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Interpretative challenges in face analysis

Desafíos interpretativos en el análisis de la imagen sociocultural

Sandi Michele de Oliveira
Nieves Hernández-Flores

Abstract

In current research on face analysis questions of who and what should be interpreted, as well as how, are of central interest. In English language research, this question has led to a debate on the concepts of P1 (laypersons, representing the "emic" perspective) and P2 (researchers, representing the "etic"). In our view, two points seem critical: a) are P1 and P2 sufficiently well described to be of use in the broader analytical context that is face analysis today? And b) what contribution does this distinction make towards a greater understanding of the data? From our research on facework in Spanish and address forms in European Portuguese, we view P1 and P2 as being far more complex than the literature suggests, with subgroups (different types of laypersons and researchers, respectively). At the micro-level we will describe the roles each subgroup plays in the interpretative process; at the macro-level we discuss how P1 and P2 are integrated into the global interpretation of face. While researchers of face analysis work typically consider P1 and P2 as independent categories, we believe the contributions of P1 and P2 cannot be disassociated. Both must be taken into account in the global analysis and final interpretative framework.

Keywords: face analysis, emic perspective (P1), etic perspective (P2), Portuguese, Spanish

Resumen

En la investigación actual sobre imagen social ha adquirido gran importancia la cuestión de quién, qué y cómo interpretar en el análisis. En lengua inglesa esta cuestión se ha centrado en el debate sobre P1 (perspectiva *émica*, la del hablante) y P2 (perspectiva *ética*, la del investigador), lo que supone que los investigadores prácticamente tengan que posicionarse sobre esta distinción. En nuestra opinión, hay dos cuestiones discutibles: ¿contamos en el análisis de la imagen social con una descripción adecuada de P1 y P2? ¿En qué medida esta distinción permite una mayor comprensión de los datos? Basándonos en estudios anteriores nuestros sobre actividades de imagen en español peninsular y formas de tratamiento en portugués europeo, entendemos que P1 y P2 son conceptos complejos, compuestos de subgrupos (los diferentes tipos de hablantes y de investigadores, respectivamente). Por ello, mediante un micro y un macroanálisis, describimos las diferentes funciones de cada subgrupo en el proceso interpretativo, y discutimos si debe insistirse en los valores relativos de P1 y P2, e incluso si es conveniente separarlos. En nuestra opinión, las contribuciones de P1 y P2 no se pueden diferenciar, sino que ambas perspectivas de análisis deben ser tenidas en cuenta en el marco interpretativo.

Palabras clave: análisis de imagen social, perspectiva émica (P1), perspectiva ética (P2), portugués, español

Sandi Michele de Oliveira, København Universitet, smo@hum.ku.dk
Nieves Hernández-Flores, København Universitet, nhf@hum.ku.dk
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1. Introduction

In the last decade, we have witnessed a shift in focus from classical studies of (im)politeness to new paths of research based on the concept of *face.* Further, new theoretical and methodological approaches have received greater prominence in the literature, such as the interactional approach, the use of natural data for analysis and the question about the roles of the researcher and lay persons with regard to interpreting social behavior.

With respect to this last question, especially in English language research, the discussion has focused on the distinction between *Politeness 1* and *Politeness 2,* that is, between politeness as this social phenomenon is understood by lay persons (P1) and politeness as that is understood by researchers, as a scientific issue (P2). This distinction was first mentioned in Watts et al. (1992) with the terms *first order politeness* and *second order politeness*, and it was broadly explained by Eelen (2001) with the denomination *Politeness 1* and *Politeness 2*, respectively. *Politeness 1* is said to represent the *emic* perspective; *politeness 2*, the *etic.*

Since the proposal of this distinction, discussion about where the main interpretative focus should be in (im)politeness research has driven several studies. Not only has the understanding of politeness phenomena been the focus, but so has impoliteness (cf. Eelen, 2001), as well as general face phenomena (Terkourafi, 2008; Haugh, 2009). The debate has reached the point in which it seems almost a requirement for a researcher to position him- or herself in relation to this distinction. Positions have been divided into authors supporting primary focus on *first order* (for example, Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003, 2011; Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher, 2006, among others) and those that choose to maintain the *second order approach*, although they recognize the importance of the first order and argue in favor of unifying the two concepts (Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010, Haugh, 2007, 2009, 2012; Terkourafi, 2005, 2008).

