

New Perspectives on (Im)Politeness and Interpersonal Communication

SERIES: ADVANCES IN PRAGMATICS AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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New Perspectives on (Im)Politeness
and Interpersonal Communication

Edited by

Lucía Fernández Amaya, Maria de la O Hernández López,
Reyes Gómez Morón, Manuel Padilla Cruz,
Manuel Mejias Borrero and Mariana Relinque Barranca

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P U B L I S H I N G

New Perspectives on (Im)Politeness and Interpersonal Communication,
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INTRODUCTION

(IM)POLITENESS AND INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION: AN OVERVIEW

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The present volume gathers together a series of studies exploring issues related to (im)politeness in human communication. Very few would deny that linguistic (im)politeness is currently one of the central objects of study in the field of pragmatics, a fact attested to by the numerous conferences and journals dedicated to the topic, the various theoretical models and approaches proposed, as well as the seemingly endless list of insightful empirical studies tackling the topic from a wide variety of angles – be it to test theoretical claims, to analyse and contrast manifestations in specific communicative contexts, discourse genres or cultures (*i.e.*, communities of practice), to explore its acquisition and development in both first and second languages, or to trace its evolution in order to gain a more historical understanding of this complex behavioural and linguistic phenomenon. Such is the vigour and volume of research and energy dedicated to this aspect of social interaction that (im)politeness studies can safely be called one of the most vibrant and fruitful subfields of linguistic pragmatics, or of the so-called social angle of pragmatics (Mey 1993; Thomas 1995) today and promises to retain scholars' interest and attention for some time to come. More importantly, this intense activity makes manifest the widely held belief in the scholarly community that, in order to gain a fuller understanding of human communicative behaviour and social interaction in both intracultural and intercultural settings, (im)politeness phenomena must necessarily be taken into account, examined and explained.

In order to precisely contextualise the works included in this book within this subfield of pragmatic research, it is necessary first to clarify

what the term *politeness* refers to in this text. We attempt to do so in the following section of the introduction, presenting and discussing some of the most popular approaches, conceptualisations and definitions of the term, as well as models typically followed by researchers. Despite continuing to enjoy generally wide popularity in the field, many of these approaches, conceptualisations, definitions and models have nevertheless been shown to present certain weaknesses in their theoretical, conceptual, anthropological or philosophical underpinnings, leaving them seemingly outdated in the face of more recent developments. These new developments in (im)politeness studies are reviewed below in Section 2 of the introduction. Additionally, since some of the studies featured in the present volume are of an empirical nature, Section 3 discusses some of the most common research methods employed in the field. Following a brief section considering the specific motivations and questions that brought about the present volume and its specific chapters, summaries of the contents of each of these chapters are offered here in Section 5.

1. Politeness: Approaches, Conceptualisations and Definitions

The term *polite* evolved from the participle *polished* and has been part of the English lexicon since the 15th century (Kasper 1998: 677; Eelen 2001: i). Present in dictionaries since the 17th century, among the meanings of the term frequently provided is one alluding to the refined manners characteristic of members of the high social classes. This sense of the term has undoubtedly contributed to the association of politeness with the stereotypical behaviour expected of members of certain communities of practice, an association that is much more evident in languages such as German, French or Spanish, where the adjectives *höflich*, *courtois* and *cortés* are derived from nouns referring to *court*. Indeed, perhaps the most widely-accepted and used conception of the term may be as the identification of a behaviour or set of behaviours as obeying a series of more or less explicit social norms or conventions established by a particular community of practice regarding the thoughts, actions, reactions or states of affairs that are desirable or predictable in a given context (Fraser 1990, 2002; Thomas 1995; Escandell Vidal 1996; Eelen 2001). When such thoughts, actions, reactions or states of affairs are coherent with these norms or conventions, the members of the specific community of practice value them positively and regard them as polite. However, when perceived as incoherent relative to given social norms or conventions,

these thoughts, actions, reactions or states of affairs are regarded as impolite.

This conception of politeness originates and is ingrained in the life experience of the members of a community of practice and entails a subjective process of introspection whereby a member analyses and evaluates his own or another individual's behaviour relative to a behavioural norm or standard assumed to be shared in a given community (Eelen 2001: 32-43). As a sociolinguistic norm (Fraser 1990) – referred to by Eelen (*ibid.*) as *politeness 1* – the concept of (im)politeness has often been linked with the use of particular registers, with linguistic formality often been interpreted as polite and linguistic informality as impolite. This is evidenced, for example, by the distinctions and explanations made in certain grammars regarding the use of second person pronouns in languages where multiple options exist. Coinciding with what has traditionally been known as *good manners*, such a view of politeness has surfaced in many manuals and books of etiquette (Moreno Fernández 1998). In pragmatics, however, the concept of politeness cannot only be understood as the use of language by certain communities of practice in specific contexts, but must necessarily be broadened to include an individual's linguistic behaviour. In this way, *politeness* must necessarily refer to “[...] ways in which linguistic action is carried out and more specifically, ways in which the relational function in linguistic action is expressed” (Kasper 1998: 677).

Between the 1960s and 1970s, two renowned figures, Herbert Paul Grice and John Searle, emerged from the philosophy of language field to crucially influence the development of the field of pragmatics. Indelibly linked to the subfield of politeness studies, in particular, their belief that interlocutors often do not select the most direct or easily-understandable formulations of the messages they wish to convey was taken as one of the foundational axioms for a new conceptualisation of politeness in pragmatics. For these two authors, politeness is related to the reasons why individuals' (linguistic) acts adopt specific forms. Within his general theory of intentionality, Searle (1969) claimed that one of the reasons why interlocutors resort to indirect formulations of their messages is to be, or at least seem, polite. In turn, Grice (1969, 1975) admitted that in many of the situations where speakers convey implicit meanings, they follow conversational principles other than his well-known Cooperative Principle or its maxims of quality, quantity, relation and manner. Among such alternative conversational principles postulated is the desire to be polite.

