

Situating Politeness

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1. Introduction

As a pragmatic and sociolinguistic concept im/politeness has always been seen as dependent on context. This situatedness comes in many forms. It can involve considering contrasts (across cultural groups, languages, dialects or genres), but this is not essential. The in-depth study of politeness phenomena within a particular setting – such as educational, medical or legal settings – can also deepen our knowledge of how im/politeness functions, and contribute to the theorizing of the discipline. The text type within which the communication is situated (e.g. computer-mediated discourse, media discourse, advertising texts) also affects (and thus tells us more about) the functions of im/politeness. In addition, situatedness invites a consideration of im/politeness as an ongoing process, which contributes to the discursive construction and maintenance of (potentially multiple) identities within a context.

However, the “obviousness” of this link has sometimes meant that many different aspects of the contextual setting have been categorised together, rather than considering their heterogeneity. *Situated Politeness* is thus concerned with disentangling the factors both embodied in and affecting our behaviour and evaluations in a given social context; it is about a fine-grained analysis of im/politeness in different texts and settings, building on both long-standing traditions in pragmatics and sociolinguistics, as well as newly emerging approaches to im/politeness, such as corpus linguistics, critical discourse analysis, and conversation analysis. While politeness is traditionally studied from a (cross-)cultural perspective, this volume offers an alternative in grounding the study of im/politeness as being situated in more than just cultures.¹

In this chapter, we first briefly describe how context has traditionally been approached in the theorising of politeness, before outlining the post-structuralist critique of these structuralist or Parsonian notions of context. This leads into an overview of how “situatedness” in various guises has been increasingly drawn upon in the approaches to politeness and impoliteness that have emerged over the past decade. While these different approaches vary in their degree of commitment to a post-structuralist conceptualisation of context, they are all united in treating im/politeness as a fundamentally situated phenomenon. In this sense, then, we are attempting to make explicit what has been a largely tacit assumption amongst im/politeness researchers to date. However, in drawing together these different approaches to situatedness it also becomes clear that it constitutes a complex, multi-faceted notion. The contributions in this volume offer a wide range of options, we believe, and thus can seed the long-overdue move to better integrating current theorisations of situatedness in politeness.

2. Structuralist approaches to context in politeness research

Context has traditionally been invoked in theories of politeness in two distinct ways. The first draws from folk understandings of different types of discourse or activity types. These are often given commonsense or vernacular labels, such as ordinary conversation, workplace meetings and interactions, classroom talk, broadcast/survey/employment interviews, debates, medical consultations and so on, or more specific labels, such as intimate talk, family dinner-table conversation, troubles telling (or troubles talk), small talk, negotiation talk, consultation, advice giving and the like. The received view is that these different discourse and activity types have an influence on the way im/politeness arises. Or at least such a view is presupposed through the way we, as researchers, frame our analyses as being restricted to a particular type of discourse or activity type. However, while such discourse and activity types are clearly an important dimension of analysis, there is no principled way of classifying contexts in this way. This has prompted a move to focusing on *how* such discourse and activity types are accomplished, rather than attempting to enumerate them as such (Auer, 2009: 95), as we will discuss in more detail in the following section.

The second, and perhaps more theoretically motivated approach to context in politeness research, has involved reducing contexts to sociolinguistic variables. This view of context is advanced in Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) highly influential face-saving approach to politeness, and in Leech's (1983, 2007) maxims approach. According to Brown and Levinson, the degree to which a particular speech act is face-threatening depends on a calculation of three variables: relative power (P), social distance (D), and the absolute ranking of impositions in a particular culture (R). Leech (1983), on the other hand, identifies social distance, authority and cost-benefit as the key variables, although he does not clarify how these are to be calculated.

Both approaches have been criticised, however, as promoting an overly reductive view of context. Other variables have been added by researchers, including affect (Brown and Gilman, 1989), age (Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson, 1985), and gender (Brouwer, 1982; Holmes, 1986, 1988, 1989; Zimin, 1981), for instance. Yet as these sociolinguistic variables have proliferated it has become increasingly difficult for researchers to establish to degree to which each of these variables is actually affecting politeness in a given interaction (Geyer, 2008: 29).

It has been argued that other more situated facets of context should also be included in analyses of politeness, including the topic or goal of the interaction (Blum-Kulka, Danet and Gerson, 1985), and the type of speech event (Blum-Kulka, 1990). The omission of the variable of setting has inadvertently led, according to Pan (2000: 14) to over-generalisations about cultural groups by researchers employing Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) model. A situation-based approach to politeness, drawing from frameworks of context developed in ethnography of speaking (Hymes, 1962, 1972, 1974; Saville-Troike, 1989) has thus been proposed by Pan (2000) as a means of accounting for the inevitable variability in politeness behaviour that we can observe within cultural groups.

[T]he situation-based approach, then, allows internal diversity within a culture, treating culture as being distributive rather than being uniform and stable [...] People take up different social roles and appropriate cultural tools from different sources to act according to the situation [...] it is [thus] inadequate to describe the behaviour pattern of a culture group without looking into variation across settings. (Pan, 2000: 16–17).

