MIRIAM A. LOCHER (BASEL)

The Relational Aspect of Language: Avenues of Research

1. Introduction

In this theoretical chapter center stage is given to the relational aspect of language and how it has been studied in a number of avenues of research, primarily within the field of politeness research. This overview draws on previously published work on the pragmatic turn (Locher 2012) and on insights from the recent special issue on interpersonal pragmatics in the Journal of Pragmatics (Haugh et al. 2013).

A classic example that zooms right in on the relational side of language is the way in which we use greeting terms in combination with first names/surnames to indicate closeness/distance and power hierarchies. As Holmes (1992, 4) succinctly puts it, "[l]inguistic variation can provide social information". Addressing somebody with their title and surname as opposed to first name thus carries social information. Choosing the title *Ms* over *Mrs* or *Miss* might index social conventions and ideologies on gender.

Within pragmatics, relational issues have been traditionally approached by drawing on politeness research (e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987; Leech 1983; Lakoff 1973). Indeed, the fact that politeness is a topic worth studying is not just exemplified by the abundant politeness literature in linguistics but we can find ample evidence in public discourse as well (see e.g. the many cartoons on politeness published in magazines and online, or publications on (n)etiquette).

In this paper I argue that drawing on classic politeness theories alone might not help us to sufficiently interpret what is going on with respect to the relational side of language more generally. The following example, taken from the Internet social network platform Facebook, is a case in point:

> Back at my desk in Basel after an awesome three and a half months in Vancouver. Thanks to the Basel team for making my leave possible and to the UBC and SJC friends for making it such a special and memorable stay. (December 13, 2012)

This status update was written by myself when I returned home after a sabbatical in Canada. We observe an act of thanking, about which we could raise questions of politeness: Was I polite in thanking my colleagues by posting a message on Facebook in this form? Rather than going for a yes-no answer, it might be more interesting to discuss the relational issues that emerge. There is membership in-group terminology (UBC, SJC) that will be accessible to some people on my friends list but not to others. I am creating in-groups and out-groups and at the same time this has an impact on my own positioning. I am performing the role of an academic in front of "friends" who are fellow academics but also in front of "friends" who do not work in an academic context.

Bucholtz and Hall (2005, 586) argue that "[h]ow one speaks (what style one uses) has an impact on how one is perceived as a person and therefore we can make a link to linguistic 'identity construction', defined here as 'the social positioning of self and other'". There is thus a connection between the relational aspect of language, style, and identity construction, which deserves to be explored in more detail.

This point will become even clearer in the next example. It is taken from a corpus of reflection papers composed by Bachelor students of Medical Science in connection with their communication skills training at a British university (see http://illness-narratives.unibas.ch for a project description). They were asked to write about a memorable encounter with a patient and discuss their own comportment during the encounter.

> While sitting in during a GP visit in my first year of being a medical student, I had to call in a patient, Jane Rosemary (name changed for confidentiality). She was a tall, middle aged woman who walked into the consultation room with her husband. She looked weak and walked slowly in. I noticed that she was not moving her right arm much and she clutched it from time to time, which I believed indicated that she was in slight pain. After greeting her, the GP proceeded to ask her if it was alright for me, a medical student to sit in during the consultation and ask her a few questions about her condition. (N-025)

What we can see here is how a story telling frame emerges when a story world is created and character positioning takes place: We are introduced to the interactants by means of membership categories such as the GP, the medical student, and the patient and her husband. We also see how the student reports on the speech acts of greeting and asking for permission, which are performed by the GP, who is in the hierarchically higher position. Since classic politeness theories are concerned with speech acts as they are performed, it will be difficult to apply them to this extract, in which they are merely named. However, relational issues clearly emerge in the observed positioning and, in the case of the speech acts, we can also see relational concerns in what is narrated.

The examples presented in this introduction demonstrate the pervasive nature of the relational aspect of language and communication. This paper deals with how this aspect has been studied in the field of politeness research and with interpersonal pragmatics more generally. Its aim is to give centre stage to the relational side of language use by sketching the history of politeness research, working with the idea of interpersonal pragmatics, and addressing the potential of research synergies. In order to reach this aim I will first talk about variation in linguistics, before leading over to interpersonal pragmatics and avenues of research on the relational aspect of language.

2. Variation and Interpersonal Pragmatics

It is useful to re-visit the idea of variation in linguistics to position the study of the relational side of language within pragmatics. Variation can be observed at all levels of language from phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon to differences in how practices are realised. We find historical, regional, social, and situational variation in language. These different planes of variation cannot easily be separated when looking at naturally occurring language – a point I will return to later. Different research disciplines have tackled variation in different ways, asking different questions about variation and developing different tools for analysis. However, ultimately, all the different disciplines look for patterns and systematic constraints in what they observe (Wardaugh 2002; Coulmas 2005). In a somewhat simplified way, we can posit that historical linguistics asks how the (abstract) language system has changed over time. Dialectology is interested in how regional language varieties differ and can be systematically

described and explained. This field can be expanded to the field of Varieties of English, the study of the different Englishes that have developed across the globe.

Variationist sociolinguistics, in the Labovian sense, has found that – in contexts such as the cities in the 1960s – there is not only regional variation, but also systematic language variation that can be linked to social factors such as class, age, or gender. Variationists work with elicited interview data and are interested in how groups of people use language differently. In other words, while intra-speaker variation and style shifts are key starting points for their methodology, they are still interested in the abstract understanding of language and the social impact on its system, rather than in the study of concrete instances of language in use by individuals.

