of urging, advising, ordering *H* to shoot her

the *perlocution* is the act of persuading, making *H* shoot her.

(ibid.: 101–102)

In practice, most attention in linguistic pragmatics has fastened on the second of these act types, illocutions. (Hence for our present limited purpose, locutions, which arguably belong to semantics, and perlocutions, which involve extralinguistic consequences, will be ignored.)

Illocutions, or illocutionary acts, are acts performed by virtue of uttering a given piece of language with a particular type of intended meaning (its illocutionary *force*), and with the kinds of felicity conditions previously mentioned in connection with performatives. These specify the kinds of meaning they enact, such as suggesting, thanking, and offering.

If we now jump forward a few years, we find Austin’s student Searle, in his book *Speech Acts* (1969), positing four kinds of conditions for each type of speech act: a propositional content condition, one or more preparatory conditions, a sincerity condition, and an essential condition. (Searle actually called these “rules,” but they are very much in line with the felicity conditions Austin had in mind.) For example, Searle proposes this outline definition of a request:

The propositional content condition: “future act *A* of *H*.”

The two preparatory conditions: “1. *H* is able to do *A*,” and “2. It is not obvious to both *S* and *H* that *H* will do *A* in the normal course of events of his own accord.”

The sincerity condition: “*S* wants *H* to do *A*.”

The essential condition: “counts as an attempt to get *H* to do *A*.” (Searle 1969: 66).

A later publication (Searle 1976) offers his influential classification of illocutions into the major categories seen in the box.

Assertives (or representatives)—e.g., stating, suggesting, claiming, announcing, predicting

Directives—e.g., ordering, requesting, advising, begging, recommending

Commissives—e.g., promising, offering, vowing, undertaking

Expressives—e.g., complimenting, accusing, congratulating, thanking, apologizing

Declarations—e.g., resigning, dismissing, naming, sentencing, appointing

This typology proves useful for our present purposes, because certain categories are particularly associated with politeness. Typically directives, being face-threatening, are associated with neg-politeness, while commissives and expressives include illocutions that, being largely face-enhancing, are associated with pos-politeness.

It will be noticed that the verbs used to describe these illocutions correspond closely to the verbs that can be used as performative verbs; that is, they can be used performatively in the simple present tense following a first-person subject. Here are examples of the corresponding performatives:

I *predict* they will build another federal building down there [LCSAE13702] (an assertive)

I *ask* you to believe me. [BNC CAM] (a directive)

I *promise* to follow all your instructions. [BNC FSC] (a commissive)

I *apologise* for the delay in replying. [BNC HD2] (an expressive)

I *resign*! [BNC H7F] (a declaration)

The examples incidentally demonstrate another syntactic characteristic of performatives: they can accept the optional insertion of the adverb *hereby*. We notice from these examples that performatives (particularly with the insertion of *hereby*) are on the whole marked and formal utterances,⁸ likely to be used especially when *S* wants to make the illocution being performed fully explicit. For example, whereas *I'll repay the debt next week* may be implicitly taken as a promise, *I (hereby) promise to repay the debt next week* overtly declares the promissory status of the utterance, such that *H* cannot possibly mistake its intended force, and *S* cannot validly say

⁸ This means that performatives are on the whole rare in a conversational context (see Kohnen 2000a on the relative infrequency of performatives). When I looked for performatives beginning with *I ask* in the LCSAE, I found, among eighty instances of the sequence *I ask*, only one undeniable example of a performative, and this was in a grace (a prayer of thanksgiving at meal times) that actually contained four performatives, three of them with *we* as the subject:

Lord, *we thank you* for our food and *we ask you* that you would bless it to us. *We thank you* for this day. *I ask you* that you'd just be with us the rest, the rest of the day. [LCSAE 157701]

This illustrates the tendency for performatives to occur, even in speech, in solemn formal contexts. On the other hand, hedged performatives (6.4.1 (e)), where the force of the performative is toned down, usually by modalization, are relatively common in everyday speech: in the LCSAE, *I ask* combines with *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, and *would you mind if* in questions such as *Um, can I ask that you put the drinks on as separate money?* [LCSAE 127402]; *Would you mind if I ask you how old you are?* [LCSAE 123201].

later *I didn't make a promise*. The meaning expressed by the performative corresponds to what Austin called the utterance's *illocutionary force*.

This leads us to a basic tenet of the speech act model as developed by Austin and Searle: that a performative may be regarded as an overtly expressed equivalent of an utterance lacking the performative but nevertheless conveying the same illocutionary force. Consider these utterances:

(14a) I (hereby) suggest that we buy candy bars. (14b) Let's buy candy bars.

[LCSAE 141403]

(15a) I (hereby) order you to call the police. (15b) Call the police. [LCSAE 107501]

The illocutionary forces of (a) and (b) are very similar, if not identical (which is not to say they are similar in tone or style). Thus (14a) enacts the force of a suggestion by using a performative prelude *I (hereby) suggest*, whereas (15b) conveys the force of a suggestion by another device: the first-person imperative *Let's*. Searle (1969: 30) says that illocutionary force can be indicated by a number of formal devices, including not only a performative prelude but also, for example, word order, intonation, and punctuation; all three of these can play a role in identifying a question as a request for information. Such a device is called an *illocutionary force indicating device*, or IFID for short (see 3.2). At the same time, Searle makes clear (ibid.) that the illocutionary force can be indicated simply by the context and the form of the utterance. Symbolically, Searle represents the logical structure of an illocution as $F(p)$, representing two components: the IFID and the *propositional content* (p) of the utterance. But it should be noted that not only the illocutionary force but also the propositional content can remain implicit. Just as the “implicit” performative *Open the door* does not specify its directive force by means of a performative, so the “explicit” performative *I resign!* does not make clear the propositional content—what *S* is resigning from—although this will presumably be evident from the context.

Although “speech act” is in principle ambiguous between Austin's locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, in practice and in loose parlance “speech act” is taken to mean “illocutionary act.” This applies also to ISAs such as *Can you post this letter?* as discussed above, which can be alternatively described as indirect illocutions. From the viewpoint of speech act theory, illocutions, or illocutionary acts, with the associated notion of illocutionary force, are the kernel of what pragmatics is about.

A1.2 PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES TO PRAGMATICS: (B) GRICE'S COOPERATIVE PRINCIPLE

In the preceding sections we have seen a gap between semantic meaning (the literal compositional meaning of a sentence) and pragmatic meaning (its meaning as an utterance in context)—a gap that becomes particularly noticeable in ISAs, where “we use one sentence/utterance to convey the meaning of another.” A different conception of a semantics-pragmatics gap was expounded in the work of H. Paul Grice in the later 1960s, but this time the “semantic” and “pragmatic” meanings were

differentiated in Grice's terms as "what was said" versus "what was implicated." Pragmatic meaning, in this framework, combines both "said" and "implicated" meaning. Grice proposed a *cooperative principle* (CP) as a means of linking the two:

Cooperative Principle (CP)

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. (Grice 1975: 26)

Grice proposed the CP (with its constituent maxims; see below) as a constraint on human communicative behavior. However, because he presented the CP and its maxims in the imperative mood ("Make your contribution..." etc.), it has sometimes been misunderstood in two ways. The first misunderstanding is that the CP is oriented toward *S*'s role in communication rather than *H*'s role; but, as we will see, the most interesting thing about the CP is the way it leads *H* to infer what *S* meant but did not say. The second misunderstanding is that the CP is some kind of precept or maxim that people prescriptively *ought to* observe. No doubt Grice's choice of the word *maxim* (which I believe he did tongue in cheek) is partly to blame for this. However, he did not put the CP and its maxims forward as ethical precepts (although some commentators have insisted on treating them as such), but as a means of explaining certain inferences that can be drawn, and that he called *conversational implicatures*. It was the *logic* of conversation, not the *ethics* of conversation, that interested him. In the expectation that people followed this principle (for ease and success in communication), it could be inferred that if the CP appeared not to be observed, this could be because *S* intended to imply (= conversationally implicate) some extra piece of meaning that would reconcile the utterance with the CP at a deeper level. To illustrate this, Grice broke the CP down into four types of maxims:

The Maxims of Quantity [or of "informativeness"]

1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

The Maxim(s) of Quality [or of "truthfulness"]

Try to make your contribution one that is true, viz:

1. Do not say what you believe to be false.
2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

The Maxim of Relation [or of "relevance"]

Be relevant.

The Maxim(s) of Manner [or of "perspicuity"]

Be perspicuous. More specifically:

1. Avoid obscurity of expression.
2. Avoid ambiguity.
3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
4. Be orderly.

Grice also admitted that other maxims might be needed. In fact—a matter of some interest for the present account—he foresaw the need for a maxim of politeness.⁹ However, for the current purpose it will be enough to give brief illustrations of the four types of maxims, and of how inferences can be drawn from them.

1st Maxim of Quantity

- (1) A: Why did you leave the meeting early?
B: I wanted to.

Here the first Maxim of Quantity comes into play: B's answer is less informative than is required, and so a reasonable inference (implicature) is that B does not want to reveal the exact reason—perhaps because it would be embarrassing, impolite, etc.

1st Maxim of Quality:

- (2) Lisa's father is a loose cannon.

Here is an utterance that cannot be accepted as literally true (human beings cannot function as artillery pieces) and therefore seems to breach the Maxim of Quality. However, it can be reconciled with the truth if we treat it as a metaphor. "A loose cannon" is then understood to be a person who resembles a loose cannon, someone who is dangerous and unpredictable, although meant to be on our side.

Maxim of Relation:

- (3) Mother: It's time you were in bed.
Jamie: Mum! I've got this homework to finish.

When Mother proposes that bedtime has arrived, Jamie replies with a superficially irrelevant statement, which does not either accept or decline the proposal. This appears to be a breach of the Maxim of Relation. However, by assuming that Jamie is observing the CP, Mother can infer that the answer to her proposal is negative, and that the statement "I've got this..." explains why Jamie is not happy to comply with the proposal.

3rd Maxim of Manner:

- (4) A: How did you get here?
B: I walked here on my own two feet.

B's reply here conveys the information that could be more simply conveyed by one or two words, (*I*) *walked*, but does so with unnecessary prolixity. The extra likely inference here is that B regarded walking was the obvious means of travel, although A appeared to assume otherwise.

⁹ Grice (1975: 47): "There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as 'Be polite', that are also normally observed in talk exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures." (On conventional and nonconventional—or conversational—implicatures, see 3.7.)

As these examples illustrate, Grice sees the CP as bringing about implicatures either by observance of the CP or by “flouting” or exploiting the CP, where on the face of it, one of the maxims appears to be obviously transgressed. He also sees it, through this exploitation, as capable of handling some well-known figures of speech where the overt meaning and the underlying meaning are quite different. Metaphor, as in (2), is one such case; another is irony, where the covert meaning is often the opposite of what is overtly expressed. Grice’s example is:

- (5) X is a fine friend!

Suppose that in (5) A is talking about someone (X) who has just divulged one of A’s darkest secrets to her worst enemy. In this case, there is again a violation of the Maxim of Quality: in such a context A cannot be literally saying what she believes to be the truth, and (as often happens with irony) the underlying meaning is presumed to be the opposite of what is overtly stated: “S believes that X is NOT a (fine) friend of hers!”

Grice allows that sometimes an implicature may arise even when no breach of the CP occurs. For example, in (3), the Maxim of Relation gives us a reason to seek the connection between the two utterances: the mother wants her son to go to bed, and he gives a reason he should not do so. But it would be stretching the notion of breaching or flouting the CP to suggest that it applies here; rather, the criterion of relevance simply enjoins us to make the most plausible connection between the utterances.

Grice’s CP generates additional meaning through the operation of what we can call “informal natural logic.” I would claim (although Grice didn’t actually do so) that this logic is essentially probabilistic, but the main point is that the extra meaning is capable of “being worked out” by an inferential process leading to what Grice called *conversational implicatures*. One of the criteria of such implicatures, unlike more formal types of implication, is that they are *defeasible* (or cancelable); thus, the inference can be cancelled by a statement that, added to the original utterance, denies the implicature. Consider examples (1) and (3) above. The inferences based respectively on the first Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation can be canceled as follows:

- (1a) A: Why did you leave the meeting early?
 B: I wanted to. *It was utterly boring.*
- (3a) Mother: It’s time you were in bed.
 Jamie: Mum! I’ve got this homework to finish. *But okay, I’ll go to bed.*

From which it can be concluded that Jamie has accepted his mother’s proposal.