Settings identified by Pan (2000) which systematically varied in their constraints on politeness behaviour included official settings, service encounter settings, and family settings (p.17). These settings, together with social distance, power relations and source of power (e.g. age, gender, rank, social class) are claimed, by Pan, to govern choices of linguistic politeness (p.148).

Another serious problem is the charge that such approaches to context have assumed a “unidirectional effect of social factors on politeness styles, thereby failing to reconstruct the dialectic relationship between communicative activity and social relationships” (Kasper, 1990: 204). Brown and Levinson (1987) themselves in fact advocated seeing participant relationships as “situationally constructed”, and thus dependent on the participants’ assumptions about the variables (pp.74–76), rather than being “firmly tied to situation-external social categories” (p.302). However, in practice these variables have often been treated by researchers as fixed, or at least have been calculated by analysts (often intuitively), rather than by the participants themselves.² Such a practice accords with a structuralist view of context as constituting both an objective social structure (Kasper, 2006), and an external force driving people to act in certain ways (Eelen, 2001). As we will discuss in the following section in more detail, however, context has increasingly been conceptualised as something that not only influences discourse, but is itself created through discourse and interaction. To view power or social distance as external factors that determine the level of politeness (or face threat) of an utterance, then, over-rates their level of influence and also under-specifies the influence of other situated variables (Kasper, 2006: 308).

Spencer-Oatey’s (2008, 2002, 2005) Rapport Management Theory represents an important move to correct for the overly reductive and static – albeit in perhaps more in practice rather than in intent – treatment of context in Brown and Levinson’s and Leech’s theories of politeness. While not exclusively focused on im/politeness, the notion of rapport management clearly encompasses politeness and impoliteness in that it involves the management of social relations through language (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 12). Alongside the rapport orientation of participants,³ and particular sociopragmatic principles and pragmalinguistic conventions,⁴ Spencer-Oatey (2008: 34) identifies four key contextual variables that influence the use of rapport management strategies: (1) participant relations, (2) message content, (3) social/interactional roles, and (4) activity type.

Participant relations, similar to Brown and Levinson (1987), are conceptualised in terms of power and distance. Both these variables are defined in more detail in Rapport Management Theory, however, with different sources of power being considered, for example, reward, coercive, expert, legitimate and referent power (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 34–35), as well as different components of distance, including social similarity/difference, frequency of contact, length of acquaintance, familiarity, like-mindedness, and affect (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 36; see also Spencer-Oatey 1996). The number of participants is also considered important, particularly in regards to the potential for face threats to be exacerbated by the presence of a larger number of addressees or overhearers (Spencer-Oatey, 2008: 36).

The second and third contextual variables postulated by Spencer-Oatey (2008: 37) are the (perceived) costs or benefits associated with particular message content, and the social and interactional roles of participants, the latter encompassing perceived rights and obligations. These cost–benefit considerations and rights and obligations are also represented in her key sociopragmatic interactional principles, with these principles presumably forming a part of the participants’ common ground. Consistent

with other rationalist theories in pragmatics (Kopytko, 1995), then, these “context factors are treated as *subjective* actors’ knowledge” (Kasper, 2006: 301, original emphasis). And while Spencer-Oatey (2002) does provide some empirical evidence for their formulation, the mechanisms by which they are established and maintained are not considered in any detail, with this being left largely to reason-based assumptions.

The final dimension of context included in Rapport Management Theory is activity types, which are broadly defined as “goal-defined, socially constituted, bounded events with *constraints* on participants, setting, and so on” (Levinson, 1979: 368, emphasis added). This intersects with the vernacular understanding of communication as something that occurs in particular settings, as previously discussed, but Spencer-Oatey (2008: 38) extends it to include the more technical notion of communicative genre, which encompasses “historically and culturally specific conventions and ideals according to which speakers compose talk or text and recipients interpret it” (Günthner, 2007: 129).

It is argued by Spencer-Oatey (2008) that these contextual variables may be treated as both pre-existing and dynamic, suggesting that “in the course of an interaction people’s initial conceptions interact with the dynamics of the interchange, both influencing and being influenced by the emerging discourse” (pp. 39–40). In this sense, Rapport Management Theory lies at the cusp of constituting a post-structuralist approach to context. However, there is no discussion of the mechanisms underlying such processes, in spite of the considerable work on this topic in fields outwith mainstream pragmatics, as we will see in the following section. Moreover, in suggesting that the interaction between contextual variables could be formalised through either an additive model (Brown and Levinson, 1987) or a threshold model (Holtgraves and Yang, 1992: 252), her approach, albeit acknowledging the dynamic nature of context, does not appear to be able to account for the inherently non-summative nature of (evaluations of) politeness in interaction (Arundale, 1999, 2006, 2010; Haugh, 2007).⁵

Rapport Management Theory includes one of the most comprehensive frameworks of context for politeness researchers developed to date, and indeed in its breadth anticipates much of the current discussion of politeness as situated. However, in being firmly committed to a broadly sociopragmatic approach to context, it remains essentially structuralist in its orientation. In the following section, we discuss some of the key challenges to this kind of structuralist approach to context.