In contrast, research approaches such as Hymes's (1974) ethnography of speaking, conversation, and discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and those concerned with the study of style and audience design have focussed not on the language system per se, but on how language is used for meaning creation by individuals and communities *in situ*. Intra-speaker variation, style shifts, and identity construction emerge as topics. We therefore see a difference in the kind of questions asked about variation. As a consequence, it is not a coincidence that variationist sociolinguistics is also a quantitative approach, while approaches such as discourse analysis or stylistics usually work with qualitative case studies.

Where can we position pragmatics, politeness research, and the study of the relational aspect of language within this rough sketch? First, we need to point out that the definition of pragmatics as the study of language in use is actually not a unified one. According to Taavitsainen and Jucker (2010, 4), there are two traditions in pragmatics. They argue that the Anglo-American tradition of "pragmatics [...] deals with information structure, implicit meanings and cognitive aspects of utterance interpretation" (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010, 4). This tradition is closely associated with approaches that explain the creation of context-dependent meaning in terms of a pragmatic interface between the language system and acts of language use, often working with constructed examples: Speech Act Theory, developed by Austin and Searle, or other approaches that developed out of the field of philosophy such as Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP; see Langlotz 2011). It is here that the classic politeness theories by Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson set in, as I will illustrate shortly.

The definition of pragmatics adopted predominantly in Europe is broader (Taavitsainen and Jucker 2010, 4), as can be shown with Verschueren's (2009, 19) definition: Pragmatics is seen as "a general functional perspective on (any aspect of) language, i.e. as an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. meaningful) functioning in the lives of human beings". While the first definition focuses on the language system as it is complemented with a set of rules that aim at explaining language in use, the individual human being engaged in acts of creating meaning is at the heart of explorations in the second research strand. Many of the more recent developments in politeness research adopt this second understanding of pragmatics.

So what about the relational side of language within the study of linguistics? The examples at the beginning of this chapter have shown that the relational aspect of language is hard to ignore. That there is such a relational aspect is of course not new. For example, in 1967, Watzlawick et al. highlighted that "[e]very communication has a content and a relationship aspect such that the latter classifies the former and is therefore a metacommunication" (54). Importantly, the content and relational aspect of language cannot easily be separated, since they co-occur in the same expression (e.g. Fill 1990).

The relational side as a point of interest in itself is not explicitly theorised in variationist theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, or dialectology. However, it does occur, for example in the Hallidayan systemic-functional grammar, where the interpersonal is recognized as an important metafunction of language (see e.g. Halliday 1978). The relational component of language is often discussed within discursive approaches to the study of language as diverse as conversation analysis, discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, style, and audience design. However, these approaches might not primarily deal with the construction of relational meaning as such, although some researchers obviously do. Finally, of special interest here is that the relational side of language is given an important role in a number of pragmatic politeness theories, such as Lakoff's, Leech's, and Brown and Levinson's frameworks. I will especially explore the relational component in the politeness field and then move on to some of the discursive approaches within this field.

In general, the label "interpersonal pragmatics" can be used for those studies that focus on the relational/interpersonal in their research endeavours. Studies in interpersonal pragmatics "explore facets of interaction between social actors that rely upon (and in turn influence) the dynamics of relationships between people and how those relationships are reflected in the language choices that they make" (Locher and Graham 2010, 2). What Sage Graham and I propose is not a new theory, but we argue that the *perspective* of interpersonal pragmatics can lead to rewarding research questions and projects without precluding any choice of method (Locher and Graham 2010, 2). Just like Haugh et al. (2013, 9), we find it important that "interpersonal pragmatics be conceptualised first and foremost as offering a pragmatics perspective on interpersonal aspects of communication and interaction [and that it] is conceived of as inherently interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary in nature." Let me now turn to some of the details of how the relational aspect of language has been theorised in that research field that can most generally be labelled as (im)politeness research.

3. Classic Politeness Research and the Relational Aspect of Language

Classic politeness research can now look back on 40 years of research dealing with the relational angle of language. There are three classic theories that all work with Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP): Lakoff (1973), Brown and Levinson (1978/1987), and Leech (1983). Rather than introducing all of these approaches in detail (see Locher 2012 for an overview), I will mainly comment on the theories' stance towards interpersonal issues. Lakoff was the first to link the idea of politeness to 'pragmatic rules' in linguistics. She highlights that while we might consider a sentence in its particular context as grammatically correct, it might nevertheless not be considered well-formed from a pragmatic point of view. For this reason she assumes that there is a set of pragmatic rules forming norms against which deviations are judged. Lakoff thus formulates a set of pragmatic rules that complement syntactic rules (Lakoff 1973, 296). She formulates two "rules of pragmatic competence" that are comprised of "1. Be clear", an early version of Grice's CP, and "2. Be polite" (Lakoff 1973, 296, 298; 1990, 37). The latter rule is split into three rules of politeness in turn: 1. Don't impose; 2. Give options, and 3. Make A[lter] feel good – be friendly. In 1990 these rules were labelled as 1. Distance, 2. Deference, 3. Camaraderie. So, we might use more words than strictly necessary from a content perspective in order to not impose, in order to give options, or to make the addressee feel good. For example, we might say *could you pass me the salt please?* rather than just saying *pass the salt*.