A1.3 PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES TO PRAGMATICS: (C) INDIRECT SPEECH ACTS

For the last example of a mismatch between the two levels of meaning, I return to the case of ISAs. Searle, in an important paper, “Indirect speech acts” (1975),

brought together his own treatment of speech acts and Grice's postulation of the CP and conversational implicature in a single account of how indirect speech acts can be interpreted through inference. Using the now well-worn example of *Can you pass the salt*, Searle points out that both the force of a directive and the force of a question are present in the same utterance, and that one (the implicit force) is conveyed by means of the other (the explicit force):

- (6) A: Can you pass the salt?
 B: Yes, of course. Here it is. [B passes the salt.]

The first part of B's reply (*Yes, of course*) responds to *Can you pass the salt?* as a question. The second part (*Here it is*) responds to *Can you pass the salt?* as a request. Both parts seem natural enough, so any account of ISAs has to acknowledge the co-presence of both illocutionary forces. Searle's account of the logic behind the interpretation of A's utterance is labored (as he admits) but even so he regards it as merely "the bare bones" of an explanation. He postulates ten steps, of which the first five are needed to deal with the overt interpretation, and the next five are needed to arrive at the underlying interpretation as a request, that is, as a kind of directive (Searle 1975: 73–74)¹⁰:

- Step 1: *A has asked me a question as to whether I have the ability to pass the salt* (fact about the conversation).
 Step 2: *I assume that he is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his utterance has some aim or point* (principles of conversational cooperation).
 Step 3: *The conversational setting is not such as to indicate a theoretical interest in my salt-passing ability* (factual background information).
 Step 4: *Furthermore, he probably already knows that the answer to the question is yes* (factual background information). (This step facilitates the move to Step 5 but is not essential.)
 Step 5: *Therefore, his utterance is probably not just a question. It probably has some ulterior illocutionary point* (inference from Steps 1, 2, 3, and 4). *What can it be?*
 Step 6: *A preparatory condition for any directive illocutionary act is the ability of H to perform the act predicated in the propositional content condition* (theory of speech acts).
 Step 7: *Therefore, A has asked me a question the affirmative answer to which would entail that the preparatory condition for requesting me to pass the salt is satisfied* (inference from steps 1 and 6).
 Step 8: *We are now at dinner and people normally use salt at dinner; they pass it back and forth, try to get others to pass it back and forth, etc.* (background information).

¹⁰ Some trivial changes have been made here to Searle's list of steps, for example, changing *Y* and *X* to *A*.

- Step 9: *He has therefore alluded to the satisfaction of a preparatory condition for a request whose obedience conditions it is quite likely he wants to bring about* (inference from Steps 7 and 8).
- Step 10: *Therefore, in the absence of any other plausible illocutionary point, he is probably requesting me to pass him the salt* (inference from Steps 5 and 9).

Searle makes it clear there is no supposition that such detailed logical steps actually take place in the human mind when an ISA like *Can you pass the salt?* is interpreted. But he hypothesizes such a path of inference by which ISAs can, as Grice says, be “worked out.” In practice, such formulae as the indirect request type *Can you X?* become highly conventionalized by the process I have referred to as “pragmaticalization” (3.7), a process that can be evidenced, for example, in the use of the request marker *please* with such utterances. When such an entrenchment¹¹ of pragmatic force takes place, it is plausible to suggest that the process of “working out the meaning” is cognitively short-circuited by a direct associative path (see Morgan 1978). But it is significant that, even so, the ulterior directive interpretation is not a matter of arbitrary convention: it is still well motivated, being derivable from the overt form of the speech act by some such step-by-step process as is indicated above. In fact, it is *by virtue of* its meaning as a question about *H*’s ability to pass the salt that the utterance is interpretable as a directive for *H* to pass the salt. In contrast, most sentence forms containing the same propositional content could not be indirect requests: for example, *Wouldn’t you pass the salt?* or *Shall I pass the salt?* or *You’re going to pass the salt* could not be used in English as an indirect salt-passing request. They lack the necessary semantic motivation. Searle generalizes about the conditions for interpretation as an indirect request as follows:

GENERALIZATION 1: *S* can make an indirect request (or other directive) by either asking whether or stating that a preparatory condition concerning *H*’s ability to do *A* obtains [where *A* = the projected action]. [E.g., *Can you pass the salt? You could pass the salt.*]¹²

GENERALIZATION 2: *S* can make an indirect directive by either asking whether or stating that the propositional content condition obtains. [E.g., *Will you pass the salt? You will pass the salt.*]

GENERALIZATION 3: *S* can make an indirect directive by stating that the sincerity condition obtains, but not by asking whether it obtains. [E.g., *I want you to pass the salt.* BUT NOT: *Do I want you to pass the salt?*]

GENERALIZATION 4: *S* can make an indirect directive by either stating that or asking whether there are good or overriding reasons for doing *A*, except

¹¹ Habituation through this process can be cognitively associated with the concept of entrenchment in cognitive linguistics (Langacker 1991, 2008), the process by which a linguistic element becomes to a lesser or greater degree embedded in the mind of the language user. Greater frequency of use and exposure leads to deeper entrenchment.

¹² I have added sentences in square brackets to illustrate the generalizations.

where the reason is that *H* wants or wishes, etc. to do *A*, in which case he can only ask whether *H* wants, wishes, etc. to do *A*. [E.g., *There's every reason to sign the document. Why don't you sign?*]

Again, this is far from complete, but is sufficient to indicate the kind of “common-sense logic” involved. Of particular interest in the context of this book is Searle’s recognition that a major motivation for using such ISAs is politeness.

Generalizations 1–4 are useful, but they are far from a fully satisfactory account of the forms that indirect requests may take (see 6.3 for a more detailed taxonomy and analysis of indirect directives). One thing missing is an explanation of why some of these options are more polite than others, or why the “tone,” or politeness quality, of some ISA formulae is quite different from that of others. For example, there is a big difference of tone between some question ISAs and the corresponding statement ISAs, so that they could hardly be used in the same situation:

- (7a) *Couldn't you post these letters?*
- (7b) *You couldn't post these letters (could you?)*

The indirect request (7a) is actually rather impolite, because of its implication that the addressee is surprisingly unwilling to comply. It is arguably both a request and a complaint. On the other hand, (7b), typically followed by a tag question or spoken with a rising (questioning) tone, is more like an entreaty: *S* takes a pessimistic viewpoint, as if not expecting his or her wish to be fulfilled. Hence (7b) is tactfully indirect in giving *H* plenty of freedom to say no and is rather high on the politeness scale.

Some indirect directives are not polite at all. For example, Searle’s Generalization 2 gives us *You will post these letters*, a statement amounting to an uncompromising prediction of *H*’s future behavior, effectively placing *H* in a volitional straitjacket, with no room to refuse. It is the kind of directive associated with military orders. The claim that indirectness implies politeness, although frequently alluded to, is an overgeneralization. One can be indirectly polite, but also indirectly *impolite*, as in the indirect threat *You just wait!*

A2 A new “take” on Searle-Gricean pragmatics

By linking Grice’s CP with Searle’s felicity conditions, I am following in Searle’s footsteps (1975) in combining Grice’s and Searle’s thinking on bridging the gap between what is “said” and what is “meant.” But in other respects I do not follow Searle.

Why is the Gricean ingredient needed? Because a salient characteristic of ISAs is that they are in apparent violation of Grice’s CP, and this helps to explain the special meanings that they convey. By the standards of the CP,

compared with a blunt directive like *Post these letters* or *Pass the salt*, the indirect directives

- (1) I'd like you to post these letters. or
- (2) Can you pass the salt?

must be considered as infringements of the CP,¹³ because all four maxims of the CP—Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner—can be engaged in the implicatures enabling us to infer that ISAs like (1) and (2) are polite requests. But some have a much more important role than others. We begin with the Maxim of Relation, as the first and perhaps the most important.

(a) The *Maxim of Relation* has been felt to be the least satisfactory of the maxims of the CP, because of the vagueness of the concept of relevance, which Grice hardly attempted to clarify. Various attempts have been made to elucidate “relevance,” notably by Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995), Wilson and Sperber (2002; 2004), and others working with Relevance Theory. However, I would argue that in Relevance Theory, as in Searle's elucidation of ISAs, the weight of pragmatic explanation is on the interpretative process of *H*, and not enough attention is given to the reconstruction of *S*'s meaning in the sense of *S*'s communicative intentions. As I see it, equal weight in pragmatics should be given to *S*'s meaning and to *H*'s interpretation of it. To give clarity to the notion of relevance, then, I have proposed to link it to the intention(s) or goal(s) of the speaker or hearer (Leech 1983: 94): an utterance is relevant to the extent that it can be recognized as contributing to the goals of the speaker (or hearer). This is not explicit in Searle's “bare bones” explanation. But it is clearly implicit in his Steps 2 and 10, repeated below for convenience, and the linking steps connecting them (see A1.3):

- Step 2: *I assume that he is cooperating in the conversation and that therefore his utterance has some aim or point* (principles of conversational cooperation).
- Step 10: *Therefore, in the absence of any other plausible illocutionary point, he is probably requesting me to pass him the salt* (inference from Steps 5 and 9).

In the dining-table context of *Can you pass the salt?*, there is no logical deductive process linking that utterance with its interpretation as a request to pass the salt. Deductively, there is no means of deriving the conclusion “He is requesting me to

¹³ Note that, unlike the examples of the CP Grice provides, as illustrated in A1.3, these are cases where the underlying meaning of request, rather than the overt meaning of question, apparently violates the CP. It is this that leads to the requirement that some other principle, not the CP, must explain the indirect relation between sense and force. This is where the Politeness Principle becomes an essential element in the pragmatician's explanatory toolkit. See below on the PP “rescuing” the CP.

pass the salt” (Step 10) from the observation (Step 7) “We are now at dinner and people normally use salt at dinner . . . etc.” Nor does *S*’s allusion to “the satisfaction of a preparatory condition for a request” (Step 9) entitle *H* to conclude that “*S* is requesting me to pass the salt.” Rather, the process of determining the force is *abductive* and probabilistic,¹⁴ as Searle’s use of words like *plausible* and *probably* indicates. Observations such as that of Step 7 are clues that enable *H* to reconstruct the *likely* goal(s) of the utterer, and along with that the likely communicative intention(s) of the utterance. What enables such clues to be used is the Maxim of Relation—understood, from *H*’s point of view, as the assumption that what *S* means to convey is that which can be most readily attributed to *S*’s communicative intention(s) in the context.

The parenthetic plural “(s)” here brings to mind that very often intentions and goals are plural rather than singular. Human agents are accustomed to keeping a number of goals in play at the same time—and, as will be elaborated, pursuing more than one goal at a time (both an illocutionary goal and the social goal of comity) is a crucial aspect of polite behavior. Hence the operation of the Maxim of Relation here is to weakly implicate two goal-oriented propositions: (i) that *S* wants *H* to perform some action, and (ii) that *S* wants to convey this politely.

- (b) Indirect directives may also breach the first *Maxim of Quality*. For example, the question *Can you pass the salt?* as Searle points out, can be uttered by someone who clearly knows, from visual evidence, that the addressee *is* capable of passing the salt. In such cases, the face-value meaning of the question includes a breach of the preparatory condition “*S* does not know whether *H* can pass the salt” (see Searle 1969: 66). In other words, it seems that *S* pretends not to know whether the desired action is possible. Here the breach of the Quality is part of a polite mitigating strategy that appears to give the addressee an “out”: if it is impossible for *H* to pass the salt, then *H* cannot be blamed for not passing it. The implicature here is that *S* is politely “pretending” that *H* may or may not be able to perform the action. In this sense the CP (Quality) is overruled by the PP.

These two exploitations of the CP apply in helping *H* to reach the conclusion, by abduction, that the utterance is not intended to be an information question, but a directive. The next two exploitations apply not to the explicit speech act of questioning but to the implicit speech act of requesting. We assume, then, for this

¹⁴ The conception of abduction comes originally from the philosopher C. S. Peirce’s threefold distinction between deduction, induction, and abduction (Fann 1970). Abduction is important for both scientific and commonsense reasoning. Josephson and Josephson (1994) explain: “The essence of abduction can be reduced to the following steps of reasoning: *D* is a collection of data (facts, observations, givens). *C* explains *D* (would, if true, explain *D*). No other hypothesis can explain *D* as well as *C* does. Therefore, *C* is probably true.”

purpose, that the likely interpretation of the ISA as a directive has already been arrived at.