3. The post-structuralist turn in approaches to context

The call for re-thinking context originated not in pragmatics or sociolinguistics, where it has assumed such a dominant role, but rather in ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology (Auer, 2009: 95). The post-structuralist turn in conceptualising context builds on the understanding that the figure-ground (or text-context) relationship is fundamentally perceptual and interpretive (Goodwin and Duranti, 1992: 10). Focal events according to a post-structuralist view are “well outlined, sharply defined, and well articulated”, while the context or ground is “far more amorphous, problematic and less stable” (Auer, 2009: 86). Analogous views of the interpretive nature of the text-context link are also emphasised in Husserl’s notion of “horizon” (*Sinnhorizont*), which was further developed in Gadamer’s (1976) hermeneutic approach to understanding:

while the meaning of any event or thing cannot be understood by someone who does not take into account its horizon properly, the horizon itself dissolves as soon as we attempt to describe or analyse it; for whoever tries to reach the horizon will only find himself in another situation which opens up yet another horizon as far out of reach as the original one. (Auer, 2009: 86)

Such perspectives reject the assumption that the focal event (e.g. an utterance) can be treated as distinct and autonomous from the ground or context. Instead, it is argued that focal events are “doubly contextual” in being “both context-shaped and context-creating” (Kasper, 2006: 303). According to Auer (2009), this reflexive and dialectical relationship between the focal event and context arises because “every focal event conveys presuppositions about its context and thus ‘contextualises’ its locus of occurrence” (p.95). There has thus been a shift in focus from attempting to enumerate different types of contexts to understanding the processes of contextualisation, by which participants establish and maintain shared contextual frames for interpretive work (Auer and di Luzio, 1992), or alternatively, interactionally achieve both contextualised participant understandings and understandings of the context itself (Duranti and Goodwin, 1992). For instance, the post-structuralist turn underpins the move away from the assumption that the physical context is simply something ‘out there’ in the world, to the view that it can be embodied in human action (Goodwin, 2000).

One of the key characteristics of contextualisation is that it is negotiable, as more than one context may be ‘in play’ at any given time in an interaction (Auer, 2009). The process is thus open to discursive dispute. The interpretation of a tease as being embedded in a serious or non-serious frame, for instance, can prove critical to the evaluation of it as face-threatening and/or face-supportive, with the line sometimes being inadvertently crossed even amongst friends (Haugh, 2010b; cf. Bousfield, 2008: 136–137).

Contextualisation is, moreover, a process grounded in both interaction and culturality (Auer, 2009: 97-98). The grounding of context in interaction, where “co-participants in an interaction are constantly engaged in making sure that they orient to the same (yet changing) context(s), in which their acting will become meaningful” (Auer, 2009: 97), has found general acceptance across post-structuralists. However, claims about the culturality of contextualisation, that is, “the retrieval of frame-like knowledge [...] based on shared practices within a relevant social group” (*ibid*: 98) remain somewhat more controversial.

On the one hand, conversation analysts argue that the latter “distal” (or “macro”) context can only influence interaction to the extent that it is “demonstrably relevant to the participants, and at that moment – at the moment that whatever we are trying to provide an account of occurs” (Schegloff, 1991: 50; see also Antaki, 1998; Potter, 1998; Schegloff, 1987, 1992). However, a particular consequence follows from restricting the analyst to contexts that are made relevant in the discourse or interaction. Effectively, it amounts to the claim that “there’s no such thing as a distal context: if macro contexts aren’t relevant, we can discount them; and if they are relevant, they’ll appear as micro contexts oriented to in the talk itself” (Grundy, 2008: 222).

Ethnomethodologists, on the other hand, take a more pragmatic approach in suggesting that “there is no point in relying on a purely sequential analysis if the details of the context happen to be independently available in some obviously, i.e., empirically, ascertainable manner” (McHoul, Rapley and Antaki, 1998: 46; see also Day 2008; de Kok, 2008).⁶ The latter view is consistent with that practised by discursive and interactional politeness theorists alike, who advocate drawing from

both the sequential context and ethnographic information in their analyses (Mills, 2003: 49; Locher and Watts 2005; Haugh, 2007; Arundale 2010a, 2010b).

One problem for any approach that attempts to enumerate different types of context, then, is that such an approach is ultimately, from a post-structuralist viewpoint, “more of an illustrative or heuristic endeavour than a theoretically rewarding or satisfying one [...] because there is some justification in the claim that basically everything can become a ‘context’ for a linguistic ‘focal event’” (Auer, 2009: 95). The early, structural approaches to context in politeness research discussed in the previous section arguably suffer from this weakness. Yet, as we are committed to the view that politeness is fundamentally situated, it appears the post-structuralist turn leaves analysts in the unenviable position of making appeal to something that appears to defy definition. It is to this issue that we now turn.

4. Situated im/politeness

It has long been considered axiomatic that politeness is fundamentally situated. An emphasis on context is a theme thus runs through virtually all theories of politeness (and now impoliteness). The difference, as we have seen, lies in how context is conceptualised across these various approaches. Early work on the contextualised nature of language use characterised this relationship as one of dependence, that is, whether an utterance can be considered polite or not depends on the context. However, this structuralist view of context has since been challenged in light of overwhelming evidence that language use is doubly contextual: it not only depends on the context, but is itself also context creating. While the notion of context has always been, and continues to be, invoked in definitions of politeness in various guises, then, it appears that context is actually much more complex and interpretive in nature than is often acknowledged in practice by politeness researchers. In this section, we thus argue that a more careful examination of how the situated nature of politeness is currently theorised is in order. We suggest that im/politeness needs to be situated in three main ways: (1) within discourse, (2) relative to groups and participation frameworks, and (3) in common or background knowledge.