Inspired by the ideas of these two philosophers, politeness progressively came to be understood as one of the motivations making individuals

behave or act with language in particular ways. As a result, theoretical models attempting to operationalise the notion of politeness also began to appear in the field. Exploring and deeply analysing the causes of such motivations, the models laid the foundations for a scientific approach to language use with an emphasis on the latter's social and interactive nature. Indeed, the majority of accepted pragmatic models of politeness share the assumption that, through linguistic form, speakers unveil the social relationship that they perceive or would like to create, maintain or modify with other individuals. Such models centre not only on the different ways in which information can be transmitted on the basis of the interlocutors' perception of their social reality, but also on the ways social information is transmitted in order to act directly upon this social reality. For this reason, the models point to politeness as "[...] the feature of language use that most clearly reveals the nature of human sociality as expressed in speech" (Brown 2001: 11620). Such models of politeness are referred to by Eelen (2001: 30) as *politeness 2*, inasmuch as they offer a scientific conceptualisation of the phenomenon that significantly differs from Eelen's *politeness 1*, that is, the frequently used, lay understanding of *politeness*¹.

These lines of scientific convergence notwithstanding, most linguists and pragmatists having studied politeness throughout history have nevertheless demonstrated (and caused) a significant amount of confusion when writing about it. Some authors from Eastern cultures (*e.g.*, Ide 1982, 1989; Hill *et al.* 1986; Ide *et al.* 1986; Matsumoto 1989), for instance, have equated politeness to deference (*i.e.*, the respect shown by individuals to others owing to inequalities in social status, age, etc.). According to these authors, politeness is not only manifested through individuals' social behaviour, but also through the grammatical resources available to individuals in particular languages (*e.g.*, certain polite forms of address or the selection of formal/informal second person pronominal forms like *vous/tu*). Indeed, Ide (*ibid.*) and Matsumoto (*ibid.*) argued extensively that in a language such as Japanese, an individual's choice of a particular grammatical form is predicated on the individual's perception of his or her social role in a specific context and on the basis of certain social conventions. In their studies, therefore, *politeness* is defined in the following terms:

[...] the language usage associated with smooth communication, realized 1) through the speaker's use of intentional strategies to allow his or her

¹ See Section 2 for further comments on differences between *politeness 1* and *politeness 2*.

message to be received favorably by the addressee, and 2) through the speaker's choice of expressions to conform to the expected and/or prescribed norms of speech appropriate to the contextual situation in individual speech communities. (Ide 1989: 225)

Similarly, other researchers have equated politeness with the use of certain registers (*i.e.*, linguistic variations in a discourse resulting from individuals' perceptions of the communicative situation in which they interact). According to this view, it is said that some situations or social relations call for a more or less formal use of language, often made manifest through an individual's lexical choices and forms of addressing an interlocutor. One study (Smith 1992), for instance, explains that Japanese women are, from a very early age, instructed in the use of specific registers on the basis of their social role or occupation.

Despite the number of scholars having adopted these positions, however, both register and the other linguistic forms whereby an individual may show deference to another are of no interest to pragmatists unless they are deployed strategically to exploit, alter or use existing social norms and conventions, and, therefore, alter their social relations (Thomas 1995: 152). In other words, changes in register or other linguistic forms are only of interest to pragmatists insofar as they are the result of a strategic choice by an interlocutor for the purpose of achieving a particular goal (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987). In this respect, the results of one study (Fraser and Nolen 1981: 98)² are particularly telling, since the use of a particular linguistic form or register to convey deference or respect in a particular context may also convey just the opposite in another context in which the necessary conditions required by the acting social norms or expectations do not apply.

Many other authors have considered politeness to be an inherent property of utterances and speech acts. In this way, analyses have been conducted on a wide array of polite utterances and speech acts such that taxonomies or hierarchies, organised by degree of politeness, could be established (Ogino 1986). Some authors even compared similar linguistic utterances across two or more languages in order to establish correlations between them in terms of politeness. One weakness of such studies, however, is that the utterances assessed by informants with respect to their degree of politeness have often been presented to them in a decontextualised manner. However and according to Thomas (1995: 155-157), a reliable assessment of the degree of politeness of any utterance or

² Pizziconi (2003) does not find many notable differences between the use of honorifics in Japanese and English.

speech act can only be made when both the situational and social factors intervening in the production of the utterance or speech act are taken into account. Furthermore, any judgement about the (im)politeness of an utterance greatly depends on the degree of an informant's linguistic competence, leading to significant variations in judgements across informants (Eelen 2001: 150-157).

Finally, there is a group of authors who characterise politeness as strategic behaviour with which interlocutors aim not only to avoid interpersonal conflict (Kasper 1990), but also to achieve a wide array of interactive goals like, for example, the establishment, maintenance, strengthening, alteration or termination of social relations (Fraser 1990, 2002; Thomas 1995). Thus, for Lakoff (1973, 1977, 1989), for example, politeness is centred around the avoidance of offence and the reduction of any possible friction resulting from social interaction. As such, Lakoff has defined *politeness* as “[...] a means of minimizing the risk of confrontation in discourse – both the possibility of confrontation occurring at all, and the possibility that a confrontation will be perceived as threatening” (1989: 102).