In the first order approach, the aim is to take *native speaker assessments of politeness* and make *them the basis of a discourse approach to politeness* (Locher and Watts, 2005, p. 16). On the other hand, as Mills (2011, p. 45) notes, as the role of the analyst is *much more tentative*, his/her role may appear to be *downgraded.* This approach has been criticized by authors like Haugh (2007) and Mullany (2005, 2008), who decry the lack of status the analyst has with respect to the participants. One of Haugh's objections is that the task of the analyst is reduced to merely representing the participant's

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understandings or perceptions. On the other hand, if the analyst is also participating in the interaction, Haugh questions who is actually evaluating the interaction. That is, to what extent is the researcher keeping separate his or her assessments as *participant* from the ones made as *researcher*?

Summarizing the perspectives taken to date on P1 and P2, the prime focus has been on the overall differences between the two categories and the relative importance of each to the researcher. However, relatively little attention seems to have been given to the component parts of P1 and P2; that is, *who* and *what* constitutes each approach, although Haugh (2009, 2012) *deconstructs* P1 by distinguishing between two types of understanding: *emic understandings,* to refer to cultural aspects that are relevant for people; and *participants' understandings,* to refer to the participants' communicative orientations during the interaction. Even with this finer description, we believe the current definitions of *first order and second order* require more specification to be operationally useful to the researcher.

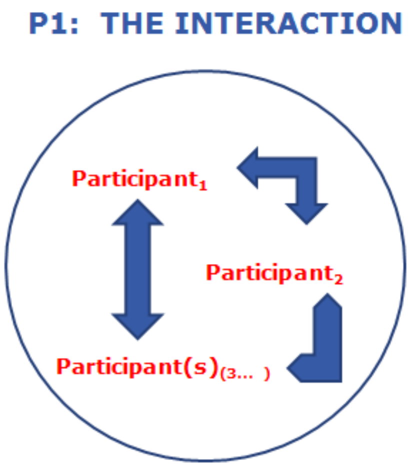
In the present work we offer a tentative methodological framework of P1 and P2 designed to take into account methodological and interpretative challenges not fully resolved in the current debate. This outlined model is based on previous empirical research on forms of address in Portuguese (de Oliveira, 1985, 1995a, 1996, 2005) and face in conversational interactions in Spain (Hernández-Flores, 2002, 2008, 2013). In these analytical works we have seen first-hand the importance of supporting interpretations with the lay persons' *common sense notions,* and we have explored methodological tools in order to get this information. However, in our opinion, two crucial questions arise:

a) Are the current definitions of Politeness 1 and Politeness 2 adequate? That is, are these definitions both sufficiently unambiguous and operationally helpful to the researcher?
b) What contributions can a more complex distinction between Politeness 1 and Politeness 2 make towards a greater understanding of the data?

2. Theoretical discussion

In our view, and supported by the amount of discussion on the topic, the current conceptualization of Politeness 1 and Politeness 2 is not entirely useful for the researcher. A more complex description of the *components* of each category, as well as consideration of the *relationship* between the two categories, is required. While some authors make a distinction between lay persons supplying P1 understandings and researchers providing the scientific perspective (P2), we find it more useful to separate the primary interactional data (and the knowledge that the participants themselves have of the interaction) from the analysis, no matter how the analysis is conducted or by whom. After all, lay person perspectives are resources for researchers. Thus, our view is that P1 should be restricted to the participants in the interaction, as figure 1 displays.