- (c) Such ISAs apparently break the *Maxim of Manner* because they are not as brief and clear as they could be. They are unnecessarily wordy, and they do not “wear their meaning on their sleeve”; that is, they are unnecessarily obscure compared with the simple imperative *Post these letters* or *Pass the salt*.
- (d) More marginally, indirect directives may fall foul of the first *Maxim of Quantity*. The utterance *I’d like you to post these letters*, although intended and interpreted as a request, makes a claim about *S*’s (hypothetical) volitional state—a weaker claim than an overt request such as the performative *I request that you to post these letters*, or the simple imperative *Post these letters*. These latter two utterances are understood to have a directive force; in Searle’s words (1969: 66) they “count as an attempt to get *H* to do *A*” (where *A* is the mentioned action), and their sincerity condition is that *S* wants *H* to do *A*. This is a stronger than the overt illocutionary force of *I’d like you to X*, which is a report of *S*’s hypothetical desire. People can harbor such weak desires without intending or requiring their fulfillment. This claim about breaching the Maxim of Quantity can be made much more convincingly of weaker, more indirect ISAs such as *I wonder if you’d post these letters*. Again, the implicature (given that the directive interpretation has already been arrived at) is that *S* is being polite in stating her directive intention in a weak hypothetical form.

There is therefore plenty of reason to think that the force of ISAs can be “worked out” using implicatures derived using the CP, the context, and the face-value meaning of the utterance. But there is still a missing factor.

The fact that all four maxims of the CP might be involved suggests, indeed, that there is a kind of “overkill” in that a number of implicatures might all point the addressee in the same direction. In Relevance Theory it is accepted that implicatures vary in their strength (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 199), and I accept this, bearing in mind that implicatures arise from abductive reasoning, which is essentially probabilistic. Hence some implicatures (e.g., (b) above) may have a subsidiary role to others (such as (a)).

On this basis, interpreted underlyingly as requests, well-known types of indirect directive patently fail to meet the requirements of the CP. The Gricean CP is so liable to infringement by indirect directives that such utterances are incapable of an explanation consistent with the CP unless we posit another motivating maxim or principle: the Tact Maxim, as it was called in Leech (1977, 1983), or more generally, the Politeness Principle (or PP), as it was called in Leech (1983). Without the PP, then, the CP would be in serious trouble: it could not begin to explain the very noticeable gap that frequently occurs between “what is said” and “what is meant” in

the case of ISAs, as for example, why ISAs like *Could you hold the line for a moment?* are often preferred to blunt imperatives like *Hold the line for a moment*.

In this sense, the PP rescues the CP. Let us see how this rescue takes place. A major idea behind the CP is that if *S* overtly fails to abide by the CP, this is likely to be because *S* has some extra meaning to implicate. Searle's step-by-step analysis of the interpretation of *Can you pass the salt?* has already indicated the bare bones of such an argument. But, without assuming the operation of the PP, his arrival at the underlying meaning of a directive (although it is clearly appropriate) is, in explanatory terms, little more than a guess, as is particularly evident in the wording of his Step 10:

Step 10: *Therefore, in the absence of any other plausible illocutionary point, he is probably requesting me to pass him the salt.*

What Searle's analysis presents is an attempt by *H* (or an observer) to *reconstruct* *S*'s communicative intentions from what *S* said. This is reasonable interpretative behavior on the part of *H*, and this reconstruction is what pragmatics has to elucidate from *H*'s point of view. Taking the speaker's orientation, on the other hand, the aim of pragmatics is to elucidate the relation between what *S* means to convey (*S*'s communicative intentions), and what *S* says in order to accomplish these intentions. For this we will need to assume a *goal-oriented* theory of pragmatics (see 3.1): in this case, for example, there are two particular goals *S* most likely has in saying *Could you hold the line for a moment?* One is to induce *H* to hold the line; the other is to avoid any offense to *H*. One may be called the *illocutionary goal* (the goal *S* aims to achieve by the use of a particular illocution) and the other the *social goal* (the goal of rapport management; Spencer-Oatey 2000b), which here means the goal of maintaining the Tact Maxim, and hence the PP; see Leech 1983: 104–130). Thus, to conclude this particular argument, transgressing the CP, if the underlying force of the ISA is assumed to be a request, cannot be explained by the CP itself, but it can be explained additionally as an observance of the Tact Maxim, one subconstraint (as is elaborated in 4.3.1) of the PP. The CP is “rescued” by the PP.

A3 Conclusion

In this appendix, I have sketched a historical path from the beginnings of modern pragmatics in the work of Grice and of Searle to an approach to neg-politeness that combines both Grice's CP and Searle's speech acts with an account of politeness in quasi-Gricean terms. In Chapter 3, I have already pushed these issues further, by in particular aiming to account for how the proposition-based pragmatics of Grice can be wedded to Searle's treatment of speech acts such as questions and directives, which are often nonpropositional, in a neo-Searle-Gricean account of ISAs.

REFERENCES

- Adolphs, S. 2008. *Corpus and context: Investigating pragmatic functions in spoken discourse*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Aijmer, K. 1996. *Conversational routines in English: Convention and creativity*. London: Longman.
- Alba Juez, L. 1998. On the conventionalization of verbal irony in English: A corpus-based study. *Perspectivas Pragmaticas en Lingüística Aplicada*. 11–18.
- Antoniou, G. 1999. A tutorial on default logics. *ACM Computing Surveys*, 31 (4): 337–359.
- Argyle, M. 1975/1988. *Bodily communication*. 2nd ed. Madison: International Universities Press.
- Argyle, M. and A. Kendon. 1972. Analysis of conversational interaction. In *Communication in face to face interaction: Selected readings*, ed. John Laver and Sandy Hutchinson. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Armstrong, Lucie Heaton. 1908. *Etiquette-up-to-date*. [N.p.] T. Werner Laurie.
- Arndt, H., and R. W. Janney. 1979. Interactional and linguistic models for the analysis of speech data: An integrative approach. *Sociologia Internationalis* 17: 1–2, 3–45.
- Arndt, H., and R. W. Janney. 1983. Towards an interactional grammar of spoken English. In John Morreal, ed. *The Ninth LACUS Forum 1982*, 367–381. Columbia, SC: Hornbeam.
- Arnovick, L. 2000. *Diachronic pragmatics: Seven case studies in English illocutionary development*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Arundale, R. B. 2006. Face as relational and interactional: A communication for research on face, facework and politeness. *Journal of Politeness Research* 2 (2): 193–216.
- Arundale, R. B. 2008. Against (Gricean) intentions at the heart of human interaction. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 5 (2): 229–258.
- Asher, N., and A. Lascarides. 2003. *Logics of conversation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Atawneh, A., and S. N. Sridhar. 1993. Arabic-English bilinguals and the directive speech act. *World Englishes* 12 (3): 279–297.
- Austin, J. L. 1962. *How to do things with words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Axelrod, R. 1984/2006. *The evolution of cooperation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bach, K. 1984. Default reasoning: Jumping to conclusions and knowing when to think twice. *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 65: 37–58.
- Bardovi-Harlig, K., and Dörnyei, Z. 1998. Do language learners recognize pragmatic violations? Pragmatic vs. grammatical awareness in instructed L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly* 32 (2): 233–259.
- Bargiela-Chiappini, F. 2003. Face and politeness: New (insights) for old (concepts). *Journal of Pragmatics* 35 (10–11): 1453–1469.
- Barth-Weingarten, D., N. Dehé, and A. Wichmann. 2009. *Where prosody meets pragmatics*. Bingley, UK: Emerald Group.

- Baxter, L. A. 1984. An investigation of compliance gaining as politeness. *Human Communication Research* 10 (3): 427–456.
- Bayraktaroglu, A. 1991. Politeness and interactional balance, *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, 92: 5–34.
- Beebe, L. M. 1995. Polite fictions: Instrumental rudeness as pragmatic competence. In *Linguistics and the education of language teachers: Ethnolinguistic, psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic aspects*, ed. James E. Alatis, Carolyn A. Straehle, Brent Gallenberger, and Maggie Ronkin, pp. 154–168. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Beebe, L. M., and M. C. Cummings. 1996. Natural speech act data versus written questionnaire data: How data collection method affects speech act performance. In *Speech acts across cultures: Challenges of communication in a second language*, ed. S. M. Gass and J. Neu, 65–86. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bergman, M. L., and G. Kasper. 1993. Perception and performance in native and nonnative apology. In Kasper and Blum-Kulka, eds., 82–107.
- Bertuccelli Papi, M. 2000. Is a diachronic speech act theory possible? *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1: 57–66.
- Bicchieri, C. 2006. *The grammar of society: The nature and dynamics of social norms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackmore, S. 1999. *The Meme Machine*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press
- Blakemore, D. 2002. *Relevance and linguistic meaning: The semantics and pragmatics of discourse markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., and Finegan, E. 1999. *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1982. Learning how to say what you mean in a second language: A study of the speech act performance of learners of Hebrew as a second language. *Applied Linguistics* 3 (1): 29–59.
- Blum-Kulka, S. 1985. Modifiers as indicating devices: The case of requests. *Theoretical Linguistics* 12 (1): 213–230.
- . 1987. Indirectness and politeness: Same or different? *Journal of Pragmatics* 11: 145–160.
- Blum-Kulka, S. and E. Olshtain. 1985. Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics* 5 (3): 196–213.
- Blum-Kulka, S., J. House, and G. Kasper, eds. 1989. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1990. *The Logic of practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- . 1991. *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bousfield, D. 2008. *Impoliteness in interaction*. Philadelphia and Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Bousfield, D., and M. Locher, eds. 2008. *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Brookins, T. 2005. A politeness analysis of Catullus polymetric poems: Can Leech's GSP cross the ancient-modern divide? *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (5): 1283–1295.
- Brooks, R. L., ed. 1999. *When sorry isn't enough: The controversy over apologies and reparation for human injustice*. New York: New York University Press.
- Brown, G., and G. Yule. 1983. *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, P., and S. C. Levinson. 1978. Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In *Questions and Politeness*, ed. Esther N. Goody, pp. 56–310. Cambridge: Cambridge