The relational aspect of language is implied in the interpersonal concepts of distance, deference, and camaraderie. Ultimately, Lakoff was in search of universals, just like Chomsky in theoretical linguistics. Her theory is meant to explain how language is used in general by taking relational aspects into account. She argues that these rules are valid across cultures, but that the cultures give different weight to the rules: She claims that Europeans value Distancing strategies, while Asian people are reported to favor Deference and Americans Camaraderie (Lakoff 1990, 35-39).

In 1983, Leech proposed his *Principles of Pragmatics* and has refined the politeness part therein in 2007. Like Lakoff, he argues that what he terms the "Politeness Principle" should be seen in connection with the CP. To understand how meaning is created in actual language use, people interpret deviations from the CP in a certain manner and politeness is one explanatory factor for not expressing yourself as clearly or as briefly as possible etc. from a content point of view. Leech (1983, 132) postulates six maxims (the Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy) that together form the Politeness Principle. The maxims all have relational issues at the core, such as how the speaker positions him- or herself towards another person. This can be shown in the sub-maxims that all explicitly mention the role of self or other towards each other. The Agreement Maxim states that people strive to minimise "disagreement between *self* and *other*", while the Sympathy Maxim argues that interlocutors strive to minimise "antipathy between *self* and *other*" (Leech 1983, 132).[1]

In 2007 Leech reformulates the Politeness Principle, drops the maxims, and highlights the fact that the Politeness Principle is a constraint with a particular aim: "The Principle of Politeness (PP) – analogous to Grice's CP – is a constraint observed in human communicative behavior, influencing us to avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain communicative concord" (Leech 2007, 173). Since offence and concord are concepts that have to do with how people are positioned towards and engage with each other, we once again see a relational element at the core of this theory.

The best-known classic politeness theory is by Brown and Levinson from 1978 and 1987. Like the others, this theory has been influenced by Speech Act Theory and Grice's CP. It is therefore positioned with the other two approaches within the same research thrust that attempted to understand language use as such, moving the theory beyond the sentence to speaker and utterance meaning. By looking at English, Tamil, and Tzeltal, Brown and Levinson especially make a case for universals in their search for pragmatic rules. This interest in the process of creating meaning in general is also visible in the proposed key assumptions. Similar to the idea of the idealised speaker-hearer in Chomskyan syntax, they base their reasoning on an idealised model person who follows

1 Leech's (1983, 132) other maxims come in pairs; for example, the Tact Maxim focusses on the other ("Minimize cost to *other*"), while the Generosity Maxim highlights the importance of the self ("Minimize benefit to *self*").

rational means-ends behavior. Crucially, however, they draw on the Goffmanian idea of face, and develop the idea of the face-threatening act (FTA), which are clearly relational concepts. In fact, we have explicit pointers to the relational effects of language use, namely the creation of social relationships and the explicit mention that language variation can be studied from that angle: "We believe that patterns of message construction, or 'ways of putting things', or simply language usage, are parts of the very stuff that social relationships are made of" (Brown and Levinson 1987, 55).

Brown and Levinson argue that both speakers and hearers systematically take extra-linguistic constraints into account when interpreting or shaping a message. These factors are "the 'social distance' (D) of S and H", "the relative 'power' (P) of S and H", and "the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture" (1987, 74). Taken together, these aspects make up the "weightiness of the FTA x" (1987, 75), which then lead the speaker to choose one of five main strategies for facework (from bold on record and mitigated strategies to refraining from committing a face-threatening act). D and P are of course relational factors in the way that two independent human beings are set in relation to each other.

In general, the three early theories are meant to be read as complements to existing theoretical thinking on syntax and speech acts of the time by proposing pragmatic rules. These theories have in common that they want to understand variation in language in general (rather than looking at the use of language by individuals[2]) and are looking for explanation of observed variation in patterns by proposing general pragmatic rules. They are thus the result of the pragmatic turn. Furthermore, the combination of all three theories with Grice's CP derived from the philosophy of ordinary language positions the approaches within the Anglo-American understanding of pragmatics, as quoted above. However, in the case of Brown and Levinson we find the addition of ideas on face derived from sociology and anthropology, which broadens their framework. When looking at how the relational component of language is worked into the early politeness theories we can note that they all give it an important position. In the case of Lakoff, the relational component of language is implied in the terms distance/deference/camaraderie. In the case of Leech, his Politeness Principle is a constraint with the aim to "avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain communicative concord" (2007, 173). This is relational by definition and on a par with the CP in the creation of meaning. Both Leech and Brown and Levinson speak of constraints that influence language choice, such as distance and power differences between interactants. Finally, Brown and Levinson broaden these early theories in that they introduce the idea of "face" and "face-threatening acts", with face being an inherently relational concept.

4. Recent Trends in Politeness Research

The three classic politeness theories – and especially Brown and Levinson's work – have received much attention in the literature and have been applied widely. As discussed in Locher (2012, 2013a), new developments in politeness research have been predominantly developed since the 1990s as a reaction to these still widely used early

2 All three theories work primarily with constructed examples and examples derived from observations that rarely go beyond two speaker turns.

politeness frameworks. This is mainly because the generalisations in the early theories are at the cost of the local, situated meaning of "politeness". It was felt that the perceptions and judgements of the interactants are not sufficiently taken into account there, and that the form-function correlation (for example, indirectness equals politeness, prominent in both Brown and Levinson and in Leech) is problematic. Alternatives were proposed by Fraser (1990), who argued for a conversational-contract view, Watts (1992), who added the notion of markedness within politeness research, and scholars such as Sifianou (1992) or Holmes (1995), who stressed the pro-social, involvement aspect of politeness (see Locher 2004 for discussions). While it is not possible to go into detail here about the particularities of the different frameworks, they have in common that they emphasise the local negotiation of meaning in particular contexts.