A key assumption that has become increasingly common amongst politeness researchers since Eelen’s (2001) seminal critique of structuralist theories of politeness is that politeness and impoliteness themselves are situated evaluations arising in and through interaction or extended pieces of discourse. The discursive/postmodern approach (Eelen 2001; Mills 2003, 2011; Watts 2003, 2005; Locher 2004, 2006b; Locher and Watts 2005, 2008; LPRG, 2011; Kádár and Mills in press), the interactional approach (Arundale 1999, 2006, 2010a, 2010b; Haugh, 2007, this vol.; Merrison, 2011), the social psychological approach (Spencer-Oatey, 2005, 2007, 2008), the situated-based approach (Pan, 2000), the frame-based approach (Terkourafi, 2005a, 2005b), and the genre-based approach (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010), are united in their commitment to this assumption. Different theoretical stances, however, are employed in analysing these evaluations. It is our contention that these differences largely stem from how situatedness has been conceptualised in these theories.

One key similarity amongst most theorists who situate politeness in interaction, and to a lesser extent discourse, is their (over-)reliance on folk categorisations of interaction or discourse types, with the exception of the genre-based approach (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010), and the situated-based approach (Pan, 2000). The problem with folk categorisations of interaction/discourse types is that we, as analysts,

are not systematically approaching the wide range of discourse types in which im/politeness may arise. Instead, there has been an overwhelming focus on workplace and interpersonal face-to-face interaction in studies of politeness. Recent work on im/politeness in different forms of computer-mediated communication (Harrison, 2000; Locher, 2006a; Davies, Merrison and Goddard, 2007; Graham, 2007, 2008; Haugh, 2010a), and in the media (Harris, 2001; Haugh, 2008; Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2009) has expanded the range of discourse types addressed, but there remains further work to be done in investigating im/politeness in a broader range of interaction and discourse types. This is not to under-estimate the importance of the traditional distinction between institutional and non-institutional forms of talk (Heritage, 2005), but rather to suggest that situating im/politeness in discourse must go beyond this dichotomy. The three-way contrast between institutional, interpersonal and public settings proposed in this volume is a starting point, but this distinction needs to be filled out with the different types of genres and channels of communication found within those settings.

The second way in which politeness can be situated is relative to particular groups and participation frameworks. At the broadest level, im/politeness is regarded as culturally situated (Bargiela-Chiappini and Kádár, 2010; Kádár and Mills, in press), or alternatively, situated at the societal level (Mills, 2009). Early work on politeness at the cultural level has been criticised for treating culture as a normative concept (Eelen, 2001: 173), which unwittingly treats participants as “cultural dopes” (Garfinkel, 1967). More recent work, however, has taken a more discursive perspective in arguing that “culture is a dynamic and complex set of values which become visible in interaction as they influence the interactants’ behaviour” (Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini, 2010: 5).

Mills and Kádár (in press), for instance, argue that we need to talk about tendencies or “dominant politeness norms” rather than “absolute norms”, and that the import of these norms of appropriateness or politeness norms differs at the “individual” and “social” levels. At the individual level, norms of politeness vary within societies or cultures, across different communities of practice, social classes, regions, gender and age among other things. The role of the politeness researcher is to examine these situated variations in politeness norms. At the social level, norms of politeness are statements by those who are perceived to be economically or culturally powerful in that society or culture, which are generally conservative, ideological, and based on stereotypes (Mills, 2009). The role of the analyst in examining politeness at the social level, therefore, is to examine the discursive means by which these supposed norms are maintained, or asserted as norms in the first place.

Haugh (in press a) suggests, however, that in exploring the culturally-situated nature of im/politeness, we need to bear in mind an important distinction between two types of first-order perspectives on politeness, namely, emic understandings versus participant understandings. An emic perspective involves “understand[ing] speech practices which make sense to the people concerned, i.e., in terms of indigenous values, beliefs and attitudes, social categories, emotions, and so on” (Goddard, 2006: 2), while a participant perspective involves understanding “the participants’ orientations to meanings, interpretations and evaluation of utterances” (Piirainen-Marsh, 2005: 214). Invoking the emic notion of *wakimae* (‘[social] appropriateness’ or ‘discernment’) in analyses of politeness in Japanese is a case in point. While Ide (1989) makes reference to this notion in explicating politeness practices in Japanese, she does not demonstrate through her analysis, according to Cook (2006), that the participants themselves are orienting to *wakimae*. No matter the outcome of this

particular debate, the general point stands that we can easily fall into the epistemological trap of reifying such first-order notions if we make recourse to folk or emic notions without proper consideration of their grounding in interaction (Haugh, in press a). Chang and Haugh (in press) also point out a further danger in relying too heavily on emic perspectives or concepts in analysing politeness, namely, that we as analysts may unwittingly neglect important politeness practices that are oriented to by participants, simply because they are not explicated within the context of emic ideologies of politeness.