Figure 1. *P1 The interaction*

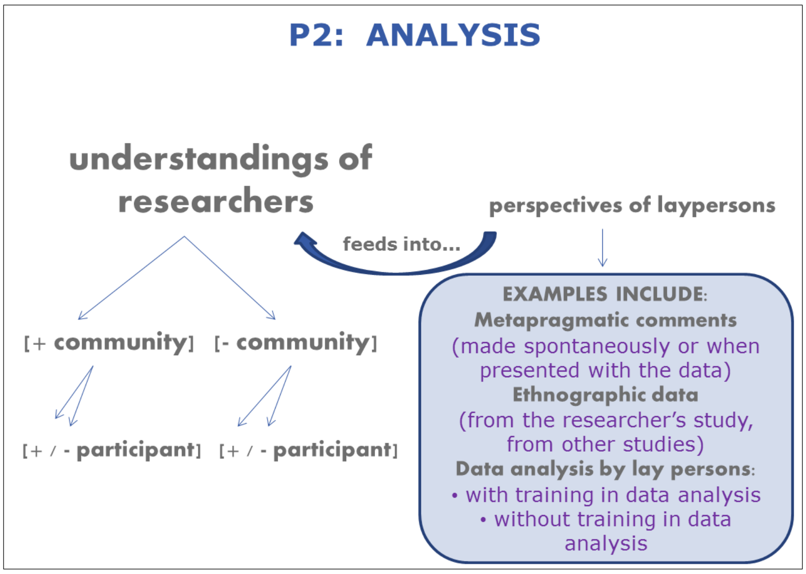


This runs counter to earlier formulations of P1 (Watts et al, 1992, p. 3; Eelen, 2001, p. 72; Watts, 2003, p. 24), in which no distinction is made between the participants in the interaction and any lay person. While we recognize that lay persons and participants share general cultural knowledge, we maintain that at every moment in the interaction there is a personal, internal process that resides in and rests with the participants. Moreover, we know that relationships develop over time, and the participants develop a shared interactional experience, or knowledge. In each new communication, they bring their shared knowledge, and the move the relationship forward. This is not the case of the non-participants who, by definition, have neither shared interactional knowledge nor have an effect on the ongoing development of the relationship.

In short, P1 is the closed circle in which the interaction takes place. Only the participants know the full range of face-constituting factors which have come into play in negotiating their relationship with the other participant(s), along with the boundaries of what they consider norm behavior in their dyad or group. All other persons, whether professional researchers, trained lay persons, or the average man (or woman) on the street, are external. Consequently, we reserve the *emic* perspective to that of the participants, and *etic* for all those looking at the interaction from the outside.

P2, then, comprises those who are not directly involved in the interaction, both researchers and lay persons, as shown in figure 2.

Figure 2. *P2 The analysis*



In order to recognize the various perspectives an investigator may have relative to the community and interaction, we propose distinguishing between researchers of the same cultural community as the participants, and those who are not. In the case of researchers from the same community, they have lay person understanding of that community´s norms, which can be of special help in formulating hypotheses with regards to the data. On the other hand, non-members of the community will need to rely on others for the lay person perspective (see Bravo, 2004, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). On the interactional level is the consideration as to whether or not the researcher has been a participant. Each of these perspectives provides a set of valuable insights to the data; however, these insights must be disentangled, and the disentanglement of the various types of interpretation is easier on a theoretical level than in practice.

This brings us to lay persons, who we believe rightly belong in P2 rather than P1. Placing lay persons in P1 makes it seem as though their assessments are not important resources in the construction of theory. In our model, lay person knowledge and intuitions are clearly integral to the interpretative process, "feeding into" the understanding that the researcher gains of the interaction and its surrounding cultural and social context.

Another reason for integrating lay persons into P2 is that they are sometimes brought into formal interpretative settings to analyze the researcher's data. We will briefly mention two methodological approaches that have been developed for accessing the lay person view in studies of Spanish. One approach is to provide the lay persons with some formal training in face analysis; that is, they are provided with the researcher's theoretical and methodological tools. This method is on view in Bravo's *intersubjectivity test* (1996, 2008, 2009a, 2009b), used with Linguistics students and academic staff. The purpose of her study was to find support for or rejection of her interpretations as researcher. Alternatively, lay persons may be asked to interpret data, having been given no formal training. This method was adopted by Garcés-Conejos Blitvich et al. (2010) in their study of impoliteness in a television talk show by means of a *multimodal questionnaire* and a *focus group*. The informants in each group were asked to interpret the television recordings. Our own work has not involved either a formal setting or direct contact between the informants and data previously collected. Both involve ethnographic information which helps the researcher confirm, qualify or reject hypotheses about the cultural community and the research question. Hernández-Flores uses *tests of social habits* (2002), while de Oliveira has used ethnographic interviews and questionnaires designed to discover cultural and social norms, cognitive representations that speakers have of specific forms, attitudes to the use of forms and to the complex address form system as a whole, etc. (de Oliveira, 1985, and later, de Oliveira 1993, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2009, 2010).