Likewise, for Leech (1983: 81), politeness aims to reduce the expression of impolite beliefs and increase the expression of polite beliefs. In their seminal and oft-cited work, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) also describe politeness as a way to reduce any aggressiveness between individuals and present in their utterances, such that more effective communication between them may be possible. In other words and as Glick (1996: 139) aptly summarises, politeness is a way of softening individuals' verbal aggressiveness. According to this model, therefore, politeness becomes “an admixture of both formal and functional features [...] which accompany an inherently face-threatening speech act [...] in order to lessen its threat” (Meier 1997: 22).

More recently, Brown defines *politeness* as “a matter of taking into account the feelings of others as to how they should be interactionally treated, including behaving in a manner that demonstrates appropriate concern for interactors' social status and their social relationship” (2001: 11620). With this definition, Brown seems to mark a position closer to that of certain other authors (Fraser and Nolen 1981; Zimmin 1981; Fraser 1990, 2002; Meier 1995; Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009; Mills 2003) who equate politeness with the idea of contextual appropriateness or adequacy. Appropriateness can therefore be understood as:

[...] something which each individual has to work out, by assessing their own status in relation to other participants in the community of practice,

and by assessing what they think the context demands. This means that they constantly have to assess their own position and identity/role within the group in order to evaluate what is appropriate for them and others, and to assess whether they are going to abide by these rules or flout them. (Mills 2003: 71)

In other words, for these authors, politeness is a matter of behaviour which is expectable and acceptable in a particular communicative and social context. Hence, it is only the absence of politeness that interlocutors actually notice (Escandell Vidal 1996; Jary 1998). One drawback to such an approach, however, is that it does not clearly explain how that social context is determined.

2. More Recent Approaches to (Im)Politeness

As can be seen, the majority of the theories mentioned in the previous section emphasise the idea that the ultimate goal of politeness is to achieve a certain degree of social harmony by reducing aggressiveness or avoiding conflict between interlocutors. Conceived in this way, the definitions neglect the possibility that interlocutors could in fact be interested in deliberately and overtly seeking confrontation and conflict (Culpeper 1996, 2011; Spencer-Oatey 2000; Eelen 2001; Culpeper et al. 2003). Thus, the notions of politeness discussed in the previous section may be better understood as examples of interpersonal politeness or tact, which significantly differ from social politeness and other conventionalised strategies frequently used in interaction (Janney and Arndt 1992). Furthermore, while the approaches from the previous section describe politeness as a phenomenon aimed at seeking harmony amongst the listeners, they nevertheless seem to forget about the speaker who could also be interested in achieving a certain degree of self-harmony (Chen 2001).

The variety of approaches and definitions reviewed thus far reveals the difficulty scholars have had reaching a clear, unified and satisfactory definition of politeness (Garcés Conejos 1995; Watts 2003; Pizziconi 2006). In an attempt to integrate some of the diverse conceptualisations into a unified definition, Garcés Conejos (1995) and Bou Franch and Garcés Conejos (2003) describe politeness as the linguistic encoding of social interaction or, in other words, of the social relationship existing between interlocutors. While such encoding may aim at the avoidance of interpersonal conflict – or, to use the terminology of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009),

the safeguarding of an interlocutor's face³ – it must nevertheless be, and be understood as, the result of rational behaviour in which speakers choose the linguistic forms that best suit the social context in which they interact. Thus, politeness can be thought of as “[...] a special way of treating people, saying and doing things in such a way as to take into account the other person's feelings” (Brown 2000: 83). This linguistic encoding must meet the different speakers' interactive goals which may include the establishment, maintenance, strengthening, alteration or termination of social relations (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009).

Among the contextual factors determining individuals' social relations are their relative power, the social distance between them and the rank of imposition of their acts (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987). Many authors have claimed that the affect individuals feel towards one another also influences their relations (Brown and Fraser 1979; Coupland, Grainger and Coupland 1988; Brown and Gilman 1989; Ide 1989; Spencer-Oatey 1993, 1996; Garcés Conejos 1995; Kopytko 1995; Fernández-Amaya 2000). Understanding the dynamics in this way, *politeness* can be conceptualised as the rational ability to accurately calculate the relevance and weight of these factors, such that individuals may fit the linguistic encoding of their messages to the relevance and weight calculated for the factors in specific contexts. Incorporating both the concept of politeness systems described by Scollon and Wong-Scollon (1983, 1995) as well as the perspective of Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009), politeness has also been said to reside in an interlocutor's ability to make linguistic forms appropriate for the politeness system in which a given interaction takes place or for the system which interlocutors wish to establish, maintain, modify or terminate (Padilla Cruz 2004, 2006).

As can be seen from the studies referenced here, such a wide variety of contributions have been made in politeness studies since the appearance of the seminal works of Lakoff (1973, 1975), Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983), that the subfield is easily one of the most researched areas within pragmatics and intercultural communication today. Given such a voluminous output, it is also no surprise that, despite their indisputable contributions to the field, Brown and Levinson's work (1978, 1987) has been the subject of criticism in more recent studies, with authors taking issue with, among other things, its conceptualisation of face (Matsumoto 1988; Ide 1989) and over-reliance on analysis at the utterance-level (Kasper 1990). Currently, the status of Brown and

³ Whereas Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) differentiated between *negative* and *positive* face, Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2008, 2009) distinguished *identity* from *quality* face.

Levinson's work as the dominant theory in politeness studies is being challenged by a post-modern or discursive approach, which is gaining traction as an equally valid, alternative framework (Eelen 2001; Linguistic Politeness Research Group 2011; Locher 2004, 2006; Locher and Watts 2005; Mills 2003; Watts 2003, 2005).