Situating politeness relative to less broad groupings has also been advocated in much of the recent work on im/politeness. Two quite different approaches to theorising politeness at the group level have been proposed: the communities of practice framework and latent/emergent network theory. The notion of community of practice (CofP) has gained increasing currency in politeness research (Mills, 2003; Ostermann, 2003; Graham, 2007), largely through its popularisation in language and gender studies (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Holmes and Meyerhoff, 1999). Following Wenger (1998) and Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) a community of practice refers to a group of people who are engaged in a common task, and in the process of interacting to accomplish this task, “ways of doing, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge” (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 464). Mills (2003, 2011) argues that analysts need to focus on how different communities of practice construct norms of im/politeness, alongside wider hypothesised or actual societal norms (Mills, 2009), in order to adequately describe and theorise politeness.

An alternative approach to theorising politeness relative to groups, which is not bound by a commitment to joint or common tasks, builds on the notions of emergent and latent networks (Watts, 1991, 2003). An emergent network refers to “networks of social links set up during interaction” (Watts, 2003: 154), with these links being maintained, reactivated, or changed during interactions (Locher, 2004: 49). An emergent network can thus only develop through an ongoing social interaction. Each new emergent network is a place where “interactants can contest and negotiate their relative positions” (Locher, 2004: 28), although this change is for the most part small relative to all the previous encounters that constitute the history of the participants’ relationship. A latent network, on the other hand, refers to a social network that has is treated as an objectified structure and mode of behaviour, but is not a ‘real’ but rather an ‘imagined’ network. It may nevertheless “influence the construction of emergent networks” (Watts, 2003: 154). Watts (1991) argues that these emergent and latent networks operate within fields:

the field in a social network is created metaphorically drawing lines from one member of the community to the other. These lines represent the connections individuals share with each other. Social networks can be close-knit or loose-knit; they can be ego-centred (hence anchored on one specific individual) or multiplex. (Locher, 2004: 27–28, citing Watts, 1991: 146–149)

Unlike the community of practice model, then, the notions of emergent/latent networks are also able to accommodate interactions and discourse where there is no apparent common task or endeavour involved. It can also be more easily applied to instances where participants are getting acquainted, or even public interactions where participants may have no intention of developing more than a passing acquaintance. In such cases, interactants cannot refer back to any particular latent network between them. Instead, their first encounter constitutes both “a latent network for future encounters” and “an emergent network [...] where the actual interaction takes place”

(Locher, 2004: 29). People do, of course, have expectations about other interactants, based on both the current context in which they are interacting, and their presumed shared world knowledge (*ibid*: 29). These expectations constitute a rich vein for politeness researchers to examine, since they arguably embody ‘norms’ distributed across broader social networks (Haugh, 2010a, this vol.).

While both communities of practice and latent/emergent networks also encompass certain participation frameworks for their members, the notion of footing (Goffman, 1979, 1981) is also highly salient for our understanding of the situatedness of politeness. Footing refers to “the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance” (Goffman, 1981: 128). These alignments are described in terms of who delivers the utterance (the animator), and who is responsible for its wording (the author), the party to whose position the words attest (the principal), and the person who the utterance is about (the figure) (Auer, 2009: 93). There are also various discourse roles in the participation framework, ranging from straightforward speakers/writers and addressees through to virtual speakers/writers (who invoke what could have been said by someone at some point) and non-addressed participants, who include side-participants, bystanders, and overhearers (Levinson, 1988; Verschueren, 1999). Evaluations of im/politeness are always made relative to the footing and discourse roles of participants in interaction and discourse.

The third way in which politeness can be situated is in common or background knowledge which goes beyond the here-and-now. This background knowledge, which encompasses situation-specific expectations about both what is likely to happen and what should happen (Haugh, 2003: 399–400; Culpeper, 2008: 29; cf. Eelen, 2001: 127–158), is often formalised through different knowledge schemata, including frames and scripts. Frames are defined as structures of co-occurring components (Minsky, 1975).⁷ Scripts, on the other hand, are defined as a certain sequence of expected actions in a given situation (Schank and Abelson, 1977). In both cases, the expectations involved can be invoked by participants through their evaluations of im/politeness.

Terkourafi (2005a) proposes that politeness can be analysed relative to frames, namely, “regularities of co-occurrence between linguistic expressions and their extra-linguistic contexts of use” (p.247). It is these regularities, not the linguistic expressions themselves, which gives rise to perceptions of politeness in her frame-based approach (see also Culpeper, 2010). The distinction between anticipated and inferred politeness (Haugh, 2003; Terkourafi, 2003), for instance, can be explicated relative to these frames. Politeness is anticipated in cases where a minimal context, consisting of “a small number of perceptually fixed contextual cues, which have been abstracted from previous experience and act as guides to the most likely interpretation” (Terkourafi, 2005b), underlies the recipient’s evaluation of the speaker as im/polite. Politeness is inferred, in contrast, when a nonce context is required for interpretation and evaluation of the speaker and/or his utterance (cf. Christie, 2007).