There are several trends that started in the 1990s and that are still topical today. The first is about whether we can or indeed should look for universals in relational use of language. We thus find a debate about the theoretical concepts employed in past theories (Eelen 2001). Ultimately this is also a question of how we ask research questions about an abstract system or how meaning is negotiated locally in naturally occurring linguistic data. Once more we find a fundamental split between two different research traditions.

The theoretical linguistics tradition, inspired by Generative Grammar, Speech Act Theory, and Grice's Cooperative Principle, works with theoretical concepts – so called second order or etic – definitions. Politeness then is a theoretical concept rather than a value judgment by interactants *in situ*. The classic politeness theories use the term "politeness" as a shorthand to account for relational considerations that influence linguistic output and interpretation. They add pragmatic rules to syntactic rules, to use Lakoff's (1973) terminology.

Researchers who argue that it would be worthwhile to look at an emic, first order account when one is interested in politeness argue that the term "politeness" refers to a judgment according to the norms pertaining to the specific interaction under investigation. As such the meaning of politeness is negotiable over time and place, and it would be of interest to look at this variability in meaning in its own right. Terms such as *polite, rude, polished*, etc. are then studied in their lay meaning rather than in their theoretical meaning. Crucially, the spotlight is on the negotiation of relational aspects of language within an emerging interaction. Largely as a result of the discussion about universals and the emic/etic discussion, the second trend came about from the nineties to today. Politeness researchers started to look for politeness in contexts where there were no obvious speech acts such as advising, greeting, requesting, and they wondered how then to use the classic theoretical frameworks. It was also argued that theories that have the relational aspect of language at their core should also be useful when analysing data that do not address face-threating acts (Brown and Levinson 1987, 69) or that are not intended to explain how human beings "avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain communicative concord" (Leech 2007, 173). Today politeness researchers work on impoliteness, rudeness, and conflict in general, and they are also interested in historical developments of practices. The recent publication by Culpeper (2011) entitled *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*, Culpeper and Kádár's (2010) edited collection on *Historical (Im)politeness*, Bousfield's (2008) monograph, and Bousfield and Locher's (2008) edited collection on *Impoliteness in Language* are examples of this trend.

Finally, we can observe that there is a new openness toward mixed methodologies and to combining politeness research with other fields within linguistics in order to approach the relational side of language (see Section 6). Especially the link between judgments on politeness and identity construction (see e.g. Spencer-Oatey 2007; 2011; Locher 2008; 2011) makes it possible to draw on work on style, audience design, or crossing that is also concerned with intra-speaker variation and positioning (see e.g. Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Davies and Harré 1990; Coupland 2007; Rampton 1995).

5. Interpersonal Issues within Relational Work and Discursive Approaches to Politeness

The last avenue of research to be discussed in this chapter is concerned with the discursive approaches that deal with the relational aspect of language (e.g. Haugh 2007; Haugh et al. 2013; Hutchby 2008; Locher 2004; 2006; 2008; 2012; 2013b; Locher and Watts 2005; 2008; LPRG 2011; Mills 2005; Tracy 2008; Watts 1989; 1992; 2003; 2005). While the scholars just mentioned do not present a unified theoretical approach to politeness, there are nevertheless a number of important commonalities. The focus is on practices in the sense that naturally occurring linguistic data is collected and analysed *in situ*. This means that attention is given to context and to the negotiation of relational meaning within emerging interaction. There is also a general interest in interpersonal effects of the entire first order spectrum so that face-enhancing, face-maintaining, and face-aggravating or face-damaging behavior is studied. With some exceptions, the work carried out in this field is primarily qualitative in nature. In what follows, the approach proposed by Richard Watts and myself (Locher and Watts 2005; 2008) will briefly be examined in light of how it treats the interpersonal side of language (for a longer introduction, see Locher 2004; 2012). We propose to use the technical term "relational work" rather than "politeness". The concept "refers to all aspects of 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). This definition highlights that we are interested in more than politeness and in particular in the relational/interpersonal side of language used to create relationships. The research aims are to better understand how people create relational effects by means of language, how this process is embedded in cultural context, and how this is interrelated with historical, social, and cognitive processes. The approach hinges on a number of key concepts, all of which have a relational component: knowledge of frames and norms of different practices, face and identity construction, and judgments of behaviour according to norms. These concepts are all of equal importance and no particular sequence is implied. The key concepts of frames and norms of different practices go hand in hand (see Locher 2012) and are meant to capture the social embeddedness of interaction. In socialisation processes, people acquire knowledge of pragmatic rules that are tied to specific understandings of cultural norms and community of practice norms (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). People learn about the rights and obligations of the interactants in particular settings and they acquire knowledge of appropriate action sequences within a practice (frames/scripts/schemata; see Tannen 1993). It is important to point out that norms are not static but constantly renegotiated through action. This means that norms are at the same time historically embedded and emergent (see also Watts' [1991, 155] useful concept of latent and emergent networks, and Haughet al.'s [2013, 6] observations on "time as infused with historicity").