Turning our attention to questions of interpretation of social behavior, we see that many studies of (im)politeness focus on behavior whose degree of politeness is assessed by socially conventionalized norms. However, relatively little attention has been made to the processes used by speakers to develop local or even individually negotiated norms which may run counter to those of society. The resulting challenges for researchers are also ignored. We must be cognizant of both methodological and interpretative obstacles for understanding the *perspective of the participants* (the *emic* view as we have defined it).

2.1. Interpretative challenges in the markedness model

De Oliveira's theoretical work on markedness may help illuminate the interpretative challenge to which we refer. Her framework for the discussion of *markedness* originates in the work of Hymes and Myers-Scotton. Hymes (1974) is credited with being the first to apply the concept of *markedness*, previously used in general linguistic theory, to sociolinguistic behavior. Generally, his view is that behavior is *unmarked* when it conforms to expected norms, and is thus somewhat predictable. On the other hand, *marked behavior* is described as that which deviates from the norm (Hymes, 1974, p. 111). However, he refers to social relationships and settings as being formal or informal, so the norm to which he refers is a societal or community-based norm, not an interactional one negotiated between two speakers. In fact, simple use of the terms "unmarked" and "marked" does not even hint that more than one interpretative scale may be in place, let alone which should be used to evaluate the usage. Recognizing one aspect of that lacuna, that conventionalized and negotiated usage may differ, Myers-Scotton (1983) proposes terms to substitute Hymes' terms to distinguish between conversational maxims that speakers use to negotiate patterns of language use that differ from conventionalized norms, proposing that the terms *conventionalized* and *negotiated* substitute *unmarked* and *marked*, respectively. De Oliveira (1985) supports Myers-Scotton's distinction and refers to two planes of interaction (the *socially conventionalized* and the *negotiated*), but also determined that *markedness* operates on both interactional planes—that is, that there exists both *(un)marked behavior* relative to *conventionalized norms* as well as *(un)marked behavior* relative to the *negotiated norms*. Thus, instead of two interpretative categories, there are four, as displayed in table 1.

Markedness		
Hymes (1974)	**Myers-Scotton's (1983)**	**de Oliveira (1985)**
Unmarked *Marked*	*Conventionalized*	*Unmarked conventionalized* *Marked conventionalized*
	Negotiated	*Unmarked negotiated* *Marked negotiated*

Table 1. *Markedness*

What is the interpretative challenge here? Let's see how variability in the use of the form *senhor* makes clear these distinctions.