Modelling the expectations that underpin im/politeness evaluations in this way, however, does not provide an account of the reach or domain of such expectations, nor does it explain how these expectations come to be shared across social networks in the first place. Auer (2009) suggests that knowledge (in the form of frames, scripts and the like) may be accumulated between participants in a specific interaction, which may then be transferred into a “history of interaction” between those participants, mirroring Watts’ (1991) claims about emergent and latent networks. However, social expectations may reach across a larger domain (*Gültigkeitsbereich*), ranging from a

certain profession (cf. communities of practice) through to “a given (ideal) community” or “common culture” (p.94).

Blommaert (2005), on the other hand, theorises this knowledge in terms of layered simultaneity and orders of indexicality that are both vertically and horizontally distributed. According to this approach, social expectations are “attached to a multitude of centres of authority, local as well as translocal, momentary as well as lasting” (Blommaert, 2007: 2), and thus situated evaluations of im/politeness occur in interactions, which should not only be treated as real-time, synchronic events, but are also “simultaneously encapsulated in several layers of historicity” (Blommaert, 2005: 130). The latter point tends to be included in analyses of im/politeness in textual discourse, but has often been neglected in analyses of im/politeness in synchronic spoken interactions.

These orders of indexicality, or social expectations, are argued by Haugh (in press b) to be more productively understood as distributed and emergent properties enabled across social networks. In other words, they arise as “inter-action [and discourse] within a network across time and space creates a structural form of social memory, independent of the memories of individuals” (Arundale 1999: 141). This continual co-maintaining of particular patterns forms a kind of “shared memory” across a particular social network, which cannot be reduced, at least not without remainder, to the psychological processes of individuals (Krippendorff, 2009). Thus it must be modelled as a system in its own right distributed across social networks. Focusing on the sociocognitive roots of evaluations of im/politeness in this way arguably enables politeness researchers to situate politeness beyond local, situated contexts. In doing so, one of the key limitations of the discursive approach, namely, its lack of generalizability beyond analyses of local, situated evaluations (Terkourafi, 2005a: 241), can be ameliorated.

Situated politeness in our view, then, involves first situating evaluations of im/politeness in interaction and discourse, with careful attention being paid to the affordances and constraints of that particular discourse and activity type. Those affordances and constraints are often a function of the particular channel(s) (auditory, audiovisual, and/or textual), medium (face-to-face, telephone, various forms of computer-mediated communication, media discourse and so on), and broad settings (institutional, interpersonal, and public) involved. Im/politeness can also be situated relative to particular groups and participation frameworks, with communities of practice and emergent/latent networks providing alternative models, although the latter has the advantage of being more easily generalizable across interaction and discourse types. Situating im/politeness in these two ways also requires consideration of the sociocognitive world of participants. We have suggested that investigating situation-specific expectations relevant to evaluations of im/politeness in the form of frames and scripts distributed in emergent ways across various social networks is a productive way forward in approaching this task.

In the final section, we outline how the notion of situated politeness has been operationalised by the contributors to this volume. While all situate evaluations of im/politeness in interaction and discourse, they vary in their approaches to situating im/politeness relative to groups and participation frameworks, and in situating im/politeness in the sociocognitive worlds of participants. We suggest that examining diverse range of approaches is a productive way forward in better theorising situated im/politeness.

5. Overview of the volume

In light of the preceding discussion of the complex ways in which politeness may be situated, drawing from theorisation at the level of interaction/discourse, sociocultural groupings, and the sociocognitive worlds of individuals connected through larger social networks (cf. Levinson, 2005), we have opted for a pragmatic approach to structuring this volume, building on the folk approach to situating im/politeness that is widely employed by politeness researchers. However, we move beyond the traditional institutional/non-institutional distinction in suggesting that situated politeness can be broadly approached, in the first instance at least, as residing in institutional, interpersonal, and public settings. We are not proposing that these categories are mutually exclusive, and indeed they arguably constitute three continuums (institutional–non-institutional, interpersonal–transactional, public–private), which in some cases can offer complementary perspectives in situating politeness. These three categories are nevertheless employed in structuring this volume into its three sections, in part to make relevant chapters more accessible to researchers who employ the folk approach to situated politeness. An integration of the various themes that run through these chapters, however, is offered in the epilogue that follows in order to emphasise once again that situating politeness goes beyond such folk taxonomies.

The chapters in Part I focus on im/politeness in what are traditionally considered institutional settings, two Māori workplaces in New Zealand (Holmes and Marra), second language classrooms in Mexico (Mugford), interactions between staff in a language school in Britain (Mills), and interactions between members of a university hockey team in Britain (Clark). The latter is an interesting example of an interpersonal setting which is embedded in an institutionalised context – hence its appearance in this section; its obvious affinity to the following section on interpersonal interaction is signalled by its placement, immediately preceding that section.

The lead chapter in Part I, Relativity rules: politic talk in ethnicized workplaces by Janet Holmes and Meredith Marra, begins with a considered discussion of what situated politeness means to them, before going on to show how norms relating to degrees of in/directness, relative orientation to self/other, relative orientation to addressee/content, degrees of implicit/explicitness, and use of verbal routines versus ad hoc formulations are situationally realised in the workplace interactions they examine. They also call upon the notion of community of practice in explicating how transactional and relational aspects of workplace interactions intersect with broader ethnic norms of im/politeness in New Zealand workplaces where Māori norms and practices predominate.