Identifying several deficiencies with these early theories of politeness, Eelen (2001) observes, for example, that the theories are unable to describe impoliteness with the same concepts used to explain politeness; they do not take the hearer's active position into account; they follow an *a priori* notion of culture; and they have a static view of social reality. In order to avoid these weaknesses, the author proposes an alternative view of politeness motivated by Bourdieu's (1991) concept of *habitus*. According to Eelen, the basic tenets of this view can be expressed as:

[...] argumentativity (which incorporates evaluativity), historicity and discursiveness. The incorporation of these characteristics leads to a notion that takes full account of the hearer's position and the evaluative moment; is able to capture both politeness and impoliteness; provides a more dynamic, bi-directional view of the social-individual relationship [...]. (2001: 247)

Post-modern theories have also rejected the excessive emphasis given by speech act theory to the utterance level, favouring instead the study of (im)politeness in longer stretches of discourse. Thus, according to this discursive approach (Mills 2003; Linguistic Politeness Research Group 2011; Locher 2004, 2006; Locher and Watts 2005; Watts 2003, 2005; Arundale 2006), the smallest units of analysis are represented by the dyad and the sequence of utterances. A cornerstone of this discursive approach to politeness is the distinction made by Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992) between first-order politeness (*i.e.*, politeness1), based on the perceptions of the participants involved, and second-order politeness (*i.e.*, politeness2), based on researchers' interpretations which are, in turn, grounded in pragmatic theory. These concepts have received further development by Eelen (2001), Watts (2003) and Locher (2006). In Locher and Watts (2005), the predominance of politeness1 over politeness2 is stressed, implying that no utterance is inherently considered face threatening, as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) stated.

Another idea to recently emerge is that politeness should be studied within a broader theory of interpersonal communication which, depending on the studies consulted, has been referred to as *relational work* (Locher 2006; Locher and Watts 2005; Watts 2005), *face constitution* (Arundale 1999, 2006) and *rappport management* (Spencer-Oatey 2000, 2002, 2005,

2007, 2008, 2009). In each of the approaches sharing this common position, a central focus is given to interpersonal relations rather than to the individual, as is done in traditional models. With the objective of complementing the traditional and post-modern views of politeness, Terkourafi (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005) proposes a frame-based approach. According to this approach, specific linguistic expressions should be analysed in their particular contexts of use (*i.e.*, frames). As the author writes, it is “the regular co-occurrence of particular types of context and particular linguistic expressions as the unchallenged realisations of particular acts that create the perception of politeness” (2005: 248).

The study of linguistic politeness in specific contexts of use is also defended by Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2010) who presents one of the most recent contributions to the field, namely, the genre approach to (im)politeness. According to the author, a comprehensive model of (im)politeness must take into account both first-order and second-order politeness, conceived of and presented in a way characteristic of a particular situational context or genre. That is, a unit of analysis is needed which should be useful not only for interpersonal, face-to-face, dyadic communication, but also to intergroup, mediated, polylogal communication. Following Swales (1990) and Fairclough (2003), Garcés-Conejos Blitvich selects as that unit the concept of *genre* which, according to Swales, can be defined as:

[...] a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style [...] exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content and intended audience. (1990: 58)

This understanding of genre has been further developed by Fairclough who describes interactions as drawing directly from the resources offered by a particular genre. Relating politeness to genre (as the latter is understood above), Garcés-Conejos Blitvich defines the former as:

(i) the use of lexico-grammatical strategies or realizations of prosodic features typically associated, *i.e.* recurrent, with a specific (pre)genre and/or (ii) the complying with the established, (pre)genre-sanctioned, norms and interactional parameters regulating the rights and obligations associated therein with a given individual/social identity which can thus be interpreted as face-maintaining or enhancing. (2010: 62)

The numerous conceptualisations, approaches and models for politeness should serve to demonstrate the complexity and richness of this aspect of human interaction which has attracted the interest of members of such diverse scholarly communities as pragmatics, anthropology, sociology and second language acquisition. Adopting one or another of the viewpoints presented above, their studies have addressed a myriad of issues of an even greater specificity. To carry out these studies, researchers have had to use and develop different research methods. These methods constitute the focus of the following section of the present introduction.

3. Frequent Employed Research Methods

In the field of (im)politeness studies and intercultural communication, different classifications are commonly made between research methods employed. One such distinction is between empirical and non-empirical methods. In empirical research methods, scholars observe a phenomenon in the real world – for example, the verbal and non-verbal interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds – collect data, interpret that data, make generalisations and reach conclusions (Gao, Li and Lü 2001; Bachman 2004; Hu 2005; Hu and Fan 2011). Empirically-based studies usually follow a systematic format including a proposal of the matter(s) to be investigated, a review of relevant literature from the field, an explanation of the data collection and analysis, an explanation of research methods employed, a review of the results obtained and a comprehensive conclusion. In contrast to empirical methods, non-empirical research often consists of theories and accompanying analyses of their implications or an account of personal experiences and views (Gao et al. 2001; Hu 2005).

As most pragmatists have generally migrated to the field from others such as anthropology, sociology, psychology and linguistics, most of the empirical data-collection procedures used have a basis in one of these fields of the classical social sciences. For this reason, pragmatists often apply data-collection methods such as authentic discourse, elicited conversation and role-plays to obtain spoken interaction samples; multiple-choice questionnaires, self-administered production questionnaires and scale-responses to obtain written responses; and interviews to obtain narrative self-reports (Kasper 2008; Félix-Brasdefer 2010).

The first videotaped open role plays in politeness studies were employed in Scarcella's (1979) study of invitations and requests among beginning and advanced Arabic-speaking English language learners. Since then, many authors (García 1989; House 1996) have used this method for

the collection of pragmatic data; however, as Kasper (2008: 324) points out, “we do not know from the use of role-play alone whether they provide valid representations of conversational practices in authentic contexts.” In light of this criticism, written production questionnaires are also used as an effective method for data collection. In multiple choice questionnaires and interviews, information is provided about informants’ perceptions of different speech act realisations, for example, in terms of politeness or about the pragmatic meaning they assign to given material.