The second complex of key concepts concerns face and identity construction and the process of judging behavior according to norms. As in many other frameworks, we also adopt the term "face" from Goffman: "The term *face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact" (Goffman 1967, 5). This concept is inherently relational since a projected face depends on the update of the addressee for confirmation and face is always at stake (Scollon and Scollon 2001). When people engage in interaction they assess their and other people's contributions in light of the face concerns pertaining to a particular constellation. When doing this, positive and negative emotions[3] play a crucial role and people will label others' and their own behavior with negatively or positively marked first-order lexemes such as *impolite, rude, impertinent, snobbish, refined, cultured, diplomatic, polite*, etc.

Finally, once we have established that people attend to face concerns and take complex considerations of context into account (community of practice norms, knowledge of frames, rights and obligations of the interactants, the history of relationships, etc.), it is a short step to arguing that identity construction is connected to these processes. Ultimately, judging others with emic labels such as *rude, impolite, refined, polite*, or *polished* also adds to the picture that interactants have of the people for whom they have used these labels. In this view, identity is considered dynamic and is defined as "intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005, 587; see also Davies and Harré 1990; Spencer-Oatey 2007; Locher 2008; 2012).

People show awareness of different norms of interaction and adopt behavioural and linguistic styles that may maintain, challenge, or enhance their standing towards other interactants in a given situation. As scholars we can describe this pragmatic intra-speaker variation by using terms such as face-enhancing, face-maintaining, and face-aggravating/face-damaging behaviour to describe the relational side of linguistic interaction. The next section points out a number of possible research avenues.

6. Research Synergies and Applications

For scholars interested in the relational aspect of language, the field of interpersonal pragmatics holds many possibilities for interdisciplinarity. I concur with Haugh et al. (2013, 2), who highlight the "inherently interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary" nature of interpersonal pragmatics. For example, they point out the field of "Interpersonal

3 In Locher and Langlotz (2008) and Langlotz and Locher (2012; 2013), we discuss the role of emotions in judging as well as the link to relational work and argue that emotions always play a role in questions of face and relational work. Emotions are fundamentally linked to appraisals and to judgments on behaviour even in instances where no linguistic or behavioural surface structure allows the linguist to see evidence of this process (Langlotz and Locher 2013, 91). Haugh et al. (2013, 4) further point out the need to explore the link between interpersonal attitudes, emotions, and evaluations.

Communication", which, while having developed independently from im/politeness research primarily in the United States, is interested in similar linguistic phenomena (Haugh et al. 2013, 1). Within linguistics, there is also a certain overlap of interests with research on identity construction, style, and audience design (see e.g. Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Davies and Harré 1990; Coupland 2007; Rampton 1995). The concepts of positioning, face, and the approach to studying interpersonal communication in different contexts *in situ* is shared by these fields. We can also find overlap of interests with psychology, from which the notion of positioning has been adopted, and with cognitive science/linguistics. The concept of frame, the processes of drawing analogies, of judging according to norms, and the role that emotions play therein are fundamentally also cognitive in nature (see e.g. Culpeper 2011; Langlotz 2010; 2011; Locher and Langlotz 2008; Langlotz and Locher 2012; 2013; Spencer-Oatey 2011). Furthermore, how pragmatic knowledge is acquired when children are socialised (see Scollon and Scollon 1990 for the notion of discourse system) and how adults acquire it in L2 non-immersion contexts, is a thriving field within cognitive and applied linguistics.

When pursuing research within interpersonal pragmatics, there are several options for addressing the field. One possibility is to focus on one or more linguistic strategies that are used for interpersonal effect. In other words, a particular linguistic surface structure is chosen to be studied in detail with respect to what kind of relational effects can be created by using it in different contexts. Examples of such studies are the discussion of mitigation (e.g. Schneider 2010), the study of the multi-functionality of swearing (e.g. Stapleton 2010), and the use of humour (e.g. Schnurr 2010). In contrast, researchers can also choose to focus on particular contexts and practices to explore how the interactants draw on several strategies to create interpersonal effects. Examples of such studies can be found in the chapters of the handbook on *Interpersonal Pragmatics* that explore the settings of the workplace (Vine 2010), courtroom interaction (Cotterill 2010), health discourse (Davis 2010), political discourse (Blas Arroyo 2010), or the discourse of dating ads (Marley 2010). Finally, it is, of course, possible to give centre stage to theoretical considerations and to combine insights from both general trends.

My own recent work in collaboration with Brook Bolander has looked at status updates in Facebook in two focus groups of ten British and Swiss young adults (Bolander and Locher 2010; Locher and Bolander 2014). The strings of brief micro-blogging texts are explored with respect to how language contributes to positioning the self versus others. As the example quoted in the introduction shows, there is a complex creation of in-groups and out-groups happening in front of the direct addressees and the wider reading audience of members of the friends lists. Micro-blogging thus poses interpersonal challenges for the writers that are of interest to scholars. The reflective writing texts of medical students mentioned at the beginning of this chapter can also be explored with a relational lens. The corpus lends itself for studies of linguistic identity construction: How do the students write about themselves in the different roles of students and novice doctors and how do they position the patients, nurses, and doctors in the scenes they describe (see Gygax et al. 2012)? The corpus can also be studied by looking at meta-pragmatic comments on relational issues and concerns. For example, the students give specific importance and value to rapport and empathy (beyond merely mentioning them as communication skills that they were taught in training), and they report that they have become aware of the challenges of communicating appropriately and that the way in which they speak has interpersonal consequences for how they and their fellow colleagues are perceived. Rather than striving for *politeness*, however, the students primarily report that they are worried that they might come across as *rude* or *patronising* (see Culpeper 2011 for similar results). The students also talk about emotions and how challenging it is for them to adequately react to the patients' emotions and their own (Locher and Koenig 2014). These brief pointers have shown that adopting a relational lens when studying interaction opens the research field beyond the study of classic politeness theory.

7. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this chapter was to explore how the relational side of language has been studied in a number of pragmatic approaches over the last forty years. By taking this bird eye's view on the history of politeness research, it has become apparent that the field has been influenced both by the pragmatic turn and by the social turn in linguistics (Langlotz 2011). The pragmatic turn, in its reaction to theoretical linguistics, has inspired work that aimed at discovering universal pragmatic rules that are on a par with syntactic rules. Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson went for the 'big picture', modelling complex social realities of linguistic communication with a number of constraints (such as differences in distance and power between interactants) that guide linguistic surface structures and their interpretation. That their reduction of complexity – inherent in all modelling work – is meaningful in its own right can be recognised in the fact that hardly anybody would deny that these constraints exist. Criticism about constraints is mainly concerned with their status as universals or the link between linguistic surface structure and relational effect.

Research inspired by the qualitative social turn, i.e., by approaches that analyse language use as a social practice that is performed for social purposes, is interested in how the interpersonal constraints are worked with by interactants in naturally occurring linguistic data. Rather than going for the big, universal picture, this work often offers interpretations of case studies, which can then be used for theory building. A focus on a turn-by-turn negotiation of relational meaning, however, does not mean that quantitative arguments do not have their place in the discursive approaches. For example, if one wants to establish the norms of a particular community of practice, it is important to find means of establishing these norms by looking at the practice over longer periods of time and by repeating analysis in order to discover the patterns. Ultimately, the discursive approaches allow again for more variation (both between groups and within individuals) – variation that had been levelled in the early approaches to politeness.

Ultimately, whether one leans towards one or the other side of the linguistic approaches has to do with what kinds of research questions are posed. The more recent developments in the field have started to look at face-aggravating and conflictual behaviour and by doing this the relational side of language is studied in its entire spectrum. In contrast, the early approaches were intended to theorise how pragmatic meaning is created primarily in situations of cooperation.

It was proposed that the term "interpersonal pragmatics" can be used for all of the discussed frameworks in this paper since the term refers to the particular focus on the interpersonal side of language and communication that they all have in common. My own research path within this field has led me from the early pragmatic theories to thinking of the interpersonal side of language in terms of relational work. The research agenda is then to better understand how people create relational effects by means of language, how this process is embedded in cultural context, and how this is interrelated with historical, social, and cognitive processes. In line with Haugh et al. (2013, 9), I suggest that to achieve these aims, we can work in an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary manner and draw on past and present politeness research, insights from work on identity and style, cognitive linguistics, communication studies, and psychology.[4]

References

Blas Arroyo, José Luis (2010): "Interpersonal Issues in Political Discourse", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 405-434

Bolander, Brook; Locher, Miriam A. (2010): "Constructing Identity on Facebook: Report on a Pilot Study", in: Junod, Karen; Maillat, Didier (eds.): *Constructing the Self.* Tübingen: Narr Francke, 165-185

Bousfield, Derek (2008): *Impoliteness in Interaction.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins

---; Locher, Miriam A. (eds.; 2008): *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on Its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice.* Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter

Brown, Penelope; Levinson, Stephen C. (1978): "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomena", in: Goody, Esther N. (ed.): *Questions and Politeness.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 56-289

--- (1987): *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Bucholtz, Mary; Hall, Kira (2005): "Identity and Interaction: A Sociocultural Linguistic Approach", *Discourse Studies* 7.4-5, 585-614

Cotterill, Janet (2010): "Interpersonal Issues in Court: Rebellion, Resistance and Other Ways of Behaving Badly", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 353-379

Coulmas, Florian (2005): *Sociolinguistics: The Study of Speakers' Choices.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Coupland, Nikolas (2007): *Style: Language Variation and Identity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Culpeper, Jonathan (2011): *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

---; Kádár, Dániel (eds.; 2010): *Historical (Im)politeness.* Bern: Peter Lang

Davies, Bronwyn; Harré, Rom (1990): "Positioning: The discursive production of selves", *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 20.1, 43-63

Davis, Boyd (2010): "Interpersonal Issues in Health Discourse", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 381-404

Eckert, Penelope; McConnell-Ginet, Sally (1992): "Communities of Practice: Where Language, Gender, and Power All Live", in: Hall, Kira et al. (eds.): *Locating Power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference.* Berkeley, CA: Women and Language Group, 89-99

Eelen, Gino (2001): *A Critique of Politeness Theories.* Manchester: St. Jerome

Fill, Alwin (1990): "Scherz und Streit aus ethnolinguistischer Sicht", *Papiere zur Linguistik* 2.43, 117-125

Fraser, Bruce (1990): "Perspectives on Politeness", *Journal of Pragmatics* 14.2, 219-236

4 The examples from the reflective writing texts are taken from research that was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation in the context of the interdisciplinary project entitled "Life (beyond) Writing": Illness Narratives <illness-narratives.unibas.ch>. I wish to thank Helen Gilroy, Andreas Langlotz, Anne Schröder, and Klaus P. Schneider for their feedback on the oral and written versions of this paper.