The second chapter by Gerrard Mugford, Discursive struggle and situated politeness in the Mexican English-language classroom, reiterates the theme of broader cultural influences on interactional practices in a particular community of practice, here ESL classrooms in Mexico. After outlining hypothesised norms of politeness at the societal level in Mexico, Mugford goes on to discuss how these societal norms are discursively realised or abandoned in the classroom. While he draws from questionnaire data rather than situating his analysis in classroom interactions, it is nevertheless evident from his analysis that a second language classroom constitutes a social context in its own right where participants engage in, develop and contest politic and polite behaviour. It also indicates that any analysis of im/politeness within a particular community of practice needs to consider the wider sociocultural milieu in which it is embedded.

This theme is taken up in more detail by Sara Mills in her contribution, Communities of practice and politeness. She argues that if politeness is conceptualised as a set of resources shared more widely across societies, which are evaluated and enacted differently within each community of practice, an approach which allows a focus on both the global and local dimensions of im/politeness is possible. Drawing from a close analysis of an interaction between a supervisor and a teacher where the conditions for attending a conference are being worked out, Mills demonstrates how hypothesised social norms are negotiated and locally inflected according to constraints of the particular community of practice in question, namely, an English language school in the U.K.

The way in which the community of practice framework can be applied to what seems, on the surface, to be an interpersonal setting is explored by Jodie Clark in her chapter, Relational work in a sporting community of practice. She analyses recordings of interactions where members of a university hockey team are discussing their relationships with each other in various interpersonal settings, such as conversations over dinner, as well as conducting ethnographic interviews with those members as a participant observer. Clark demonstrates the way in which evaluations of im/politeness are mediated by the hierarchical structure of their community of practice and the relational identities assumed amongst its members through this analysis. In particular, she shows how the analyst can situate local conflicts over norms of appropriateness within a larger institutional framework.

The chapters in Part II focus on im/politeness in what are traditionally considered interpersonal settings, ranging from interactions between friends (Barke) and family members (Barke, Clancy) in Japan and Ireland, through to an intercultural interaction involving a mixture of family, friends and people who are less well acquainted (Inagaki), and finally interactions between participants who are getting acquainted in Australia (Haugh). The first chapter in this section (Barke) also constitutes an interesting example of examining politeness in an interpersonal setting which has to some extent some institutional overtones, hence its placement adjacent to the chapters in the first part of this volume.

The first chapter in this section, Situated functions of addressee honorifics in Japanese television drama by Andrew Barke, focuses on the situated deployment of honorifics in scripted interpersonal interactions between family members and friends in a variety of settings, including the home and workplace, as well as more informal, social settings. Barke gives both a quantitative account of these honorifics, drawing from an analysis of scripts from a television drama, as well as focusing on instances in the dialogue where there are marked shifts in the relative level of those honorifics in particular interactions. In this way, he demonstrates that honorifics are not restricted to displays of politeness as is often traditionally assumed, but may also be used to express impoliteness and sarcasm, as well as more emotive stances such as annoyance and lack of intimacy. In this way, he links the use of honorifics to issues of identity as well as im/politeness in his analysis.

The following chapter, Hedging in Irish traveller and settled family discourse by Brian Clancy, employs a corpus-based approach to compare the use of hedges amongst family members in a 'mainstream' Irish family and members of an ethnic minority group in Ireland. While the deployment of hedges is found to be constrained by the pre-established structure of the family, where parents and children are bound in an asymmetrical power relationship, it is also argued by Clancy that macro-social factors, such as ethnicity, age, and educational background also influence the way in which hedges are used in family discourse. While he examines a particular politeness

phenomena in a local, situated context, then, Clancy also argues for the importance of considering broader, macro-social factors in any such analysis.

Noriko Inagaki's chapter, Unpacking the hearer's interpretation of situated politeness, begins by drawing from Gadamer's hermeneutical phenomenology in a critique of Bourdieu's notion of habitus, before going on to argue that the evaluation of im/politeness by hearers is always contingent due to the fact that one's hermeneutical circumstances (i.e. the base on which our understandings are built) are continually in a state of flux. She illustrates this detailed theoretical discussion with data from follow-up discussions with a number of participants in an intercultural dinner party where one of the members asked a seemingly "rude" question. Inagaki argues that their narratives, where they reflected both on how they interpreted this question and broader conceptions of im/politeness, were mediated through their own historical situations in their respective societies. In this respect, their evaluations were not neutral, but rather involved their own personal and social histories, traditions and preconceptions.

The final chapter in this section, Humour, face and im/politeness in getting acquainted by Michael Haugh, illustrates an analytical approach that is grounded in pragmatics but is informed by research and methods in conversation analysis. The focus of interactional pragmatics is on how the participants themselves produce, recognise, and interpret their own and others' meanings, actions and evaluations in situated interactions. In his analysis, Haugh focuses on how humour arises in interactions between Australian speakers of English who are getting acquainted, and the evaluations of face threat and support – as well as im/politeness – it engenders. In being grounded in the cognizing of individuals, however, it is suggested that such evaluations are often inherently ambivalent with respect to how threatening and/or supportive (and thus polite and/or impolite) the mocking or teasing is taken to be by participants.