- University Press. Reissued 1987 with corrections, new introduction, and new bibliography, as a book entitled *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. [Abbreviated to “B&L” in this book.]
- Brown, R. W., and A. Gilman. 1960. Pronouns of power and solidarity. In *Style in Language*. ed. Thomas A. Sebeok, pp. 253–276. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Reprinted in *Language and Social Context*, 1972, ed. P. Giglioli, pp. 252–282. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Brown, R., and A. Gilman. 1989. Politeness theory in Shakespeare’s four major tragedies. *Language in Society* 18, 159–212.
- Blublitz, W., and A. Hübler. 2007. *Metapragmatics in use*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Burnard, L., ed. 2000. *Reference guide for the British National Corpus (world edition)*. <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/archive/worldURG/urg.pdf>.
- Carrell, P. L., and B. H. Konneker. 1981. Politeness: Comparing native and non-native judgements. *Language Learning* 31(1): 17–30.
- Cenoz, J., and J. F. Valencia. 1996. Cross-cultural communication and interlanguage pragmatics: American vs. European requests. In *Pragmatics and Language Learning*. vol. 7, ed. L. F. Bouton, 41–54. Urbana-Champaign: Division of English as an International Language, Intensive English Institute, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.
- Chen, R. 1993. Responding to compliments: A contrastive study of politeness strategies between American English and Chinese speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 20: 49–75.
- Cheng, W., C. Greaves, and M. Warren 2008. *A corpus-driven study of discourse intonation*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Cherry, R. D. 1988. Politeness in written communication. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12: 63–68.
- Cole, P., and J. Morgan, eds. 1975. *Syntax and Semantics 3: Speech Acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Conlan, C. J. 2005. Face-threatening acts, primary face threatening acts, and the management of discourse. In Lakoff and Ide, 129–144.
- Cook, M., and A. J. Liddicoat. 2002. The development of comprehension in interlanguage pragmatics: The case of request strategies in English. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 25 (1): 19–39.
- Coulmas, F. 1992. Linguistic etiquette in Japanese society. In Watts, Ide and Ehlich, 299–323.
- Couper-Kuhlen, E., and B. Kortmann. 2000. *Cause, condition, concession, contrast: Cognitive and discourse perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Couper-Kuhlen, E., and S. Thompson. 2000. Concessive patterns in conversation. In Couper-Kuhlen and Kortmann, 2000, 381–410.
- Coupland, N., and H. Giles, eds. 1988. Communication accommodation: Recent developments. Special issue of *Language and Communication* 8 (3–4): 175–327.
- Creese, A. 1991. Speech act variation in British and American English. *PENN Working Papers in Educational Linguistics* 7 (2): 37–58.
- Culpeper, J. 1996. Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 25: 349–367.
- . 2005. Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The Weakest Link. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1(1): 35–72.
- . 2011a. *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- . 2011b. Politeness and impoliteness. In *Handbook: The Pragmatics of Society*, ed. Karin Aijmer and Gisle Andersen, 393–436. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2011c. “It’s not what you said, it’s how you said it”: Prosody and impoliteness. In *Discursive approaches to politeness*, ed. Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 57–84. Berlin: De Gruyter.
- . 2012. Epilogue: (Im)politeness: Three issues, *Journal of Pragmatics* 44: 1128–1133.
- Culpeper, J., and D. Z. Kádár, eds. 2010. *Historical (im)politeness*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Culpeper, J. and Kytö, M. 2010. *Early Modern English dialogues: Spoken interaction as writing*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J., and J. Demmen. 2011. Nineteenth-century English politeness: Negative politeness, conventional indirect requests and the rise of the individual self. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 12 (1–2): 49–81.
- Culpeper, J., D. Bousfield, and A. Wichmann. 2003. Impoliteness revisited: With special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35: 1545–1579.
- Dawkins, R. 1976/1989. *The selfish gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Deutschmann, M. 2003. *Apologising in British English*. Umeå, Sweden: Umeå Universitet.
- Dunbar, R. 1996. *Gossip, grooming and the evolution of language*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- . 2004. *The human story*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Edmondson, W. J., and J. House. 1991. Do learners talk too much? The waffle phenomenon in interlanguage pragmatics. In *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research*, ed. R. Philipson, E. Kellerman, L. Selinker, M. Sharwood Smith, and M. Swain, 273–287. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Eelen, G. 1999. *Ideology in Politeness: A Critical Analysis*. Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van Doctor in de taal-en letter kunde. Antwerp: Universitaire Instelling Antwerpen.
- . 2001. *A critique of politeness theories*. Manchester: St Jerome.
- Eisenstein, M., and J. Bodman. 1993. Expressing gratitude in American English. In Kasper and Blum-Kulka, eds., 64–81.
- Evans, N., and S. C. Levinson. 2009. The myth of language universals: Language diversity and its importance for cognitive science. *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 32: 429–448.
- Faerch, C., and G. Kasper. 1989. Interlanguage request modification. In Blum-Kulka et al., eds., 221–247.
- Fann, K. T. 1970. *Peirce’s theory of abduction*. The Hague: Nijhoff.
- Félix-Brasdefer, C. 2007. Natural speech vs. elicited data: A comparison of natural and roleplay requests in Mexican Spanish. *Spanish in Context* 4 (2): 159–185.
- . 2008. Pragmatic development in the Spanish as an FL classroom: A cross-sectional study of learner requests. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 4 (2): 253–287.
- . 2010. Data collection methods in speech act performance: DCTs, role plays and verbal reports. In *Speech act performance*, ed. Alicia Martínez-Flor and Esther Usó-Juan. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Fillmore, C. J. 1976. Frame semantics and the nature of language. In *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences: Conference on the Origin and Development of Language and Speech*. Vol. 280: 20–32.
- . 1977. Scenes-and-frames semantics, linguistic structures processing. In *Fundamental Studies in Computer science*, ed. Antonio Zampolli, no. 59. Amsterdam: North Holland.

- Fitzmaurice, S. 2010. Changes in meaning of politeness in 18th century England. In Culpeper and Kádár, 87–116.
- Flin, R. 2010. Rudeness at work: A threat to patient safety and quality of care. *British Medical Journal* 340: 212–213.
- Fox, K. 2004. *Watching the English: The hidden rules of English behaviour*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Fraser, B. 1975. Hedged performatives. In Cole and Morgan, eds., 187–210.
- Fraser, B. 1990. Perspectives on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 219–236.
- Fraser, B., and W. Nolen. 1981. The association of deference with linguistic form. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 27: 93–109.
- Fukuda, A. and Asato, N. 2004. Universal politeness theory: Application to the use of Japanese honorifics. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (11): 1991–2002.
- Fukushima, S. 2000. *Requests and culture: Politeness in British English and Japanese*. Bern: Peter Lang.
- Garcia, P. 2004. Developmental differences in speech act recognition: A pragmatic awareness study, *Language Awareness* 13 (2): 96–115.
- Giles, H., N. Coupland, and J. Coupland. 1991. Accommodation Theory: Communication, Context and Consequence, *Contexts of Accommodation: Developments in Applied Sociolinguistics*, 1–68.
- Goffman, E. 1956. *The Presentation of self in everyday life*. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Social Sciences Research Centre.
- . 1967. *Interaction ritual: Essays in face-to-face behavior*. New York: Doubleday.
- . 1971. *Relations in public: Microstudies of the public order*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 1972. *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- . 1986. *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Boston: Northeastern University Press.
- Golato, A. 2003. Studying compliment responses: A comparison of DCTs and recordings of naturally occurring talk. *Applied Linguistics* 24 (1): 90–121.
- . 2005. *Compliments and compliment responses: Grammatical structure and sequential organization*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Goodwin, M. H. 2002. Exclusion in girls peer groups: Ethnographic analysis of language practices on the playground. *Human Development* 45: 392–415.
- Graham, S. L. 2008. A manual for (im)politeness? In Bousfield and Locher, eds., 281–304.
- Granger, S. 1993. The International Corpus of Learner English. In *English language corpora: design, analysis and exploitation*, ed. Jan Aarts, P. de Haan, and Nelleke Oostdijk, 57–69. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- . 1998. ed. *Learner English on Computer*. Harlow, UK: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Granger, S., E. Dagneaux, F. Meunier, and M. Paquot, M. 2009. *The International Corpus of Learner English. Version 2. Handbook and CD-ROM*. Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses universitaires de Louvain.
- Greenbaum, S. 1996. *Comparing English worldwide: The International Corpus of English*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Grice, H. P. 1957. Meaning. *Philosophical Review* 66: 277–288. Repr. in Grice, 1989, 213–233.
- . 1975. Logic and conversation. In Cole and Morgan, eds., 41–58. Repr. in Grice, 1989, 213–233.

- . 1989. *Studies in the way of words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gu, Y. 1990. Politeness phenomena in modern Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 3: 237–257.
- . 1997. Five ways of handling a bedpan: A tripartite approach to workplace discourse. *Text* 17: 457–475.
- Gumperz, J. J. 1982. *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Halliday, M. A. K. 1985/1994. *An introduction to functional grammar*, 2nd ed. London: Arnold.
- Hamilton, W. D. 1963. The evolution of altruistic behavior. *American Naturalist* 97: 354–356.
- Harris, S. 2001. Being politically impolite: Extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse. *Discourse and Society* 12: 451–472.
- Harris, S., K. Grainger, and L. Mullany 2006. The pragmatics of political apologies. *Discourse and Society* 17 (6): 715–737.
- Haverkate, H. 1984. *Speech acts, speakers and hearers: Reference and referential strategies in Spanish*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Hendriks, B. 2008. Dutch English requests: A study of request performance by Dutch learners of English. In Puetz and Neff van Aertselaer, eds., 335–354.
- Hill, C. 2007. A pragmatic analysis of family mediation. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales, Bangor.
- Hill, T. 1997. The development of pragmatic competence in an EFL context. Ph.D. thesis, Temple University, Japan.
- Ho, D. Y.-F. 1976. On the concept of face. *American Journal of Sociology* 81(4): 867–884.
- Hobbs, J. R. 2004. Abduction in natural language understanding. In Horn and Ward, eds., 724–741.
- Hofstede, G. 1991. *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- , and G. J. Hofstede. 2005. *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*, 2nd ed. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Holmes, J. 1986. Compliments and compliment responses in New Zealand English. *Anthropological Linguistics* 28: 485–508.
- . 1988. Paying compliments: A sex-preferential positive politeness strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12 (3): 445–465.
- . 1990. Apologies in New Zealand English. *Language in Society* 19 (2): 155–199.
- . 2006. *Gendered talk at work: Constructing gender identity through workplace discourse*. New York, Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1995. *Women, men and politeness*. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Holmes, J., and S. Schnurr. 2005. Politeness, humor and gender in the workplace: Negotiating norms and identifying contestation. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1 (1): 121–149.
- Holtgraves, T., and J. Yang. 1992. Interpersonal underpinnings of request strategies: General principles and differences due to culture and gender. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 62: 246–256.
- Hopper, P. J., and E. Closs Traugott 1993/2003. *Grammaticalization*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Horn, L. R., and G. Ward. eds. 2004. *The handbook of pragmatics*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- House, J. 1989. Politeness in English and German: The functions of *please* and *bitte*. In Blum-Kulka et al., eds., 96–121.

- . 1996. Developing pragmatic fluency in English as a foreign language: Routines and metapragmatic awareness. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 18 (2): 225–252.
- House, J., and G. Kasper. 1987. Interlanguage pragmatics: Requesting in a foreign language. In *Perspectives on Language in Performance* Vol. 2, ed. W. Lörcher and R. Schulze, 1250–1288. Tübingen: Narr.
- Hua, Z., W. Li, and Y. Qian. 2000. The sequential organization of gift offering and acceptance in Chinese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 32: 81–103.
- Huang, P., and H.-M. Wu. 1994. More order without more law: A theory of social norms and organizational cultures. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 10 (2): 390–406.
- Huang, Y. 2007. *Pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Huber, M. 2007. The Old Bailey Proceedings, 1674–1834: Evaluating and annotating a corpus of 18th- and 19th-century spoken English. In *Annotating Variation and Change*, Studies in Variation, Contacts and Change in English 1, ed. Anneli Meurman-Solin and Arja Nurmi. <http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/journal/volumes/01/huber/>
- Hundt, M., and U. Gut, eds. 2012. *Mapping unity and diversity worldwide: Corpus studies of new Englishes*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Hymes, D. H. 1966. Two types of linguistic relativity. In *Sociolinguistics*, ed. W. Bright. The Hague: Mouton, 114–158.
- Ide, S. 1982. Japanese sociolinguistics: Politeness and women's language. *Lingua* 57: 49–89.
- . 1989. Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua* 8 (2–3): 223–248.
- . 1993. Preface: the search for integrated universals of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua* 12 (1): 7–11.
- Ide, S., B. Hill, Y. M. Carnes, T. Ogino, and A. Kawasaki. 1992/2005. The concept of politeness: An empirical study of American English and Japanese. In Watts, Ide, and Ehlich, eds., 281–298.
- Ilie, C. 2004. Insulting as (un)parliamentary practice in the British and Swedish parliaments. In *Cross-cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse*, ed. Paul Bayley, pp. 2–81. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Janney, R. W., and Arndt, H. 1992/2005. Intracultural tact versus intercultural tact. In Watts, Ide, and Ehlich, eds., 21–41.
- Jaszczolt, K. 2002. *Semantics and pragmatics: Meaning in language and discourse*. Harlow, Essex: Pearson/Longman.
- . 2005. *Default semantics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2006/2010. Defaults in semantics and pragmatics. In *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. E. N. Zalta. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/defaults-semantics-pragmatics/>.
- Jaworski, A. 1994. Apologies and non-apologies: Negotiation in speech act realization. *Text* 14 (2): 185–204.
- Joseph, J. E. 2004. *Language and identity: National, ethnic, religious*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Josephson, J. R., and S. G. Josephson, eds. 1994. *Abductive inference: Computation, philosophy, technology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Jucker, A. 2012. Changes in politeness cultures. In *The Oxford Handbook of the History of English*, ed. Elizabeth Closs Traugott and Terttu Nevalainen, 422–433. New York: Oxford University Press.