Goffman, Erving (1967): *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Behavior.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Books

Gygax, Franziska et al. (2012): "Moving across Disciplines and Genres: Reading Identity in Illness Narratives and Reflective Writing Texts", in: Ahmed, Rukhsana; Bates, Benjamin (eds.): *Medical Communication in Clinical Contexts: Research and Applications.* Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 17-35

Halliday, M.A.K (1978): *Language as a Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning.* London: Edward Arnold

Haugh, Michael (2007): "Emic Conceptualisations of (Im)politeness and Face in Japanese: Implications for the Discursive Negotiation of Second Language Learner Identities", *Journal of Pragmatics* 39, 657-680

--- et al. (2013): "Interpersonal Pragmatics: Issues and Debates", *Journal of Pragmatics* 58, 1-11

Holmes, Janet (1992): *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics.* London: Longman

--- (1995): *Women, Men and Politeness.* New York: Longman

Hutchby, Ian (2008): "Participants' Orientation to Interruptions, Rudeness and Other Impolite Acts in Talk-in-Interaction", *Journal of Politeness Research* 4, 221-241

Hymes, Dell (1974): *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Lakoff, Robin Tolmach (1973): "The Logic of Politeness, or Minding Your p's and q's", *Chicago Linguistics Society* 9, 292-305

--- (1990): *Talking Power: The Politics of Language.* New York: Basic Books

Langlotz, Andreas (2011): *Creating Social Orientation through Language: A Socio-Cognitive Theory of Situated Social Meaning.* University of Basel, Habilitation

---; Locher, Miriam A. (2012): "Ways of Communicating Emotional Stance in Online Disagreements", *Journal of Pragmatics* 44.12, 1591-1606

--- (2013): "The Role of Emotions in Relational Work", *Journal of Pragmatics* 58, 87-107

Leech, Geoffrey N. (1983): *Principles of Pragmatics.* New York: Longman

--- (2007): "Politeness: Is There an East-West Divide?", *Journal of Politeness Research* 3, 167-206

Life (Beyond) Writing: Illness Narratives. Universität Basel. <http://illness-narratives.unibas.ch/?Home>

Locher, Miriam A. (2004): *Power and Politeness in Action: Disagreements in Oral Communication.* Berlin: Mouton

--- (2006): "Polite Behavior Within Relational Work: The Discursive Approach to Politeness", *Multilingua* 25.3, 249-267

--- (2008): "Relational Work, Politeness and Identity Construction", in: Antos, Gerd et al. (eds.): *Handbooks of Applied Linguistics.* Volume 2: *Interpersonal Communication.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 509-540

--- (2011): "Situated Impoliteness: The Interface between Relational Work and Identity Construction", in: Davies, Bethan L. et al. (eds.): *Situated Politeness.* New York/London: Continuum, 187-208

--- (2012): "Politeness Research from Past to Future, with a Special Focus on the Discursive Approach", in: Amaya, Lucía Fernandez et al. (eds.): *New Perspectives on (Im)Politeness and Interpersonal Communication.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1-22

--- (2013a): "Politeness", in: Chapelle, Carol E. (ed.): *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, n.pag.

--- (2013b): "Relational Work and Interpersonal Pragmatics", *Journal of Pragmatics* 58, 145-149

---; Bolander, Brook (2014): "Relational Work and the Display of Multilingualism in Two Facebook Groups", in: Mass, Christiane et al. (eds.): *Face Work & Social Media.* Münster: Lit-Verlag, in press

Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.; 2010): *Interpersonal Pragmatics.* Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter

Locher, Miriam A.; Koenig, Regula (2014): "'All I Could Do Was Hand Her Another Tissue' – Handling Emotions as a Challenge in Reflective Writing Texts by Medical Students", in: Langlotz, Andreas; Soltysik Monnet, Agnieszka (eds.): *Emotion, Affect, Sentiment: The Language and Aesthetics of Feeling.* Tübingen: Narr, in press

Locher, Miriam A.; Langlotz, Andreas (2008): "Relational Work: At the Intersection of Cognition, Interaction and Emotion", *Bulletin Suisse de Linguistique Appliquée (VALS-ASLA)* 88, 165-191