In addition to the above, controlled “open” role plays are another type of method employed and described in the literature. In these observational studies, no deliberate constraints are imposed on the informants, although some unintentional observer effects may nevertheless be present. One oft-used and criticised elicitation format in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics are Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs). First developed by Levenston and Blum-Kulka (1978) to study lexical simplification and adapted to investigate speech act realisation by Blum-Kulka (1982), DCTs are written questionnaires that include a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue containing an empty slot for the speech act under study. They were extensively used in the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984), one of the most well-known series of studies in the field. In addition, they have also been used in other similar studies, including House and Kasper (1987), Faerch and Kasper (1989), Takahashi and Beebe (1993), Lorenzo-Dus (2001) and Maiz Arévalo (2010). Since the studies by Wolfson (1989b) and Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990), observational data from authentic interactions has also been collected by way of field notes and audio or video recordings. While this is clearly indicative of the fact that, in the past, there was a great need for more authentic data, nowadays in politeness studies there seems to be a greater need for more developmental research (Barón and Celaya 2010; Barón in this volume).

More recently, the need for more complex research methods to study (im)politeness across cultures has become quite evident. Thus, Pan (2008) presents a situation-oriented approach that views (im)politeness as series of linguistic strategies and discourse resources which enable participants to achieve their interactional goals. The approach is put to use in *Professional Communication in International Settings (PCIS)* (Pan, Scollon and Scollon 2002) and “Cross-cultural Communication Norms and Survey Interviews” (CCNSI) (Pan 2007; Pan et al. 2008). In *PCIS*, professional communication and politeness norms are studied in three cultural contexts (Beijing, Hong Kong and Finland), while CCNSI

examines the linguistic behaviour of speakers in survey interviews across five language groups (English, Chinese, Korean, Russian and Spanish). The studies compared the interviewees' linguistic behaviour, including linguistic politeness, across languages by conducting two types of analyses: an analysis of interview transcripts and another of group members' perceptions of the interviews as a communicative event.

Nowadays, most studies do not rely upon only one research method, but rather combine two or more. The result are findings that clearly demonstrate that politeness is everywhere, that what can be considered polite by one language group may be considered impolite by another and that what is appropriate in one situation may be considered inappropriate in another. The same conclusion is reached by some of the studies in the present volume. Moreover, the studies also show that the boundaries between (im)politeness and interpersonal communication studies have been blurred and obviously unified in the pragmatic studies arena. The following section briefly addresses this issue.

4. (Im)Politeness and Interpersonal Communication in Context

While the first generation of linguistic politeness research (Janney and Arndt 1992: 21) could be characterised by the search for universals in politeness (Brown and Levinson 1978; Lakoff 1973, 1975; Leech 1983) as well as by the attempt to understand related key concepts like face threatening acts, a second generation of politeness research (Janney and Arndt 1992:21) aimed at explaining linguistic and cultural relativity (Matsumoto 1988; Ide 1989; Kasper 1990; Blum-Kulka 1992; Watts 1992; Lim 1994; Scollon and Scollon 1995). Such a generational shift can be understood as a move from the more general to the specific in language use. Additionally, in this second generation of studies, culture is not seen as the only relevant aspect in communication, but rather as one of many factors to be considered. It was at the end of this second generation in the history of (im)politeness studies that the field could be considered to have formed part of interpersonal communication studies.

However, this aforementioned shift is by no means the only one to have taken place in the field of linguistic politeness studies. Rather, a recent trend in politeness studies not only identifies (im)politenes as a constitutive part of communication and interpersonal studies, but has also shifted its attention from static to dynamic aspects of (im)politeness. Such a shift can be seen as the result of an interactive process in which linguistic notions cannot be separated from other socio-psychological perspectives

that motivate interaction as such. This discursive approach (Watts, 2003: xii) does not allow for the establishment of shared norms to explain cultural (im)politeness. Instead, the new approach (Thornborrow 2002; Holmes and Stubbe 2003; Watts 2003; Mills 2003; Locher 2004) which may be considered the third generation in politeness studies, emphasises the importance of closely examining (im)politeness in specific contexts in interaction.

It is important to warn against the faulty conclusion that, by their simple emergence in the field, these new trends can be said to have supplanted those of the previous generation. To the contrary, the two co-exist with the unifying aim of uncovering answers to the cultural and situational dynamism that is a hallmark of communication. As Yabuuchi writes, “[...] although searches for (semi-)universal frameworks and discursive dynamism are qualitatively different, they form complementary parts in clarifying the complex phenomenon called politeness behaviour” (2006: 324).

In the last few years, the field has witnessed the emergence of studies relying on situational features, indicating a shift from culture to situation as a unit of analysis. Thus, as noted in Section 2 of this introduction, everyday conversation may accurately be explained from a frame-based perspective – such as Terkourafi’s micro-analysis of politeness (2001, 2002, 2003, 2005) – while professional and institutional interaction seems to require a genre-based approach (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2010), which explains communication as part of a situational apparatus rather than of the features of an entire population.

It is at this point in the history of politeness studies that (im)politeness necessarily becomes linked to the contexts in which it is studied. The unit of analysis, then, should be the situation itself, which need not be extrapolated to any other, but may nevertheless explain other situations that share the same institutional or non-institutional features. Bearing this in mind, one objective of the current volume is to illustrate this coexistence of the second and third generations of (im)politeness studies.