- Jucker, A. H., and I. Taavitsainen. 2000. Diachronic speech act analysis: Insults from flying to flaming. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1: 67–95.
- Jucker, A. H., and I. Taavitsainen. 2008. *Speech acts in the history of English*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Jucker, A. H. and I. Taavitsainen. 2000. Diachronic speech act analysis: Insults from flying to flaming. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1: 67–95.
- Kachru, B. B. 1985. Standards, codification and sociolinguistic realism: The English language in the outer circle. In *English in the World*, ed. R. Quirk and H. G. Widdowson, 11–30. London: British Council.
- Kasper, G. 1981. *Pragmatische Aspekte in der Interimsprache*. Tübingen: Narr.
- . 1990. Linguistic politeness: Current research issues. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 193–218.
- . 1992. Pragmatic transfer. *Second Language Research* 8 (3): 203–231.
- . 2000. Data collection in pragmatics research. In *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*, ed. Helen Spencer-Oatey, 316–341. London and New York: Continuum.
- . 2008. Data collection in pragmatics research. In *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory*, ed. Helen Spencer-Oatey, 279–303. London and New York: Continuum. (Revised version of Kasper 2000.)
- Kasper, G., and M. Dahl. 1991. Research methods in interlanguage pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 13 (2): 215–247.
- Kasper, G., and S. Blum-Kulka, eds. 1993. *Interlanguage pragmatics*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kasper, G., and K. R. Rose. 2002. *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Keltner, D., L. Capps, A. M. Kring, R. C. Young, and E. A. Heerey. 2001. Just teasing: A conceptual analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin* 127 (2): 229–248.
- Kendon, A. 2004. *Gesture: Visible action as utterance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kenny, A. J. 1966. Practical inference. *Analysis* 26: 65–75.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, Catherine 1997. A multilevel approach in the study of talk-in-interaction. *Pragmatics* 7(1): 1–20.
- . 2006. Politeness in small shops in France. *Journal of Politeness Research* 2(1): 79–103.
- Kobayashi, H., and C. Rinnert. 2003. Coping with high imposition requests: High vs. low proficiency EFL students in Japan. In *Speech acts across cultures*, ed. S. M. Gass and J. Neu, 257–281. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Kohnen, T. 2000a. Corpora and speech acts: The study of performatives. In *Corpus linguistics and linguistic theory: Papers from the Twentieth International Conference on English Language Research on Computerized Corpora (ICAME 20)*, ed. Christian Mair and Marianne Hundt, 177–186. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- . 2000b. Explicit performatives in Old English: A corpus-based study of directives. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 1 (2): 301–321.
- . 2002. Towards a history of English directives. In *Text types and corpora: Studies in honour of Udo Fries*, ed. Andreas Fischer, Gunnel Tottie, and Hans Martin Lehmann, 165–175. Tübingen: Narr.
- . 2007. Text types and the methodology of diachronic speech act analysis. In *Methods in historical pragmatics*, ed. Susan M. Fitzmaurice and Irma Taavitsainen, 139–166. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

- . 2008a. Directives in Old English: Beyond politeness? In Jucker and Taavatsainen, eds., 27–44.
- . 2008b. Linguistic politeness in Anglo-Saxon England? A study of Old English address terms. *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 9 (1): 140–158.
- Koike, D. A., and L. Pearson. 2005. The effect of instruction and feedback in the development of pragmatic competence. *System* 33: 481–501.
- Kopytko, R. 1993. *Polite discourse in Shakespeare's English*. Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press.
- . 1995. Linguistic politeness strategies in Shakespeare's plays. In *Pragmatic developments in the history of English*, ed. Andreas H. Jucker, 516–540. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Koutlaki, S. A. 2002. Offers and expressions of thanks as face enhancing acts: *Tearof* in Persian. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34 (12), 1733–1756.
- Kuiper, K. 2010. Bros, Boys and Guys: Address term function and communities of practice in a New Zealand rugby team. *New Zealand English Journal* 24: 33–54.
- Labov, W. 1972a. *Language in the inner city: Studies in the black English vernacular*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 1972b. Rules for ritual insults. In *Studies in Social Interaction*, ed. D. Sudnow, pp. 120–169. New York: Free Press.
- . 1972c. *Sociolinguistic patterns*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Labov, W., and D. Fanshel. 1978. *Therapeutic discourse: Psychotherapy as conversation*. New York: Academic Press.
- Lachenicht, L. G. 1980. Aggravating language: A study of abusive and insulting language. *International Journal of Human Communication* 13 (4): 607–688.
- Lakoff, R. T. 1973. The logic of politeness; or, minding your Ps and Qs. In *Papers from the Ninth Regional Meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society 1973*: 292–305.
- . 1989. The limits of politeness: Therapeutic and courtroom discourse. *Multilingua* 8(2–3): 101–129.
- . 1990. *Talking power: The politics of language in our lives*. Glasgow: HarperCollins.
- . 2005. Civility and its discontents. In Lakoff and Ide, eds., 23–43.
- Lakoff, R. T., and S. Ide, ed. 2005. *Broadening the horizon of linguistic politeness*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Langacker, R. W. 1991. *Foundations of cognitive grammar. Vol 2: Descriptive application*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- . 2008. *Cognitive grammar: A basic introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Larina, T. 2008. Directness, imposition and politeness in English and Russian. *Cambridge ESOL: Research Notes* 33: 33–38.
- Leech, G. 1977. *Language and tact*. Trier: Linguistic Agency University of Trier, Series A, Paper No.46. Reprinted with revisions in Geoffrey Leech, *Explorations in Semantics and Pragmatics*, pp. 79–117. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- . 1983. *Principles of pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- . 1999. The distribution and function of vocatives in American and British English conversation. In *Out of corpora: Studies in honour of Stig Johansson*, ed. Hilde Hasselgård and Signe Oksefjell, pp. 107–118. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- . 2003. Towards an anatomy of politeness in communication. *International Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 101–123.

- . 2005. Politeness: Is there an East-West divide? *Wai Guo Yu: Journal of Foreign Languages*, Shanghai, 6: 3–31.
- . 2007. Politeness: Is there an East-West divide? *Journal of Politeness Research* 3(2): 167–206. (Revised version of Leech 2005.)
- . 1983/2008. Pragmatics, discourse analysis, stylistics and “the Celebrated Letter.” *Prose Studies* 6 (2): 141–157. Repr. in Geoffrey Leech, *Language in Literature: Style and Foregrounding*, 86–103. Harlow, UK: Pearson/Longman.
- Leech, G., M. Hundt, C. Mair, and N. Smith. 2009. *Change in contemporary English: A grammatical study*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lein, L., and D. Brenneis. 1978. Children’s disputes in three speech communities. *Language and Society* 7: 299–323.
- Levinson, S. C. 1979. Activity types and language. *Linguistics* 17: 365–399.
- . 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2000. *Presumptive meaning: The theory of generalized conversational implicature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Liebersohn, Y. Z., Y. Neuman, and Z. Bekerman. 2004. Oh baby, it’s hard for me to say I’m sorry: Public apologetic speech and cultural rhetorical resources. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (5): 921–944.
- Lima, J. P. de. 1995. Pragmatic maxims in explanations of language change. In *Pragmatic developments in the history of English*, ed. Andreas H. Jucker, 197–216. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Liu, R. 1986. The politeness principle and A Dream of Red Mansions. M.Phil. thesis, Lancaster University.
- Locher, M. A. 2004. Politeness and power in action: Disagreements in oral communication. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Locher, M. A. 2006. *Polite behavior within relational work: The discursive approach to politeness*. *Multilingua* 25 (3): 249–267.
- Locher, M. A., and R. J. Watts. 2005. Politeness theory and relational work. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1(1): 9–33.
- Locher, M. A., and R. J. Watts. 2008. Relational work and impoliteness: Negotiating norms of linguistic behavior. In Bousfield and Locher, eds., 77–99.
- Macfarlane, A. 1978. *The origins of English individualism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 1994. On individualism. *Proceedings of the British Academy*. 82: 171–199.
- Manes, J., and N. Wolfson. 1981. The compliment formula. In *Conversational routine: Explorations in standardized communication and pre-patterned Speech*, ed. Florian Coulmas, 115–132. The Hague: Mouton.
- Mao, L. M. 1992. Invitational discourse and Chinese identity. *Journal of Asian Pacific Communication* 3 (1): 79–96.
- . 1994. Beyond politeness theory: “Face” revisited and renewed. *Journal of Pragmatics* 21: 451–486.
- Matsumoto, Y. 1988. Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics* 12: 403–426.
- Matsumoto, Y. 1989. Politeness and conversational universals: Observations from Japanese. *Multilingua* 8: 207–221.
- Matsumura, S. 2003. Modelling the relationship among interlanguage pragmatic development, L2 proficiency and exposure to L2. *Applied Linguistics* 24 (4): 465–491.

- . 2007. Exploring the after effects of study abroad on interlanguage pragmatic development. *Intercultural Pragmatics* 4 (2): 167–192.
- McEnery, A. M. 2006. *Swearing in English: Bad language, purity and power from 1586 to the present*. London: Routledge.
- Mendoza, M. 2005. Polite diminutives in Spanish. In *Broadening the horizon of linguistic politeness*, ed. Robin T. Lakoff and Sachiko Ide, 163–173. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Mills, S. 2003. *Gender and politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Milroy, L. 1980/1987. *Language and social networks*, 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Minsky, M. 1975. A framework for representing knowledge. In *The psychology of computer vision*, ed. Patrick H. Winston, 211–277. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975.
- Mizutani, O., and N. Mizutani. 1987. *How to be polite in Japanese*. Tokyo: Japan Times.
- Montagu, A. 1967/2001. *Anatomy of swearing*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Morgan, J. L. 1978. Two types of convention in indirect speech acts. In *Syntax and Semantics 9: Pragmatics*, ed. Peter Cole and Jerry L. Morgan, 261–280. New York: Academic Press.
- Murray, I. R., and J. L. Arnott. 1993. Toward the simulation of emotion in synthetic speech: A review of the literature on human vocal emotion. *Journal of the Acoustic Society of America* 93 (2): 1097–1108.
- Myers, G. 1989. The pragmatics of politeness in scientific articles. *Applied Linguistics* 10 (1): 1–35.
- Nevala, M. 2004. Accessing politeness axes: Forms of address and terms of reference in early English correspondence. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 2125–2160.
- Nevalainen, T. 2006. *An Introduction to Early Modern English*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Nevalainen, T., and H. Raumolin-Brunberg. 1995. Constraints on politeness: The pragmatics of address formulae in early English correspondence. In Jucker, ed., 541–610.
- Nevalainen, T., and H. Raumolin-Brunberg, eds. 1996. *Sociolinguistics and language history: Studies based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence*. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Nute, D. 1994. Defeasible logic. In *Handbook of logic in artificial intelligence and logic programming*, Vol. 3: *Nonmonotonic reasoning and uncertain reasoning*, 353–395. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- . 2003. *Lecture notes in computer science*. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer.
- Ogiermann, E. 2009. On apologising in negative and positive politeness cultures. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamins.
- Ohta, A. S. 1991. Evidentiality and politeness in Japanese. *Issues in Applied Linguistics* 2 (2): 211–238.
- Okamoto, S. 1999. Situated politeness: Manipulating honorific and non-honorific expressions in Japanese conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 9 (1): 51–74.
- Ogden, C. K. and I. A. Richards. 1923. *The meaning of meaning: A study of the influence of language upon thought and of the science of symbolism*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. (10th edn. 1949).
- Olshain, E. 1989. Apologies across languages. In Blum-Kulka et al., eds., 155–173.
- Olshain, E., and S. Blum-Kulka. 1985. Degree of approximation: Nonnative reactions to native speech behaviour. In *Input in second language acquisition*, ed. S. M. Gass and C. G. Madden, pp. 302–323. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