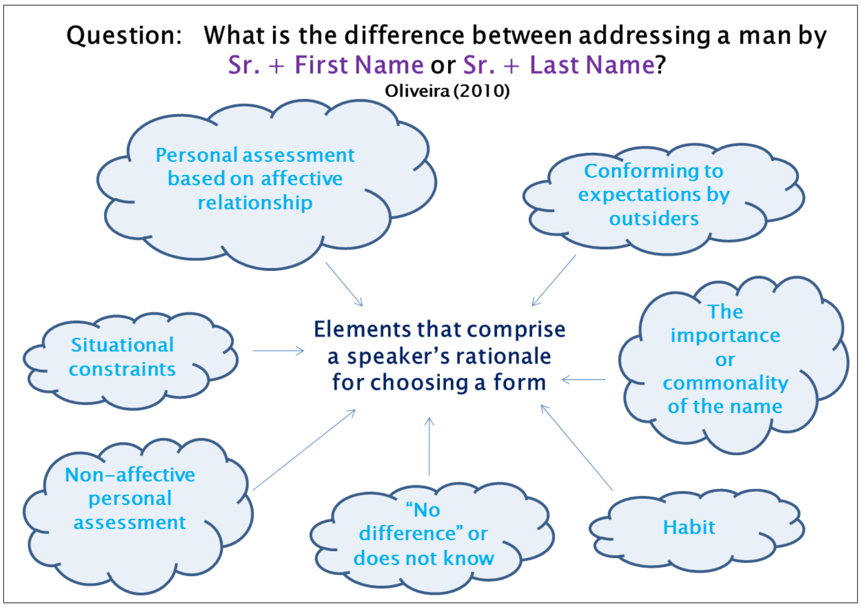
Social Relationship	**Interpretation of use of *senhor***
Between **adult strangers** (NB: Use of first name, *tu,* and a host of other forms would be considered **marked conventionalized** usage).	**Unmarked conventionalized** (i.e., the expected social norm)
Between **adult strangers when the addressee has a title that is known** by the speaker**.**	**Marked conventionalized** (i.e., the unexpected form for a young male to receive)
Acquaintances who negotiated the continued use of *senhor*.	**Unmarked negotiated** (i.e., the expected form within the relationship which has developed between the two speakers)
Friends, family, colleagues, etc. who normally use another form but choose *senhor* to mark humor, anger, the presence of certain other people, etc.	M**arked negotiated** (i.e., an unexpected form within a relationship which has been negotiated)

Table 2. *Variability in the interpretation of* senhor *in European Portuguese*

If the speakers are strangers, the adult male would be addressed, conventionally, as *senhor,* unless the speaker knows the other has a different title. Consequently, *senhor* is the *unmarked conventionalized* form under these circumstances. If the two speakers know each other, but have not negotiated use of a different form, then use of *senhor* becomes the marker of norm usage for their relationship: *unmarked negotiated* usage. Once negotiation to a form that the speakers consider less "formal" or "distant" has taken place, reverting to *senhor* signals *marked negotiated* usage for the relationship. Such usage may indicate humor, anger, or the presence of third parties who are unaware of the close relationship of the speakers (examples drawn from de Oliveira 1985 *passim*). The fourth category is that of *marked conventionalized* address. If when the strangers meet one or both has a title that is known by the other, use of *senhor + title* would be the unmarked conventionalized form, leaving *senhor* as a *marked* form. An example of use of a *marked conventionalized* form would be the omission of a title when titles are generally required: for example, if someone meets the President of an organization, using the address form *senhor* instead of the conventionalized form *senhor presidente* would be considered marked usage.

These examples are clear and easily explained, but the cognitive underpinnings are complex. In order to access the strategies, speakers use to determine the form that *satisfies* them (in the words of more than one informant). In one question, for example, informants were asked to tell the differences that they felt between use of *Sr.+ First Name*, versus *Sr + Last Name.* The 56 participants of the original study provided 17 different answers. For similar question posed regarding differences between the three social titles used with women, they provided 33 different views. The reasons they provided were catalogued as to the type of information each involved (see de Oliveira, 2013), but are presented here in a form more visually friendly. Note that some of these categories involve community-based knowledge, while others are entirely dependent on the interactional history of the participants:

Figure 3. *The choice of address forms – Sr. + FN vs. Sr. + LN*



The responses obtained from this question reveal a complex cognitive processing system. Moreover, much of which goes on in the mind of the speaker is neither predictable on the part of the outsider nor does it involve simplistic views of social relationships. Consequently, any attempted analysis of the precise face-constituting elements being used at that moment by the speakers is speculative—whether it is being done by the researchers or by lay persons of the same community.

2.2. Interpretative challenges in face analysis

In the analysis of face in family and friends' conversations (Hernández-Flores, 2002, 2008), interpretative challenges have also be experienced, as the author's different roles meant that she needed to consider various levels and types of interpretation. In one project the author had multiple roles: *analyst*, *member of the same cultural community* as the participants, *member of the same social group* (the author's own family and friends), and even *participant*. This experience led to the thought that having multiple roles surely had many advantages for interpreting the data.