5. Studies in the Current Volume

The eleven chapters of the present volume are the products of efforts made by specialists in the field of (im)politeness studies. In each contribution, additional evidence is offered of how the attempt to understand the complexity of interpersonal communication from the perspective of specific contexts is advantageous for (im)politeness studies on a whole. In the volume’s opening chapter, Locher presents a highly

helpful review of the seminal works in politeness and interpersonal communication. In Chapters 2 and 3, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Mancera Rueda examine (im)politeness in online environments. (Im)politeness is also studied in other media such as films by Mejías in Chapter 10 and Mariottini in Chapter 4 with a special focus given to variation in interpersonal aspects of communication. In Chapter 9, Breeze examines the topic in professional settings. As can be seen, the genre-based approach necessarily co-exists with studies in which cultural relativism and linguistic realisation go hand in hand. Given this fact, speech act realisation is a valuable method for understanding (im)politeness, as may be seen in Chapters 5 by King and 6 by Maíz-Arévalo. Finally, Chapter 7 by Barón, Chapter 8 by Mugford and Chapter 11 by Trillo and Lenn make clear that (im)politeness studies can also have a significant relevance for second language teaching and learning. As a result of these common threads and foci, the chapters of the present volume have been classified under the following sections: (1) state-of-the-art of (im)politeness studies, (2) (im)politeness in the mass media, (3) (im)politeness, speech acts and language teaching and (4) (im)politeness in other specific contexts. While it is true that each of the chapters deals with (im)politeness from a different standpoint, their scope and practical applications demonstrate the transversality and versatility of interpersonal communication.

Miriam Locher opens the volume with the chapter, “Politeness research from past to future, with a special focus on the discursive approach”. In it, she reviews the early motivations for politeness research since its pragmatic turn and reveals their link to current developments in the field. Locher argues that by revisiting the moment of the pragmatic turn, topics of past and current research may be positioned side by side, analysing their similarities and differences. The chapter places particular emphasis on the discursive approach to politeness research, as proposed by Locher and Watts (2005, 2008), within the study of relational work which can be understood as “the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice” (Locher and Watts 2008: 96). Finally, Locher proposes the merging of the fields of identity construction and politeness, offering a dual justification: first, as an endeavour to study the interpersonal effects created through language usage, and second, so that the research field may benefit from the incorporation of social, cognitive and psychological findings into the frameworks.

The three chapters which follow present research data obtained from different types of mass media. The section opens with Pilar Garcés-

Conejos Blitvitch's study, "Politics, lies and YouTube: a genre approach to assessments of (im)politeness on Obama's 9/9/2009 Presidential address". In the chapter, Garcés-Conejos Blitvich analyses the comments posted on YouTube in response to a video of Congressman Joe Wilson's infamous remark to President Obama, *You lie!*, during the latter's address to a joint session of Congress. More specifically, the paper focuses on examples of classificatory politeness whereby a given behaviour is assessed as either polite or impolite by participants (Eelen 2001).

Following Eelen's influential discourse approach (2001) giving pre-eminence to the evaluative role of the hearer, recent scholarship on (im)politeness has paid considerable attention to participants' assessments of (im)politeness. These assessments have been elicited in most studies, however, through the application of different instruments and with the intention of unveiling general, rather than genre specific, perceptions of (im)politeness. Grounding her study on a genre approach to (im)politeness (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich 2010a), the corpus analysed here by Garcés-Conejos Blitvich consists of unsolicited comments made in response to a real-life situation which can be assessed within the parameters of an established genre. In such a context of polylogal, mediated interaction where intergroup communication prevails, the selection of genre as a unit of analysis is particularly appropriate.

Presidential addresses, of course, are highly institutionalised genres of political discourse with strict constraints on content, moves and rhetorical strategies (Swales 1990). It is in reference to these strict constraints that assessments of (im)politeness are made. That said, genre is always co-constructed at the level of style (Fairclough 2003) and individuals' assessments of the (in)appropriateness of a given contribution may vary depending on factors such as the identity of the person involved, special circumstances, ideological (dis)alignment and emotions. The influence of these factors on assessments of (im)politeness is heightened by the de-individuated nature of the YouTube environment, favouring social rather than individual identity (Reicher et al. 1995). Congruent ideology and political affiliation emerge as the main reasons why, against initial predictions, Joe Wilson's remark is seen as appropriate by over half of the YouTubers involved.

In the following chapter, "Impoliteness in Spanish digital mass media", by Ana Mancera Rueda, a famous 1921 essay by C. P. Scott marking the centenary of the *Manchester Guardian* is taken as a launching point. In his essay, Scott, the then editor of the publication, discussed his opinions on the role of newspapers, stating that their "primary office" is accurate reporting since "comment is free, but facts are sacred". Despite this

statement, however, Mancera Rueda contends that until recently, in traditional mass media the free public expression of opinions was, in fact, something of a myth: with the only channels available for the exercise of this right being letters to the editor or phone calls to radio and television programmes, though these are usually pre-filtered by the corresponding media companies (Martínez Rodríguez 2007).

However, through the development of the Internet, citizens now have new tools through which they may participate. Thanks to these so-called interactive tools (Alonso Ruiz and Martínez Rodríguez 2003) which include e-mail, chat rooms, on-line surveys and forums, the mass media have established new types of communication processes for their followers. With these tools, users can not only express their points of view immediately, but also note how quickly their contributions are published by the media. That said, the argumentative nature of forums and the freedom users enjoy under the cloak of anonymity both favour the presence of numerous examples of impoliteness. In the chapter, the author proposes the analysis of how readers of Spanish online daily newspapers, able to give their opinions freely in forums, frequently express themselves in an impolite manner.

Contributed by Laura Mariottini, the final chapter of the present section is entitled “Audiovisual (im)politeness: an interlinguistic and intercultural analysis of Spanish films dubbed into Italian”. As the title suggests, Mariottini’s study focuses on the pragmatic nature of Spanish film texts and their dubbed translations in Italian, with special attention paid to instances of (im)politeness.