- Otçu, B., and D. Zeyrek. 2008. Development of requests: A study on Turkish learners of English. In Puetz and Neff van Aertselaer, eds., 265–300.
- Parsons, T. 1966. *Societies: Evolutionary and comparative perspectives*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- Pawley, A., and F. H. Syder. 1983. Two puzzles for linguistic theory: Nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. In *Language and Communication*, ed. J. C. Richards and R. Schmidt, 191–226. London: Longman.
- Penman, R. 1990. Facework and politeness: Multiple goals in courtroom discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 9 (1–2): 15–38.
- Pinker, S. 2011. *The better angels of our nature: The decline of violence in history and its causes*. London: Allen Lane.
- Pomerantz, A. 1975. Second assessments: A study of some features of agreements/disagreements. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Irvine.
- . 1978. Compliment response: Notes on the co-operation of multiple constraints. In *Studies in the organisation of conversational interaction*, ed. Jim Schenkein, 79–112. New York: Academic Press.
- Popper, K. R. 1963/1972. *Conjectures and refutations: The growth of scientific knowledge*. London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul. Rev. ed.
- Posner, E. 2002. Law and social norms. *Pragmatics*, 21(4): 451–486.
- Puetz, M., and J. Neff van Aertselaer, eds. 2008. *Developing contrastive pragmatics: Interlanguage and cross-cultural perspectives*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Quirk, R. 1974. *The linguist and the English language*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik. 1985. *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. London: Longman.
- Raumolin-Brunberg, H. 1996. Forms of address in early English correspondence. In Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, eds., 167–182.
- Rayson, P., G. Leech, and M. Hodges. 1997. Social differentiation in the use of English vocabulary: Some analyses of the conversational component of the British National Corpus. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics* 2 (1): 133–152.
- Reinhardt, J. 2010. Directives in office hour consultations: A corpus-informed investigation of learner and expert usage. *English for Specific Purposes* 29 (2): 94–107.
- Reiter, R. 1980. A logic for default reasoning. *Artificial Intelligence* 13: 81–132.
- Rintell, E., and Mitchell, C. 1989. Studies of requests and apologies: An inquiry into method. In Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, eds., 248–272.
- Room, A. 1990. *Dictionary of dedications*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Rosch, E. 1978. Principles of categorization. In *Cognition and Categorization*, ed. E. Rosch and B. B. Lloyd, 27–48. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Rose, K. R. 2000. An exploratory cross-sectional study of interlanguage pragmatic development. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 22 (1): 27–67.
- Ruhi, Ş. 2006. Politeness in compliment responses: A perspective from naturally-occurring exchanges in Turkish. *Pragmatics* 16 (1): 43–101.
- Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff, and G. Jefferson. 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50 (4) Part 1: 696–735.
- Sadock, J. 1974. *Towards a linguistic theory of speech acts*. New York: Academic Press.
- Sasaki, M. 1998. Investigating EFL students' production of speech acts: A comparison of production questionnaires and role plays. *Journal of Pragmatics* 30 (4): 457–484.

- Scarcella, R. 1979. On speaking politely in a second language. In *On TESOL79: The learner in focus*, ed. C. A. Yorio, K. Peters, and J. Schachter, 275–287. Washington, DC: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
- Schank, R. C., and R. P. Abelson. 1977. *Scripts, goals, plans and understanding: An inquiry into human knowledge structures*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Schauer, G. 2009. *Interlanguage pragmatics development: The study abroad context*. London and New York: Continuum.
- Schmidt, R. W. 1980. Review of Esther Goody, ed. 1978. *Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction*. *RELC Journal*, Singapore. 11: 100–114.
- Scollon, R., and S. Scollon. 2001. *Intercultural communication: A discourse approach*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Searle, John R. 1969. *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 1975. Indirect speech acts. In Cole and Morgan, eds., 59–82.
- . 1976. A classification of illocutionary acts. *Language in Society* 5: 1–23.
- . 1979. *Expression and meaning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Selinker, L. 1972. Interlanguage. *International Review of Applied Linguistics* 10: 209–230.
- Sifianou, M. 1992. The use of diminutives in expressing politeness: Modern Greek versus English. *Journal of Pragmatics* 17 (2): 155–173.
- . 1999. *Politeness phenomena in England and Greece: A cross-cultural perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sodian, B., and S. Kristen. 2010. Theory of mind. In *Towards a theory of thinking: Building blocks for a conceptual framework*, ed. B. Glatzeder, V. Goel, and A. Müller, pp. 189–201. Berlin and Heidelberg: Springer.
- Sparks, J. 1982. *The discovery of animal behaviour*. London: Collins and BBC.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. 1993. Conceptions of social relations and pragmatics research. *Journal of Pragmatics* 20: 27–47.
- . 1996. Reconsidering power and distance. *Journal of Pragmatics* 26: 1–24.
- , ed. 2000a. *Culturally speaking: Managing rapport through talk across cultures*. London and New York: Continuum.
- . 2000b. Rapport management: A framework for analysis. In Spencer-Oatey 2000a, 11–46.
- . 2005. (Im)Politeness, face and perceptions of rapport: Unpackaging their bases and interrelationships. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1 (1): 95–119.
- . 2007. Theories of identity and the analysis of face. *Journal of Pragmatics* 39 (4): 639–656.
- , ed. 2008. *Culturally speaking: Culture, communication and politeness theory*. London and New York: Continuum. (Revised edition of Spencer-Oatey 2000a.)
- Spencer-Oatey, H., and W. Jiang. 2003. Explaining cross-cultural pragmatic findings: Moving from politeness maxims to sociopragmatic interaction principles (SIPs). *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35: 1633–1650.
- Spencer-Oatey, H., P. Ng, and D. Li. 2008. British and Chinese reactions to compliment responses. In Spencer-Oatey, ed., 95–117.
- Sperber, D., and D. Wilson. 1986/1995. *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2004. Relevance theory. In Horn and Ward, eds., 607–632.

- Suzuki, T. 2007. *A pragmatic approach to the generation and gender gap in Japanese politeness strategies*. Tokyo: Hituzi Syobo.
- Swales, J. M. 2004. *Research genres: Exploration and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taavitsainen, I., and Jucker, A. H. 2007. Speech act verbs and speech acts in the history of English. In *Methods in historical pragmatics*, ed. Susan Fitzmaurice and Irma Taavitsainen, 107–138. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Taguchi, N. 2008. Cognition, language contact, and the development of pragmatic comprehension in a study-abroad context. *Language Learning* 58 (1): 33–71.
- Takahashi, T., and L. M. Beebe. 1993. Cross-linguistic influence in the speech act of correction. In Kasper and Blum-Kulka, eds., 138–157.
- Tanaka, N. 1988. Politeness: Some problems for Japanese speakers of English. *JALT Journal* 9 (2): 81–102.
- . 1991. An investigation of apology: Japanese in comparison with Australian. *Meikai Journal* 4: 35–53.
- . 2000. Would you apologize when you are not responsible? Some current features in younger Japanese. *Meikai Journal* 12: 63–75.
- . 2001. *The Pragmatics of uncertainty: Its realisation and interpretation in English and Japanese*. Yokohama: Shumpūsha.
- Tanaka, N., H. Spencer-Oatey, and H. Cray. 2000. “It’s not my fault!” Japanese and English responses to unfounded accusations. In Spencer-Oatey, ed., 2000a, 75–97.
- Tanaka, S., and S. Kawade. 1982. Politeness strategies and second language acquisition. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 5 (1): 18–33.
- Tannen, D. 1993. Introduction. In *Framing in discourse*, ed. Deborah Tannen, 3–13. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Terkourafi, Marina. 1999. Frames for politeness: A case study. *Pragmatics* 9 (1): 97–117.
- . 2001. The distinction between generalised and particularised implicatures and linguistic politeness. In *Proceedings of the Fifth Workshop on the Formal Semantics and Pragmatics of Dialogue*, ed. Peter Kuhnlein, Rieser Hannes, and Henk Zeevat, 174–188. Bielefeld: ZiF.
- . 2002. Politeness and formulaicity: Evidence from Cypriot Greek. *Journal of Greek Linguistics* 3: 179–201.
- . 2005. An argument for a frame-based approach to politeness: Evidence from the use of the imperative in Cypriot Greek. In Lakoff and Ide, eds., 99–116.
- . 2008. Towards a unified theory of politeness, impoliteness, and rudeness. In *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice*, ed. Derek Bousfield and Miriam Locher, 45–74. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Thomas, J. 1983. Cross-cultural pragmatic failure. *Applied Linguistics*, 4(2): 91–112.
- . 1995. *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Tracy, K., R. T. Craig, M. Smith, and F. Spisak. 1984. The discourse of requests: Assessment of a compliance-gaining approach. *Human Communication Research* 10 (4): 513–538.
- Trosborg, A. 1987. Apology strategies in natives/non-natives. *Journal of Pragmatics* 11 (1): 147–167.

- . 1995. *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints and apologies*. Berlin and New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- , ed. 2010. *Pragmatics across languages and cultures*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. (Vol. 7 of *Handbooks of Pragmatics*, ed. Wolfram Bublitz, Andreas H. Jucker and Klaus P. Schneider.)
- Trudgill, P. 2003. *A glossary of sociolinguistics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Ungerer, F., and H.-J. Schmid. 1996/2006. *An introduction to cognitive linguistics*. Harlow, UK: Pearson/Longman.
- Upton, T. A., and U. Connor. 2001. Using computerized corpora analysis to investigate the textlinguistic discourse moves of a genre. *English for Specific Purposes* 20 (4): 313–329.
- Vandello, J. A., and D. Cohen. 2003. Male honor and female fidelity: Implicit cultural scripts that perpetuate domestic violence. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 84: 486–495.
- Verschueren, J. 1995a. Metapragmatics. In Verschueren, 1995b, 367–371.
- Verschueren, J. 1995b. *Handbook of pragmatics: Manual*, ed. Jef Verschueren. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Vuchinich, S. 1986. On attenuation in verbal family conflict. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 49(4): 281–293.
- Walters, J. 1979. Strategies for requesting in Spanish and English: Structural similarities and differences. *Language Learning* 29(2): 277–293.
- Watson, O. M. 1970. *Proxemic behavior: A cross-cultural study*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Watts, R. J. 1989. Relevance and relational work: Linguistic politeness as politic behavior. *Multilingua* 8 (2–3), 131–166.
- . 1992. Linguistic politeness and politic verbal behaviour: Reconsidering claims for universality. In Watts, Ide, and Ehlich, eds., 1992/2005, 43–69.
- . 2003. *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Watts, R., S. Ide, and K. Ehlich, ed. 1992/2005. *Politeness in Language: Studies in its history, theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Weizman E. 1989. Requestive hints. In Blum-Kulka, House, and Kasper, eds., 71–95.
- Weizman, E. 1993. Interlanguage requestive hints. In Kasper and Blum-Kulka, eds., 123–137.
- Werkhofer, K. T. 1992. Traditional and modern views: The social constitution and the power of politeness. In Watts, Ide, and Ehlich, eds., 155–199.
- Wharton, T. 2009. *Pragmatics and non-verbal communication*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Wichmann, A. 2004. The intonation of *please*-requests: A corpus-based study. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36 (9): 1521–1549.
- . 2005. *Please*—from courtesy to appeal: The role of intonation in the expression of attitudinal meaning. *English Language and Linguistics* 9: 229–253.
- Wierzbicka, A. 1991/2003. *Cross-cultural pragmatics: The semantics of human interaction*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter. (2nd ed. published, with a new introduction, 2003.)
- Wilson, D., and D. Sperber. 2002. Truthfulness and relevance. *Mind* 111: 583–632.
- . 2004. Relevance theory. In Horn and Ward, eds., 607–632.
- Wise Bauer, S. 2009. *The art of the public grovel: Sexual sin and public confession*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

- Wolfson, N. 1983. An empirically based analysis of complimenting in American English. In Wolfson and Judd, eds., 82–95.
- . 1988. The Bulge: A theory of speech behavior and social distance. In *Second language discourse: A textbook of current research*, ed. J. Fine, 21–38. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- . 1989. The social dynamics of native and nonnative variation in complimenting behaviour. In *The dynamic interlanguage: Empirical studies in second language variation*, ed. Miriam R. Eisenstein, 219–236. New York: Plenum Press.
- Wolfson, N., and E. Judd, eds. 1983. *Sociolinguistics and language acquisition*. Rowley: Newbury House.
- Wolfson, N., and J. Manes. 1980. The compliment as a social strategy. *Papers in Linguistics*, 13: 389–410.
- Wolfson, N., L. D'Amico-Reisner, and L. Huber. 1983. How to arrange for social commitments in American English: The invitation. In Wolfson and Judd, eds., 116–128.
- Woodfield, H. 2008. Interlanguage requests: A contrastive study. In Puetz and Neff van Aertselaer, eds., 231–264.
- Ye, L. 1995. Complimenting in Mandarin Chinese. In *Pragmatics of Chinese as native and target language*, ed. Gabriele Kasper, 207–295. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Yu, M.-C. 1999. Universalistic and culture-specific perspectives on variation in the acquisition of pragmatic competence in a second language. *Pragmatics* 9 (2): 281–312.
- . 2003. On the universality of face: Evidence from Chinese compliment response behaviour. *Journal of Pragmatics* 35: 1679–1710.
- Yuan, Y. 2001. An enquiry into empirical pragmatics data gathering methods: Written DCTs, oral DCTs, field notes, and natural conversations. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33 (2): 271–292.