When analysts are *members of the same cultural community*, they understand communicative behaviour that may be influenced by the sociocultural context; however, they cannot base their analysis on this knowledge. They have to find other confirmation, such as from ethnographic studies, ethnographic questionnaires and interviews (cf. Bravo, 2004, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Hernández-Flores, 2002, 2009) They may also use metapragmatic comments made by the participants about social behaviour, either at the time and within the context of the original interaction, or made later to the researchers (see Hernández-Flores, 2002).

Likewise, analysts who are *members of the same social group* within the community have knowledge constructed through previous interactions with the participants, knowledge of previous events, conversations and facts. However, once again, this information cannot be the sole source for scientific analysis.

Finally, *participants* have the clearest picture of what is going on in the interaction. A natural assumption would be that if we, as analysts, are also participants, then we might be able to apply our participant knowledge directly in the data interpretation process. However, the moment at which the interaction becomes a focus of research interest, we must distance ourselves from our role as participant so that we can take a scientific approach to the data. Consequently, the interactional knowledge we have as a participant can be incorporated in the research assumptions and premises, but it cannot be used in the interpretation unless independently corroborated.

A different dynamic emerges when the researcher is not a participant nor a member of the particular social group studied. In another corpus (Hernández-Flores, 2014), also involving family conversation data, the roles of the analyst were only two: *analyst* and *member of the same cultural community*. Not being a participant means the analyst had no knowledge of previous interactions, the details on the participants' relationship, or elements present in the interaction that were not evident in the written data. As we said before, this information can be very important when interpreting (im)politeness, because it is the very context in which the interaction takes place. In one of the extracts of this family interaction the mother criticizes her daughter several times. Verbal, prosodic and interactional cues indicated the possibility that the mother was being impolite to her daughter. However, through a more complete analysis of the interaction and the use of ethnographic sources, the conclusion was that it was a case of *self-face* behaviour in accordance with her role as mother in the Spanish cultural community.

However, a crucial question remains: would deeper knowledge of this family history change the interpretation? Let's imagine that the mother's behaviour is well known and accepted by the other members of the family. Or, that this situation repeats often and that creates a difficult situation in the family, especially with respect to the daughter. Only a broader knowledge of the participants' relationship could clarify this. But, once again we have an obstacle. Because, even if we are, at the same time, analysts and members of the group, we cannot use this knowledge in our interpretations, because, as we said with respect to the other situation, it does not reflect accepted ways of conducting research.

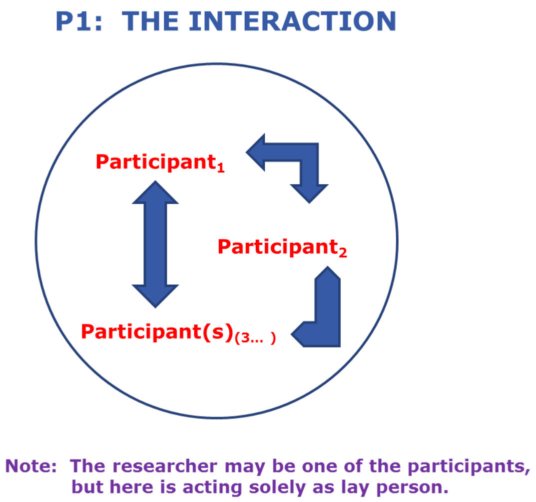
An argument can be made for using a post-interaction interview to obtain the participants' information on their relationship, their previous interactions and the face-constituting elements of the interaction they have just completed. However, in addition to the difficulty in getting access to the participants, there is no guarantee that they would be willing, or even able, to provide the exact and complete information that we as analysts would seek.

Thus, as in the case of the (un)marked conventionalised and negotiated address forms, in research we lack an important part of the information, and this information resides in P1 in the minds of the participants.