As stated by Pettit, “[Language] is an expression of culture and culture is expressed through language. An audiovisual text offers a cultural representation of the world” (2009: 44). In transferring a text from one language and culture to another, it is the job of the translator to mediate between these two linguistic and cultural systems, requiring bilingual and bicultural vision and competencies. For such complex semiotic and pragmatic audiovisual texts as films, however, the translator is confronted by a myriad of signs in verbal/nonverbal, intentional/unintentional and implicit/explicit contexts, all of which, when combined, result in the final message received by the viewer (Delabastita 1989; Gottlieb 2004). From this complexity, and particularly in dubbed versions of films, the translator must aim to ensure that dialogues seem as authentic as possible in the target language.

Mariottini begins her study with the assumption that if viewers are to be drawn into the fictional world portrayed in a film, be it a translated or original version, dialogues must present clear similarities to real-world

dialogue exchanges (Korloff 2000; Pavesi 2009). Furthermore, dialogue exchanges do not happen in a vacuum, but rather always occur in a given context. In the case of an audiovisual text, this context is a concrete situation at a concrete moment of time captured by the camera.

In her study, Mariottini adopts a pragmatically-oriented perspective of dubbing, conceptualising the practice as an act of communication in no ways different from any other type of communication. Consequently, the study focuses on the investigation of dubbed dialogues in the context of the communicative event as a whole, given particular technical constraints and in view of other people's expectations. Here contextualisation is of particular importance since, as noted by Bakhtin, "[At] any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions [...] that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (1990: 428). As Mariottini's analysis is not limited to instances of (im)politeness in the original Spanish soundtrack of the selected film material, but also considers the corresponding Italian translations, the study presents an interesting interlinguistic and intercultural perspective.

The following section of the volume focuses on speech act theory and includes three chapters (although the second chapter also has clear applications for the teaching of English as a foreign language [EFL]). In the first of the three chapters, Jeremy King applies speech act theory to an earlier period in the development of the Spanish language. In his paper entitled "Politeness and the question of register: directive structure in Early Modern Spanish", the author argues that an understanding of the language and registers used in Spain during the Early Modern period is crucial for a complete appreciation of the development of the Spanish language as a whole. While studies on English language register appear frequently in the literature, there is nevertheless a dearth of such research for Spanish.

For the author, a question commonly raised in several fields of linguistics centres on the employment of distinct genres of primary sources in the study of language register. While some scholars argue that theatrical texts provide the closest approximations to the oral registers of the early varieties of modern languages (Brown and Gilman 1989; Salmon 1987; Culpeper and Kytö 2000), others insist that the language found in personal letters is in fact more colloquial (Fontanella de Weinberg 1994).

In response to this divergence of opinion, the primary source texts comprising King's corpus of study were selected from both genres, that is, personal letters and dramatic texts. Regarding the former, the 100 letters used were taken from Otte's 1988 study, *Cartas privadas de emigrantes a*

Indias, and all date from the second half of the sixteenth century. With reference to the latter, a series of literary works known as *pasos*, or short farces, were selected due to their deliberate employment of the standard colloquial language of the day. In the study, directives were selected as the focal point of the analysis due to the frequency with which this particular type of speech act is employed in both genres. All instances of directives are categorised here according to Blum-Kulka's (1987) request head act classification, with the internal and external modifications made in the two genres analysed according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of linguistic politeness. Preliminary results reveal that direct requests (and particularly bare imperatives) are by far the most frequently occurring type of head act in the two genres examined.

In the second chapter of the section entitled, "At a loss for words or how to respond to compliments: a contrastive analysis of compliment response in English and Spanish", Maíz Arévalo argues that compliments have traditionally been regarded as speech acts representative of positive politeness. In fact, according to the author, the aim of a typical compliment seems to be the demonstration of the speaker's approval of the addressee, an opinion shared by numerous authors (Wolfson 1981a, 1983; Holmes 1986b, 1987; Herbert 1989; Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989). According to Wolfson, for instance, compliments function "as social lubricants which 'create or maintain rapport'" (1983: 86).

However, Maíz Arévalo argues that compliments are far from simple. Noting that reception of certain compliments can even leave an addressee feeling at a loss for words, Maíz Arévalo echoes a frequently argued point that compliments can be highly threatening when produced in the wrong context. When uttering, interpreting and responding to compliments, a critical influence is exerted by different variables such as gender, power inequalities, specific matters regarding the relationship between the interlocutors, as well as the specific behaviour or quality of the addressee being complimented. Given inappropriate felicity conditions, a compliment may be interpreted as pure flattery, condescension or even sarcasm (Holmes 1995: 119).

If compliments already demonstrate high complexity due to the diverse variables at play, their complexity only increases when transferred to intercultural contexts. In fact, as demonstrated in the extensive research carried out on interactions between members of linguistic cultures like English and Greek (Sifianou 2001), American English and Chinese (Chen 1993), English and Polish (Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk 1989), and English and Spanish (Maíz Arévalo 2009), compliments have been identified as

one of the speech acts through which cross-cultural differences between speakers become glaringly obvious.

Despite the wealth of studies dedicated to the topic of intercultural compliments, the majority nevertheless tend to focus on the compliments themselves, without seriously addressing elicited addressee responses. In response to the lack of scholarship on this latter topic, Maíz Arévalo aims to present an analysis of both the given compliments and responses generated. This analysis is twofold, presenting on the one hand a contrastive study of responses given to compliments in English and their counterparts in peninsular Spanish (*i.e.*, both intracultural contexts) and, on the other, a number of cases of intercultural communication in which English is used as the *lingua franca*.