INDEX

Note: A **bold face** number refers to the chief place where the topic in question is explained or discussed.

- abduction, abductive reasoning 74, 78, 318
- ability 13
- ability/possibility questions 154–155
- ability/possibility statements 149
- absolute politeness 15, 88
- accommodation 263
- accounts 31 – *see* grounders.
- activity types 5
- address terms – *see* vocatives.
- addressee – *see* hearer.
- addressee politeness 18–20
- adjacency pairs 31, 32, 130
- adjectives, commendatory 187
- advice, advising 102, 204–208
 - solicited vs. unsolicited 208
- affect 139
- agreement 201–202
- Agreement Maxim 35, 90, 91, **96–97**, **101**, 103, 189, 201–4, 274
 - violation of 221, 226
- Aijmer, K. 38–39, 45, 155, 199
- Albee, Edward 224
- alerter 122
- Alfred the Great 290
- all right, alright* 200
- altruism 21
 - communicative 3, 23
- American English and politeness culture 294, 298–299
- Americanization 297
- anger, paralinguistic signs of 231
- Anglo xiii, 129, 275–276, 298
- Anglo-Saxons 285–286
- animal metaphors 229, 230
- answers – *see* responses.
- antonyms, negated 193
- apologies 91, 92, 96, **115–133**, 137
- apologies, face attack 118
 - as external modifiers 171
 - formulaic 118
 - mutual 123
 - performative 127–128
 - political 131
 - pragmalinguistic facet of 124–128
 - public 131
 - sociopragmatic facet of 128–130
- apology territory 133
- appreciative opening 163–164
- Approbation Maxim 35, 90, 91, **93–94**, 103, 104, 210–211, 234, 289–291
 - violation of 221, 225–226
- appropriateness 268
- Arabic 269
- Armitage, S. 286–287
- Arndt, H. and Janney, R. 38, 44
- artificial intelligence 79
- assertive 63, 64, 309
- asymmetry, reciprocal 6, 7, 30, 100
- attitude clash 238
- Austen, Jane 293
- Austin, J. L. 77, 303, **307–308**
- Australian English and politeness culture 129, 299
- authentic vs. contrived data 249
- B&L – *see* Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C.
- balance of value 8
- Balance Principle 35
- bald on-record strategy 33, 137, 142
- banter 20, 100–101, 216, **238–243**
- Banter Principle 242–243
- battles of politeness 7
- Beowulf* 285–286, 301–302
- bivalent politeness 9–11, 108–109, 300
- Blum-Kulka, S. 37, 116–117
- BNCdemog 257, 259
- boasting 95
- Boswell, James 293–294
- Bourdieu, P. 26, 43
- Bousfield, D. 224, 241
- Boyer, A. 285
- British English and politeness culture 84, 106, 274, 298
- British National Corpus (BNC) x, 256–257, 259, 298
- Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C. (B&L) 24, **33–34**, 40, 43, 46, 58, 81–86, 89, 99, 129, 142, 281
- Brown, R. and Gilman, A. 291

- bulge theory 139
bye-bye, bye 200, 213
- camaraderie 43, 99, 109, 111, 173, 238–239, 295,
297–298, 299–300
- can* 151
Can I, Could I 140, 184
Can you 154, 315
Can't you 156
cancelability 71
Caxton, William 287
CCSARP – *see* Cross-cultural Speech Act
Realization Project.
- Chinese 84, 93–98, 100–101, 264, 269, 274
Chinese vs. British culture 106
Coke, Sir Edward 291
collaborative speech events 89–90
collectivist, collectivism 36
colloquialization 296
comity 24–27
commands 62, 135, 185
commiserations 210–212
commissives 68, 93, 309
communicative concord vs. discord 87, 89
competitive speech events 89, 135
compliments 92, 176, **186–191**, 209, 255
comprehension data 248
computer-mediated communication (CMC) 259
condolences 97, 210–212
confession, in apologies 116
conflictive speech events 89–90, 223
Congratulations! 209
congratulations 97, 208–210
constitutive – *see* regulative.
consumerism 301
context, knowledge of 304
context-free and context-sensitive politeness –
see pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic
politeness.
context-governed speech sampling 257
controlled vs. uncontrolled access to data 249
conventional indirect requests 142, 171
conventional indirect strategies 37
conversational analysis (CA) 256
conversational contract 37
convivial speech events 89
cooperation 21–22
Cooperative Principle (CP) 35, 55, 85–86, 241,
311–313, 320
corpora, electronic 256, 257
of spoken English 259
corpus analysis 255
linguistics 255
Corpus of Early English Correspondence
(CEEC) 284, 299, 300
Corpus of English Dialogues (CED) 284
- cost-benefit; cost-benefit scale 103, 107, **137**,
139–140, 185, 217, 281
could 151, 167
could have 195
Could you 154–155, 295–296
courtly love 286
criticisms, indirect or mitigated 191–196
cross-cultural pragmatics 275–280
Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project
(CCSARP) **37**, 115–117, 142–143, 175, 252,
264, 266–267, 273
Culpeper, J. 218, 220, 222, 224, 241, 275
- Danish 269
data collection, methods of 247–260
DCT – *see* discourse completion test.
Dear X (salutation) 297
declarations 309
declarative 63
default 65, 70, 78
reasoning 66–68, 73, 77
defeasibility 71, 73, 79
deference 43 – *see also* honorification.
defocalization 141, 142, 192, 195, 207
deliberative opening 162–163
democratization 278, 291, 296
demographic sampling 257
Deutschmann 38–39, 118, 129, 239–240
Diachronic Corpus of Present-day Spoken
English (DCPSE) 258
Dickens, Charles 293
diminutives 105, 277
direct requests 142
direct speech acts / strategies 37, 147–148
directives 68, 73, 92, 205, 276, 304–305, 309 –
see also requests.
disagreement 202–203
discernment 36, 84
discourse analysis 255, 256
discourse completion test (DCT) **37**, 248,
252–253, 264, 270
discourse management, impoliteness in 227–229
disgust, paralinguistic signs of 231
dispreferred option 96, 202 – *see also* preference
and dispreference.
distance (D) 11, 84, 99
horizontal and vertical 11, 103, 107, 217, 281
Dombey and Son 293
downgraders 105, 116 120, 272
downtoners 160–161, 165
Dunbar, R. 21, 22n
Dutch 269
- Early English Books Online 284
Early Modern English, politeness in 283,
Eelen, G. 32–33

- eighteenth century, politeness in 283
 elicited data 248
 elliptical expressions 30, 65
Emma 293
 empathy 27
 endearments 173, 290, 299
 English as a lingua franca (ELF) 261
 essential condition 69, 124, 308
 ethnographic methods 255
 evidence for politeness 53
 evolution 5, 21–22
 exaggeration 234
 exchange of value 8n
 exclamation 65, 189
excuse me 123, 126–127, 213
 explanation, in apologies 116
 explicit vs. implicit instruction in pragmatics 269
 exploiting a maxim 70
 expressing gratitude, appreciation 199
 expressives 92, 309
- face **24–27**, 33, 36, 41, 81, 84, 85, 109–111
 attack 218, 220
 loss of 236
 negative and positive 13, 24–25, 81
 face-enhancing act (FEA) 99, 110, 197
 face-threatening act (FTA) 25, 33, 81, 84, 85, 99
 familiarity 139
 farewells; leave-taking 212–213
 Feeling reticence Maxim 91
 violation of 221, 227
 felicity conditions 69, 71, 307
 field notes 255–256
 first-name address 294, 299
 first-order and second-order politeness 41, 47, 109
 first-person pronouns/reference 105
 Fitzmaurice, S. 284–285
 flaming 300
 flouting a maxim 70
 formulae 133
 frames, cognitive 38–39, 45, 76n
 Fraser, B. 37–38, 44
 French 291
 frequency 105
 FTA – *see* face-threatening act.
 Fukushima, S. 140
- games theory 21–22
 General Strategy of Politeness (GSP) 35, 45, 85, **90–98**, 111, 221, 273–274, 280
 “General Strategy of Impoliteness” 221
 Generosity Maxim 35, 44, 90, 91, **92–93**, 101, 104, 181–183, 204–205, 264, 276
 violation of 221, 225, 228
 German 269, 288, 291
- given name – *see* first-name address.
 goal-orientation; goal-oriented behaviour 35, **56–58**, 87, 320.
 goals 87
 Goffman, E. 24, 33, 40
 good wishes 97, 212–214
goodbye 213, 229
gotta 149
 gradations of politeness 30
 gradience 47
 greetings 213–214, 228
 Grice, H. P. 55, 87, 303, **310–313**, 316, 320
 Gricean maxims 85–87
 Gricean pragmatics 55–79, 81
 grounders 31, 37, **175**
 GSP – *see* General Strategy of Politeness
 Gu Yueguo **35–36**, 44
guys 174
- H* – *see* hearer
 habitus 26, 43
 happenstance indicators 167–168
have got to 149
have to 149
 head act 116–117, 131, 199
 hearer (*H*) 20, 50–51, 79
 hedges, hedging 32, 105, 120 – *see also* performatives, hedged.
Hello, Hullo 297
 Henry VIII 292–293
 hesitations 31
Hey 297
H-focused speech event 207
Hi 213, 297
 hints 142, 144, 158–159, 271
 hints, question 158–159
 hints, statement 158
 history of politeness in English 283–301
 Hofstede, G. and Hofstede, G. J. 275n, 295
 Holmes, J. 43, 128
 honorific vocatives 174, 293–294
 honorification, honorifics, honorific system 9, 36, 105, 108–109
 House, J. 37
How about 157
 Huang, Y. 85–86
 hyperbole 234
 hypothetical meaning 168–169, 177, 196
- I think, I don't think* 202, 207, 276
I would, I'd 207
 Ide, S. 36–37, 45
 identity 41
if I were you 207
if-clause 157, 163, 207
 IFID – *see* illocutionary force indicating device.

- illocution, illocutionary act 55–79, 309
- illocutionary force 68, 310
 - force indicating device (IFID) 37, 66, 75, 147, **310**
 - goals 78, 89, 320
 - territory 119
- imperative 68, 73, 137, 147, 184, 271
 - “democratic” 151
 - first-person 184
- implicature; implicated meaning 52, 58, 70, 77, 216, 319
 - conventional 70, 74–76, 223
 - conversational 70, 311
 - generalized conversational 72
- impoliteness 17, 42, 50, 99, 216, **219–231**
- (im)politeness – *see* politeness, impoliteness
 - in floor holding 227–228
 - in turn taking 227–228
- indeterminacy 47
- indirect directives 318 – *see also* indirect requests.
- indirect requests 144–145, 148–159, 179 – *see also* indirect speech act (ISA).
- indirect speech act (ISA), indirectness 30, **55–79**, 271, 304, **313–316**, 317–320
- individualist, individualism 36, 81, 296
- inference, 76, 148
- informalization 296, 300
- in-group and out-group 103, 106
- instructions 137
- intensification, emotive 211
- intensifiers 98, 105, 16, 193, 196–197, 199
- interference 263
- interjections 66, 199
- interlanguage pragmatics 37, 261–282
- International Corpus of English (ICE) 258
- International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) 271
- interrogative 63
- interviews 251
- intonation 231
- invitations, inviting 102, **180–181**, 184, 185
- Irony Principle, the 233, 241
- irony, conversational 16, 18, 100–101, 216, **232–238**
- ISA – *see* indirect speech act.
- isolates 66
- Italian 288, 291
- Japanese 9, 36, 84, 95, 104, 109, 129, 269, 274, 278–280
- Johnson, Samuel 289n, 293–294
- Jucker, A. 283
- Kasper, G. 37
- Kasper, G. and Dahl, M. 248, 250, 251
- King James Bible* 289
- Kohnen, T. 285, 295
- Korean 84, 104, 109, 278
- L2 learners 261
- Labov, W. 240
- Lakoff, R. T. 21, 33, 297, 300
- Larina, T. 277
- learner corpora 271
- Leech, G. 34–35, 80–87, 89, 319–320
- Levinson, S. C. 31–32, 72 – *see also* Brown, P. and Levinson, S. C.
- lian* 84
- limao* 84
- litotes 243
- locution 309
- London-Lund Corpus 155, 199
- Longman Corpus of Spoken American English (LCSAE) x, 257, 298
- ma'am* 11
- madam* 173, 219, 290, 293
- mand 59, 61–64, 68
- Manner Maxims 72, 234, **311–312**, 317, 319
- maxim 35, 85 – *see also* Agreement Maxim,
 - Approbation Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Manner Maxims, Modesty Maxim, Obligation Maxims, Quality Maxim, Quantity Maxim, Maxim of Relation, Sympathy Maxim, Tact Maxim, etc.
- Maxim of Relation 72–3, 78, 154, **311–312**, 317
- maxims of politeness 85, 90–98
- MC – *see* multiple choice
- meanings 90
- meiosis 234
- meme 26
- metapragmatic response 190
- metapragmatic terms 146, 185
- methodological continuum 248–249
- mianzi* 84
- Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) 259
- Middle English, politeness in 283, **286–289**, 302
- might have* 195, 196
- Mills, S. 240
- mind* (verb) 166–167, 169
- minimizers 200
- Miss* 293, 294, 297
- mitigation of FTAs or impoliteness 25, 32, 191–196, 196
- mock impoliteness 100, 238 – *see* banter.
- mock politeness 100, 233 – *see* irony,
 - conversational
- mock sarcasm 241