The chapters in Part III involve examinations of im/politeness in public settings, ranging from online interaction in an international discussion board forum (Locher), through to broadcast interviews in the U.K. (Taylor), public documentation around the European Constitution (Magistro), and an Australian-focused international marketing campaign and the subsequent discourse it generated worldwide (Ardington). The chapters in this last part of the volume represent an important move to considering in more depth im/politeness in settings beyond those that have traditionally received a lot of attention in politeness research.

The lead chapter in Part III, Miriam Locher's Situated impoliteness: the interface between relational work and identity construction, begins by taking stock of current theorising of impoliteness, and its relationship to issues of face and identity. She approaches situated impoliteness through the lens of her own notion of relational work, together with the notions of community of practice and frames. She then applies these theoretical tools in analysing an interaction conducted on an online forum run by volunteers that provides free technical support. The focus of her analysis is a heated exchange between an advice-seeker and advisor where evaluations of impoliteness/rudeness, which intersect with the claimed and attributed identities of the two participants, are made explicitly, on-record. Locher suggests that such meta-comments provide a useful window into instances of perceived breaches of norms and expectations specific to a particular community of practice.

Charlotte Taylor also focuses her analysis on meta-comments in her chapter on Negative politeness forms and impoliteness in institutional discourse: a corpus-assisted approach, but this time the analysis is in the context of parliamentary debates,

witness interviews, and broadcast interviews, all of which can be considered part of public discourse in the U.K.. She demonstrates how techniques from corpus linguistics can be used to identify potential sites of impoliteness in these corpora. Due to the obvious lack of form-function mapping, these techniques include searching for metapragmatic comments on discourse norms, and clashes of context or co-text arising from shifts from transactional to interactional modes of communication. Taylor then demonstrates these techniques by analysing two types of negative politeness markers, the collocation *with respect* and formal vocatives, before going on to consider occurrences of mock politeness that were also identified. In this way, she illustrates the potential for corpus-assisted discourse analyses to contribute to situated politeness research.

The next chapter by Elena Magistro, National face and national face threatening acts: politeness and the European Constitution, contextualises the analysis of politeness strategies employed in two informative booklets about the European Constitution for the general public. Magistro uses techniques from discourse analysis to analyse various linguistic features, drawing heavily from Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework. However, she proposes expanding Brown and Levinson's framework to encompass issues of national face and national face threat to account for evaluations of politeness that may be engendered by this kind of public discourse.

The final chapter in this part of the volume, Tourist advertising of Australia: impolite or situation-appropriate? by Angela Ardington, investigates a particular genre, the language of international tourism, in the context of the So where the bloody hell are you campaign launched by Tourism Australia. She draws from (critical) discourse analysis in examining the interplay of language, humour and national character used in the campaign, and then discusses reasons why the campaign was received so badly around the world, even though English is the dominant language in the countries that were targeted. Ardington argues that given the inherent ambiguities and culture-bound nature of humour, there is a high risk of misinterpretation. Thus, humour may not always hit its intended mark, but rather may cause offence.

The volume concludes with an epilogue written by the editors, which draws together the main themes found across the contributions, and highlights both the promise of recent theoretical and methodological developments, but also their limitations, in furthering our understanding of situated politeness.

Notes

¹ This volume represents a selection of papers from the Third International Symposium on Politeness held at the University of Leeds (2-4 July 2007) where the theme was Situated Politeness. The conference was organised by Bethan Davies and Andrew Merrison, who subsequently invited Michael Haugh to join the editorial team.

² One exception to this overwhelming trend is the inclusion of rater assessments of P, D and R relative to the specific situation in Fukushima's (2000) comparative analysis of politeness and requests in British English and Japanese.

³ The management of social relations involves four broad orientations according to Spencer-Oatey (2008: 32): rapport enhancement ("a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors"), rapport maintenance ("a desire to

maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors”), rapport neglect (“a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors”), and rapport challenge (“a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors”).

⁴ Sociopragmatic principles encompass maxims (Leech 1983) or sociointeractional principles such as rights and obligations to equity and association–dissociation (Spencer-Oatey (2008: 15–16, 41), which underpin the interpretation and performance of communicative acts as (in)appropriate (Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistic conventions, on the other hand, encompass shared understandings about the degree of (in)appropriateness of linguistic forms and strategies used to convey interpersonal/relational meanings (Thomas, 1983).

⁵ See Haugh (2011b) for further discussion of the property of emergence/non-summativity in relation to conversational interaction.

⁶ Notably, while McHoul and Rapley argue for an approach that takes into account elements of context that can be empirically verified through analyses of other interactions or texts (p.51), Antaki retains the CA view that analysis can proceed without making assumptions about participants’ shared knowledge (p.52).

⁷ Frames are also defined as interpretive structures that underpin metapragmatic awareness amongst participants about what is going on in interaction (Goffman, 1974; Tannen, 1993).

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