3. Conclusion

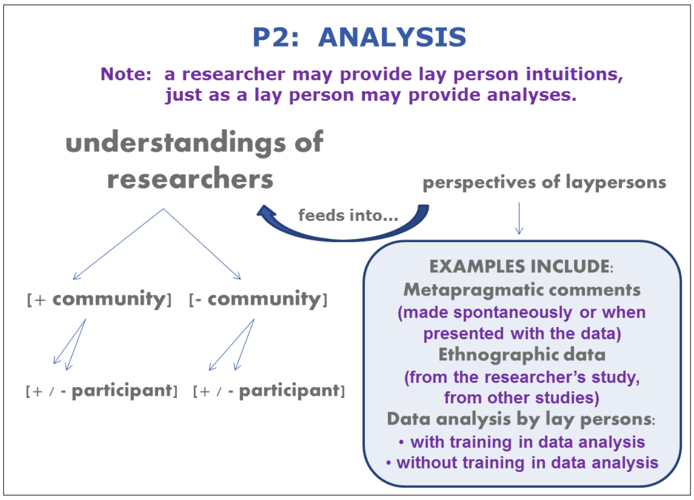
To summarize, our view is the following:

Figure 4. *The role of the analyst in the interaction*



P1 belongs only to the participants of the interaction. Neither other lay persons nor non-participant researchers have access to the underlying processes which result in language and social behavior. When researchers are also participants—as mentioned in figure 6—they can use knowledge from the interaction in their own research to develop assumptions, premises or hypotheses about the interaction. However, this information cannot be directly used in the argumentation: that must be supported through other informational sources.

Figure 5. *The role of lay persons in the analysis*



P2 is the interpretative world of the researcher, although it can, and must, include the lay persons' interpretations. As can be seen in figure 7, these may come in different forms, some of which are mentioned here: metapragmatic comments, information about ethnographic aspects and data analysis by lay persons.

In conclusion, we have examined traditional representations of P1 and P2 and find that, for operational reasons, the researcher is better served by distinguishing between the direct interactional data (the domain of the participants) with P2 being a more well-developed category of analysis, in which lay person contributions are also included. In this way, the knowledge and intuitions of lay persons are recognized as useful resources for the researcher. On a conceptual level, the integration of lay persons into P2 helps make clear the notion that good theories of politeness should not be incompatible with the common sense notions of politeness within the lay community.

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Sandi Michele de Oliveira holds a PhD in Linguistics from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She currently works as an Associate Professor the University of Copenhaguen Department of English, Germanic and Romance Languages. The unifying theme that encompasses most of her research is the way speakers construct identities through discourse, a topic which brings together sociolinguistics, pragmatics, discourse analysis, communities of practice and interaction analysis. Projects within this broad theme include address forms, politeness, political discourse, and strategic communication for those living in border communities or transnational situations.

Sandi Michele de Oliveira es doctora en Lingüística por la Universidade Nova de Lisboa. Actualmente trabaja como profesora asociada en el Departamento de Inglés, Lenguas Germánicas y Románicas de la Universidad de Copenhague. El tema unificador que abarca la mayor parte de su investigación es la forma en que los hablantes construyen identidades a través del discurso, un tema que reúne a la sociolingüística, pragmática, el análisis del discurso, las comunidades de práctica y el análisis de la interacción. Los proyectos dentro de este amplio tema incluyen formas de direcciones, la cortesía, el discurso político y la comunicación estratégica para los que viven en las comunidades fronterizas o transnacionales.

Nieves Hernández Flores holds a PhD in Language and Culture for International Studies from Aalborg University. She currently works as an Associate Professor at the University of Copenhaguen Department of English, Germanic and Romance Languages. Her areas of interest are within pragmatics and discourse analysis, and so has researched in Spanish colloquial conversation, media discourse, discourse on immigration, advertising and political discourse, among other topics. It has been, however, her studies on face and politeness where she has produced most of her scientific production. Also, she has actively collaborated in the coordination of EDICE Program since its inception.

Nieves Hernández Flores es doctora en Lengua y Estudios Internacionales de Cultura por la universidad de Aalborg y en la actualidad ejerce como profesora titular en el Departamento de Inglés, Lenguas Germánicas y Románicas de la Universidad de Copenhague. Sus áreas de interés están dentro de la pragmática y el análisis del discurso, y así ha investigado y enseñado sobre conversación coloquial, discurso de medios, discurso en torno a la inmigración, publicidad y discurso político, entre otros temas. Pero ha sido en los estudios de cortesía e imagen social donde ha desarrollado la mayor parte de su producción científica. Ha colaborado activamente en la coordinación del Programa EDICE desde su fundación.