- modal adverbs 196
 auxiliaries 148–159
- Modesty Maxim 35, 90, **91**, **94–96**, 189, 274, 279–280, 287–288
- Modesty Maxim, violation of 221, 226
- modification; modifiers, external 116, 171–174, 199, 272
 internal 116, 133, 160–171, 272
 pragmatic 116, 133, 159–174 178
- Mr.* 293, 294, 297
- Mrs.* 293, 294, 297
- multimedia instruments 253
- multiple choice (MC) 248, 249, 250
- must* 149
- need to* 149
- negation combined with intensification 193, 196
- negative bias 166–167
 politeness 11, 14, **33–34**, 40, 89, 99, 142, 276, 299
 transfer 263
- neg-politeness **11–13**, 25, 52, 55–79, 89, 91–92, 99, 110, 120, 136, 183, 303
- Neo-Gricean pragmatics 64n, 73
- Netiquette 259n
- New Zealand 128
- niceness 299
- Nolan, W. 37–38, 44
- nonconventional indirect requests 142, 271
- nondiscreteness 146
- nonpoliteness 216–219
- nonsentential strategies 156–157
- norms; normativity 5, 44
- O* – *see* other, other person
- Obligation Maxims 91, 92, **96–97**, 197, 279
 violation of 221, 226
- obligation statement 148
- obscene expletives 229, 231
- observation (of politeness) 4
- observational methods 247–248
- offers 68, 102, 110, 138, **180–186**
 of repair, in apologies 117
- O*-focused requests 141
- O*-oriented – *see* *S*-oriented.
- OK, okay* 200
- Old Bailey Corpus 284
- Old English, politeness in 283, **285–286**, 301–302
- on-record vs. off-record strategies 33, 142, 145, 146
- Opinion-reticence Maxim 91, 97, 205, 276
 violation of 221, 226–227
- optionality 135, 185
- orders 135 – *see also* commands.
- Othello* 290
- other, other person (*O*) 20
- overpoliteness 218
- paralinguistic features 231
- pardon (me)* 126–127
- past tense – hypothetical 168–169, 183
- past tense – past time 169–170
- pauses 31
- performatives 127, 147–148, 205, 209, 276, 304, **309**
- performatives, hedged 165–166, 196, 205, 209
- perlocution 309
- phatic communion 203–204, 214
- Pinker, S. 27
- please* 14, 75, 161–162, 305
- Polish 276–277
- polite belief 100
- politeness **48–53**, 74, 79 *and passim* – *see also*
 bivalent politeness, trivalent politeness,
 negative politeness, neg-politeness, positive
 politeness, pos-politeness, pragmalinguistic
 politeness, sociopragmatic politeness.
 context-invariant 251
 model of 80–111
 violation of 221–222
- Politeness Principle (PP) 35, 77, 87, 98–99, 241, 319–320
- politeness₁ and politeness₂ 41, 47, 48
- politic behaviour 42, 217
- positive politeness 11, **33**, 40, 89, 99, 142, 299
- pos-politeness **11–13**, 25–26, 52, 89, 91–92, 99, 110, 120, 183, 277
- possibility 149, 151, 196
- postmodernism, postmodernist 43
- power (P) 11, 84 *see also* vertical distance
- power 23–24, 139
- power distance index 295
- power semantic 291
- PP – *see* Politeness Principle
- pragmalinguistic politeness **15–18**, 88, 105, 217
- pragmalinguistics 13–15, 105
 contrastive 14
- pragmatic competence 264
 failure 262
 level 63
 meaning representation 68
 principles, a hierarchy of 241–243
 transfer 263
- pragmaticalization 14, **74–76**, 78, 145, 163, 213, 235, 305, 306–307, 315
- pragmatics ix, 90, 303–320
 contrastive 275n
 empirical 247–260
 historical 283

- precision, investigative 249
- prediction statements 148
- preference and dispreference 30, 31–2
- preparators 175
- preparatory conditions/rules 69, 71, 123, 308
- presumptive meaning 72
- Principles of Pragmatics*, criticisms of 85–87
- probabilistic thinking 318
- problem-solving 52, 56–58
- production data 248
- progressive aspect 170
- promise 185
 - of forbearance, in apologies 116–117
- proposing 204 – *see also* advice, advising.
- proposition 59, 61, 63
- propositional 63
 - attitudes 69
 - content 310
 - content condition 69, 122, 309
 - function 59–60
- prosodic features 231
- prototypic; prototypical categories 116–119, 122–124
- psychological explanation of politeness 24–27
- qualitative differences of sociopragmatic
 - politeness 106–107
- qualitative vs. quantitative data analysis 251, 256
- quality face 145
- Quality Maxims 70, 71, 77, 103, 203, 234, 274, **311–312**, 317–318
- quantitative differences of sociopragmatic
 - politeness 106
- Quantity Maxims 67, 69, 71, 103, 193, **311–312**, 317, 319
- quasi-vocatives 230, 238
- questions 59, 61, 63, 73, 152–156, 304
 - about possibility 196
 - exclamatory 189
- rank of imposition (R) 11, 84 – *see also*
 - cost-benefit.
- ranking test 251
- rapport management 9, 36, **39–41**, 46, 87, 320
- rationality 57
- recommending 204 – *see also* advice, advising.
- refusals 176, 177
- regret* 126
- regulative vs. constitutive rules/principles 34, 34n, 56, 86
- relational work 9
- relative politeness 16
- relevance 72–73, 78 – *see also* Maxim of Relation.
- Relevance Theory 85, 319
- repetitive behaviour 7
- replies – *see* responses
- request for permission 140–141
 - territory 137–146
- requests 62, 110, **134–179**, 185, 271, 304
 - off-record indirect 158–159
 - on-record indirect strategies for 148–158
 - questions as 152–156
 - statements as 148–152, 304
- responses to apologies 131–132
 - to compliments 94–5, **189–191**, 274
 - to compliments, negative 189
 - to compliments, positive 189
 - to requests 176–178
 - to thanks 200–201
- rights and obligations 103, 106
- Robinson, A. 229, 234
- rogative 63, 65n
- role play, closed vs. open 253–254, 264
- rudeness 5, 6, 17, 223, **229–232**, 236, 300
- Russian 277
- S* – *see* speaker
- Sadock, J. M. 305
- salutation in letter writing 289–290
- sarcasm 16, 18, 73, 216, 233 – *see also* irony, conversational.
- scalar phenomena; scales of value 14, 137
- Schauer, G. 260, 267, 273
- Searle, J. R. 55, 68–71, 92, 134–135, 197, 303, **307–310**, **313–315**, 316, 320
- Searlo-Gricean pragmatics 55–79, 305, **316–320**
- second language acquisition (SLA) 262
- second-order politeness – *see* first-order politeness.
- principle 233
- second-person pronouns/reference 105, 239, 278
- See you*, *See you later*, etc. 213
- self-territory and other-territory 103–4
- semantic level 63
- semantic representation 61
- semi-formulae 143, 157
- sentence 305
 - simple 59
- S*-focused requests 140
 - speech event 207
- Shakespeare, William 213n, 290–292
- short-circuiting of inferential path 76, 315
- should* 148, 149
- should(n't) have* 195
- sincerity conditions/rules 69, 71, 122, 308
- sir* 10, 173, 219, 290, 293–294
- Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* 286–287, 302–303
- small talk – *see* phatic communion
- social explanation of politeness 21–24, 26, 27
- social goals 78, 89, 320
- sociopragmatic politeness 15–18, 44, 88, 105, 106, 217

- sociopragmatics 13–15
 contrastive 15 – *see also* cross-cultural pragmatics
 solidarity 239, 295
 semantic 291
 S-oriented vs. O-oriented maxims 92
 S-oriented vs. O-oriented speech events 120, 121, 136
sorry, (I'm) 119, 125–126
 Spanish 269
 Spanish 288, 291
 speaker (S) 20, 50–51, 79
 speech act, speech event 60–61, 77, **115–117**, 307
 – *see also* illocutionary acts, illocutions.
 speech act verbs 137
 speech event categorization 146
 Spencer-Oatey 39–41, 46, 84, 87
 strategies for directives 142–158
 strategies, illocutionary 34, 142
 study-abroad students 266
 subjunctive 61
 suggestions 137, 151, 157
 O-focused 204–208
sumimasen 279
 supporting move 117, 131, 174–176, 178, 199
 surname; family name – *see* title+surname address
 swear words 230–231, 239
 sweeteners 176
 Sympathy Maxim 31, 35, 90, **91**, **97–98**, 203, 210, 211, 213–214
 violation of 221, 227
 syntactic level 63
- T/V* choice of pronoun 278, 291–293
 taboo terms 229–231
 Tact Maxim 35, 90, **91**, **93**, 134, 182, 183, 275–276, 295, 319–320
 violation of 221, 225, 228
 tag question 64, 170–171
 tease 236
 Terkourafi, M. 38–39
 tests 264
thank you 14, 17, 198–199, 200
 thanking, thanks 8, 96, 172, **196–201**
 in response to a compliment 190
 pragmalinguistic strategies for 199
 premature 198, 298
thanks 201
 theory of mind 25n, 27
 third-person address 288–289
 politeness 18–20
 Thomas, J. 140, 263
thou 291–293
 threats 235–236
 title+surname address 173, 294
 transaction 107
 transactional politeness – *see* trivalent politeness
 trivalent politeness **9–11**, 107–109
 Trollope, Anthony 293
 Trosborg, A. 163, 267, 273
 Turkish 269
- UK 6, 204, 220, 301
 underpoliteness 218
 understatement 234, 237–238
 undertakings 180, 181, 184
 United States 104, 109, 273, 298, 301
 universals; universalism vs relativism 3, 81–83
 utterance 304 – *see* speech act, speech event
- vagueness 194, 195
 value 6, 47, 50
 high vs. low 92
 transactions 8, 108
 violations of maxims 221
 vocatives 172–174, 294–295
 volitional 36
 questions 153–154
 statements 149–150
- “waffle phenomenon” 272
wakimae 36, 84
want, I 150
 Watts, R. J. 21, 23, **41–43**, 47, 284–285
Weakest Link, The 220, 224, 229, 234
 weather, talk about 204
 weightiness of the transaction 11, 107 – *see also* cost-benefit.
Well as deliberation signal 177, 202
well done etc. 210
 Western vs. Eastern values 81, 84, 85 95
What about 157
Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf 224–229, 232
Why don't you 184, 194, 205206
Why not 206
Why-questions 194
 Wierzbicka, A. 82, 275–276
will 153
Will you 154
 willingness 13, 153
 Wolfson, N. 139
 and Manes, J. 187, 188, 255
Won't you 182
wonder(ed) 207
would ... like... 136, 150, 154, 182
would ... mind 166
would 151, 153–154, 169, 196
Would you 154, 182, 295
 written texts 259
- ye, you* 278, 291
you('d) better 205