Locher, Miriam A.; Watts, Richard J. (2005): "Politeness Theory and Relational Work", *Journal of Politeness Research* 1.1, 9-33
--- (2008): "Relational Work and Impoliteness: Negotiating Norms of Linguistic Behavior", in: Bousfield, Derek; Locher, Miriam A. (eds.): *Impoliteness in Language: Studies on its Interplay with Power in Theory and Practice*. Berlin: Mouton, 77-99
LPRG - Linguistic Politeness Research Group (eds.; 2011): *Discursive Approaches to Politeness (Vol. 8)*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter
Marley, Carol (2010): "Interpersonal Issues in the Discourse of Dating Ads", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 435-462
Mills, Sara (2005): "Gender and Impoliteness", *Journal of Politeness Research* 1, 263-280
Rampton, Ben (1995): *Crossing: Language and Ethnicity among Adolescents*. London/New York: Longman
Schneider, Stefan (2010): "Mitigation", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 253-269
Schnurr, Stephanie (2010): "Humour", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 307-326
Scollon, Ron; Scollon, Suzanne Wong (1990): "Athabaskan-English Interethnic Communication", in: Carbaugh, Donal C. (ed.): *Cultural Communication and Interactional Contact*. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 261-290
--- (2001): *Intercultural Communication: A Discourse Approach*. Oxford: Blackwell
Sifianou, Maria (1992): *Politeness Phenomena in England and Greece*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
Spencer-Oatey, Helen (2007): "Theories of Identity and the Analysis of Face", *Journal of Pragmatics* 39.4, 639-656
--- (2011): "Conceptualising 'the Relational' in Pragmatics: Insights from Metapragmatic Emotion and (Im)politeness Comments", *Journal of Pragmatics* 43.14, 3565-3578
Stapleton, Karyn (2010): "Swearing", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 289-305
Taavitsainen, Irma; Jucker, Andreas H. (2010): "Trends and Developments in Historical Pragmatics", in: Jucker, Andreas H.; Taavitsainen, Irma; (eds.): *Handbook of Historical Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 3-32
Tannen, Deborah (1993): "What's in a Frame?: Surface Evidence for Underlying Expectations", in: Tannen, Deborah (ed.): *Framing in Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 14-56
Tracy, Karen (2008): "'Reasonable Hostility': Situation-Appropriate Face-Attack", *Journal of Politeness Research* 4, 169-191
Verschueren, Jef (2009): "Introduction. The Pragmatic Perspective", in: Verschueren, Jef; Östman, Jan Ola (eds.): *Key Notions for Pragmatics: Handbook of Pragmatics Highlights*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1-27
Vine, Bernadette (2010): "Interpersonal Issues in the Workplace", in: Locher, Miriam A.; Graham, Sage Lambert (eds.): *Interpersonal Pragmatics*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 329-351
Wardhaugh, Ronald (2002): *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics* (4th edition.). Oxford: Blackwell
Watts, Richard J. (1989): "Relevance and Relational Work: Linguistic Politeness as Politic Behavior", *Multilingua* 8, 131-166
--- (1991): *Power in Family Discourse*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter
--- (1992): "Linguistic Politeness and Politic Verbal Behaviour: Reconsidering Claims for Universality", in: Watts, Richard J. et al. (eds.): *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 43-69
--- (2003): *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
--- (2005): "Linguistic Politeness Research. *Quo vadis*", in: Watts, Richard J. et al. (eds.): *Politeness in Language: Studies in its History, Theory and Practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, xi-xlvii
--- (2008): "Rudeness, Conceptual Blending Theory and Relational Work", *Journal of Politeness Research* 4, 289-317
Watzlawick, Paul; et al. (1967): *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies and Paradoxes*. New York: Norton

BERND KORTMANN (FREIBURG)

Comparison and Comparability: The WAVE Perspective

1. Introduction

Comparability is the key concern of any large-scale comparative enterprise, regardless of whether we are looking at comparative studies in a given discipline or at attempts at making scientific output measurable and, thus, comparable across all academic disciplines.[1] Typically, this means that quantifiable criteria win out over qualitative criteria, so that, for example, in the world of ratings and rankings bibliometric measures are preferred over peer-reviewed quality assessments of selected research papers. In linguistics, the largest-scale comparative enterprises are typological (or: macro-comparative) ones, especially those undertaken with the aim of (literally) mapping linguistic diversity across the globe, as done in the *World Atlas of Language Structures* (WALS; see Dryer and Haspelmath 2013 for its most recent version) and the *Atlas and Survey of Pidgin and Creole Structures* (APiCS; Michaelis et al. 2013), both initiated at, directed from, and electronically hosted by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Leipzig, Germany. The as yet largest-scale comparative enterprise striving to map language-internal (micro-comparative) variation on a global scale is WAVE, which offers ratings, examples, and interactive maps for 235 morphosyntactic features in 50 L1 and L2 varieties of English as well as 26 English-based pidgins and creoles. In print form WAVE comes as *The Mouton World Atlas of Varieties of English* (Kortmann and Lunkenheimer 2012); as an electronic online resource WAVE can be freely accessed as the *Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (eWAVE, last updated in November 2013; www.ewave-atlas.org).

It is from the perspective of (e)WAVE, especially from what it can (and cannot) reveal concerning (dis)similiarities in the morphosyntax across varieties of English and English-based pidgins and creoles, that in this paper some reflections on the central issue of comparability will be offered. In section 2 I begin with a brief review of the typological perspective on comparability and the appropriate choice of categories for macro-comparative (cross-linguistic) comparison, before presenting in section 3 – against the typological background – the WAVE perspective in four steps: A brief introduction to (e)WAVE (3.1) will be followed by a discussion of the nature of the WAVE features (3.2). Next I address the problem that WAVE possibly glosses over important, typically substrate-induced local constraints, as has been pointed out in several recent publications (3.3), before presenting examples of four different types of usage constraints on certain WAVE features (3.4). Section 4, finally, offers some major lessons to be learnt from the WAVE perspective on how much comparability is possible in large-scale comparative studies, and identifies the major challenges and tasks for the

1 For many helpful comments and suggestions the author would like to thank, above all, Alice Blumenthal-Dramé and Klaus P. Schneider.

Anglistentag 2013 Konstanz

Proceedings

edited by

Silvia Mergenthal and Reingard M. Nischik

with assistance from
Emily Petermann and Melanie Stengele

Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier

Anglistentag 2013 Konstanz
Proceedings
ed. by Silvia Mergenthal, Reingard M. Nischik
Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2014
(Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English; Vol. 35)
ISBN 978-3-86821-561-8

Umschlaggestaltung: Brigitta Disseldorf

ISBN 978-3-86821-561-8

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem und säurefreiem Papier
Printed in Germany

WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier
Bergstraße 27, 54295 Trier
Postfach 4005, 54230 Trier
Tel.: (0651) 41503 / 9943344, Fax: 41504
Internet: http://www.wvttrier.de
e-mail: wvt@wvttrier.de

Proceedings of the Conference of the German Association of University Teachers of English

Volume XXXV