The study aims to test a number of different hypotheses including: (1) responding to compliments is not as formulaic as it may at first seem, (2) given their cultural differences, Spanish and English speakers will respond to compliments in different ways, and (3) due to the aforementioned differences, compliments given during Spanish-English intercultural exchanges can be particularly problematic and may easily lead to the breakdown of communication or the perpetuation of cultural stereotypes.

In the following chapter by Júlia Barón, the development of politeness in EFL learners, from beginners to more advanced learners, is analysed. The study examines the types of requests and different strategies – such as the use of modification – that EFL learners use in order to mitigate the imperative force of a request (Sifianou 1999; Alcón Soler, Martínez Flor and Safont Jordá 2005). With regard to the use of modification, Barón's study focuses particularly on the learned use of *please*, which has been commonly considered one of the least polite forms employed in interaction (Brown and Levinson 1987; Curl and Drew 2008). In addition, the chapter also examines the politeness strategies used by EFL learners in order to accept or reject a request.

All data analysed here come from learners having participated in the Barcelona Age Factor (BAF) Project. More specifically, data was obtained from 40 EFL learners, from young children to university students, with the inclusion of a base-line of Catalan/Spanish bilinguals and native English speakers. In the study, EFL learners had to execute an oral task in pairs. In each case, this oral task consisted of an open role-play between a parent and child or flatmates in which permission was requested to throw a party at the speakers' home. Given the nature of the role-play, requests were expected to appear throughout the task, together with acceptances and refusals.

As regards the use of modification, study findings show that low proficiency learners use only internal modification (i.e., attention-getters) when making requests. Indeed, the study finds no signs of the use of external modification among this group. While such internal modifications are still used even as learners become more proficient (Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Schauer 2007), more proficient learners nevertheless tend to use a wide variety of external modifications, as well, including preparators, grounders and expanders.

The four chapters that make up the following section of the present volume all attempt to tackle the topic of (im)politeness proper. The first of these four studies, Gerrard Mugford's "*¡Qué Grinch!* The creative use of Anglicisms to express phatic communication and impoliteness in Mexican Spanish", examines the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic role that Anglicisms play in everyday language use among Mexican Spanish-language speakers. The author argues that, all too often, Anglicisms are only understood in lexical and grammatical terms rather than also as resources to enhance speaker meaning.

Investigating the specific contours of phatic communion and impoliteness, the author examines how Spanish-language speakers in Guadalajara, Mexico, employ Anglicisms in creative and playful ways to add another dimension to interpersonal language use. Through phatic communion and impoliteness, two contrasting areas of pragmatic language use can be observed: phatic communion aims to establish, develop and maintain interpersonal relations, whilst impoliteness normally impairs, undermines or even terminates relationships.

To understand how Anglicisms are used in Mexican Spanish, the author surveys different approaches, analysing them in synchronic or diachronic terms, and argues that they ought to be seen as adding a dynamic, creative dimension to monolingual interpersonal language use. Mugford then briefly surveys approaches towards the study of phatic communion and impoliteness, revisiting Malinowski who argues that phatic words fulfil "a social function" (1923: 315) and that the actual words themselves do not matter.

The chapter also examines more contemporary work including Laver (1975, 1981), Coupland, Coupland and Robinson (1992), and Placencia (2004), arguing that the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic use of phatic Anglicisms such as *¡Cúdate mucho!* *Never change* and *¡Qué fashion están tus lentos!*, have specific pragmatic solidarity functions which can be contrasted against perfectly acceptable Spanish-language equivalents. Anglicisms can either reflect English-language usage or convey new phatic meanings that respond to the needs of Spanish-language speakers.

The following chapter contributed by Ruth Breeze, “With the greatest respect for my colleagues: politeness in dissenting opinions in international arbitration disputes”, analyses international commercial arbitration proceedings of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID), a body governed under the auspices of the World Bank and offering entities a means of obtaining redress against nations that have not respected investors’ rights. In such proceedings, considerable sums of money are at stake and the issues involved are often delicate. While the proceedings themselves are held in strict confidentiality, the final Award is usually published. This published text includes an account of the case and a reasoned decision in which all the members of the Tribunal speak as one voice; although under the ICSID regulations, individual arbitrators who disagree wholly or partially with the majority decision are permitted to issue dissenting opinions, or individual concurring opinions, which may be published alongside the Award. The author adds that this practice has been the object of some controversy, inasmuch as dissenting opinions oftentimes reveal the tensions within the arbitration process, highlight the essential points of controversy and open up a window onto the confidential process.

In this chapter, Breeze applies pragmatic analysis to eight dissenting and concurring ICSID opinions. From a linguist’s point of view, however, these opinions are of particular interest insofar as they reflect the arguments presented during the proceedings and constitute the only evidence available concerning what goes on behind the closed doors of the arbitration room. In fact, from the perspective of (im)politeness studies, by presenting a separate opinion, the dissenting arbitrator is taking a considerable and conscious risk. Public dissent from a majority decision is a powerful face-threatening act which may produce disfavour for the arbitrator within the arbitral community and which may even be construed as a threat to the principles of the arbitral institution itself. Arbitrators may therefore attempt to mitigate their dissent by employing techniques to offset the potentially offensive content of their opinion and to avoid direct criticism of fellow arbitrators, the parties or the arbitral system.

The following chapter contributed by Manuel Mejías Borrero is entitled “*Like* as a pragmatic marker in North American English”. In his exploration of pragmatic uses of the word *like* in North American English, the author first discusses taxonomies of pragmatic markers and reviews several studies having previously analysed the pragmatic uses of *like*. Based on Fraser’s taxonomy (2006), the author identifies *like* as a parallel marker, since it can indicate a communicative intention different from the propositional content of the utterance.