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MANAGING INTERPERSONAL RAPPORT: USING RAPPORT SENSITIVE INCIDENTS TO EXPLORE THE MOTIVATIONAL CONCERNS UNDERLYING THE MANAGEMENT OF RELATIONS¹

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the motivational concerns that underlie the management of relations. In linguistics, the management of relations has been discussed extensively within politeness theory, and so the paper starts by identifying four key issues of controversy in politeness theory: a) should 'polite' language use be explained in terms of face (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987), conversational maxims (e.g. Leech, 1983), and/or conversational rights (e.g. Fraser, 1990); b) why are speech acts such as orders interpersonally sensitive – is it because they are a threat to our autonomy (Brown and Levinson, 1987), or because of cost–benefit concerns (Leech, 1983); c) is Brown and Levinson's concept of negative face too individually focused, and should a social identity component be included (Matsumoto, 1988); and d) is face just a personal/individual concern or can it be a group concern (Gao, 1996)? The paper then uses reports of authentic rapport sensitive incidents to throw light on these controversial issues and to find out the relational management concerns that people perceive in their everyday lives. It maintains that such data is important to politeness theory, because linguistic politeness needs to be studied within the situated social psychological context in which it occurs. The paper ends by presenting and arguing for a conceptual framework that draws a fundamental distinction between face and sociality rights, and that incorporates an independent/interdependent perspective, thus providing a more comprehensive framework for analysing the management of relations than is currently available.

Keywords: Management of relations, politeness, face, independent/interdependent, interpersonal/intergroup orientation

1. INTRODUCTION

Many authors (e.g. Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967; Brown and Yule, 1983) have pointed out that an important macro function of language is the effective management of relationships. In linguistics, this perspective on language use has been explored extensively within politeness theory, and as Fraser (1990) and Kasper (1990, 1996a, 1996b) explain, a number of different approaches have been taken towards linguistic politeness. Two of the most influential of these are Brown and Levinson's (1987) face management model and Leech's (1983) conversational maxim approach. These approaches have stimulated a vast amount of research and resulted in extensive academic debate and controversy, with one perspective often pitted against another in terms of its effectiveness for explaining certain phenomena (e.g. Chen, 1993; Mao, 1994; Pavlidou, 1994).

This paper extends this debate by focusing on the social psychological component of the management of relations. It maintains that linguistic politeness (which is just one of the resources available for managing relations) should be studied within the situated social psychological context in which it occurs, and that it is therefore important for pragmaticists to consider the motivational concerns underlying the management of relations. The paper does not deal with the process of managing relations, nor with the strategies that can be used in this process; instead it focuses on fundamental motivational issues. It starts by identifying some key issues of controversy in politeness theory, and then draws on reports of authentic rapport sensitive incidents to find out the relational management issues that people perceive in their everyday lives. It ends by presenting and arguing for a more elaborated motivational framework for understanding the management of relations than is currently available.

2. ISSUES OF CONTROVERSY IN POLITENESS THEORY

2.1 Face, Maxims and/or Rights

One key issue of controversy within politeness theory relates to the explanatory basis of people's 'polite' language use. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), face is the key motivating force for 'politeness'. They propose that each of us has a 'public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61), and that this image or face can be maintained, enhanced or lost. They suggest that certain communicative acts, such as orders, requests, criticism, and disagreements, inherently threaten the face needs of the interlocutors (labelled *face-threatening acts* for short), and that since it is in everyone's best interests to maintain each other's face, politeness involves selecting speech strategies that will minimise or eliminate such threats. Other linguists who propose a face-saving approach to politeness are Scollon and Scollon (1995).

Leech (1983), on the other hand, accounts for 'politeness' in terms of conversational maxims. He maintains that Grice's Cooperative Principle is constrained by the Principle of Politeness, in that what people say to achieve their illocutionary or discoursal goals may be modified by their desire to 'maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place' (Leech, 1983: 82). He proposes six interpersonal maxims (1983: 132), such as the *Modesty Maxim* (minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self) and the *Agreement Maxim* (minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other) to account for the ways in which language use is constrained by social factors. Other authors who have also proposed a conversational maxim approach to politeness include Lakoff (1973) and Gu (1990).

A third perspective on 'politeness' is suggested by Fraser (Fraser, 1990; Fraser and Nolan, 1981). Fraser (1990: 232–3) proposes the notion of a conversational contract: "... upon entering into a given conversation, each party brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine, at least for the preliminary stages, what the participants can expect from the other(s). ... being polite constitutes operating within the then-current terms and conditions of the conversational contract". So for Fraser, politeness is associated with the fulfilment of conversational rights and obligations.

These three perspectives on why politeness occurs (because of face needs, social rules/maxims and conversational rights and obligations) are typically seen as alternative explanations (e.g. Fraser, 1990; Kasper, 1996b). However, Watts (1989: 136–7) seems to link all three. He explains 'socially-agreed upon rules of politeness' in terms of interlocutor rights, and states that these are supplementary to the maintenance of mutual face wants. I agree with Watts and maintain that the three perspectives are complementary: that the politeness maxims proposed by Leech (1983) are best seen as pragmatic constraints that help manage the potentially conflicting face wants and sociality rights of different interlocutors.

2.2 Negative Face, Autonomy and/or Cost–Benefit Considerations

A second issue of controversy in politeness theory revolves round why speech acts such as requests and orders are interpersonally sensitive. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain it in terms of negative face. They maintain that face consists of two related aspects: positive face (a person's want to be appreciated and approved of by selected others, in terms of personality, desires, behaviour, values, and so on) and negative face (a person's want to be unimpeded by others, the desire to be free to act as s/he chooses and not be imposed upon). They argue that directives are face-threatening because they impose on people's desire for autonomy, and thus threaten people's negative face.

Leech (1983: 132) similarly draws attention to the social sensitivity of impositives and commissives. However, whereas Brown and Levinson (1987) link them with the question of autonomy, Leech links them with cost–benefit issues, and proposes the *Tact Maxim* (minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other) and the *Generosity Maxim* (minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self) to help manage them. Cost–benefit is a broader concept than autonomy, in that 'costly' messages may not only limit people's autonomy but may also involve time, effort, inconvenience, risk and so on. Thus cost–benefit incorporates the notion of autonomy.

2.3 Negative Face and Autonomous–Associative Orientation

Most of the criticisms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualisation of negative face have focused not so much on the distinction between desire for autonomy versus cost–benefit considerations, as on the relative importance of autonomy compared with 'social identity' (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988; Ide, 1989; Mao, 1994). For example, Matsumoto (1988: 405) argues as follows:

"What is of paramount concern to a Japanese is not his/her own territory, but the position in relation to the others in the group and his/her acceptance by those others. Loss of face is associated with the perception by others that one has not comprehended and acknowledged the structure and hierarchy of the group. ... A Japanese generally must understand where s/he stands in relation to other members of the group or society, and must acknowledge his/her dependence on the others. Acknowledgement and maintenance of the relative position of others, rather than preservation of an individual's proper territory, governs all social interaction."

In other words, Matsumoto's (1988) criticisms of Brown and Levinson (1987) are twofold: that they have over-emphasized the notion of individual freedom and autonomy, and that they have ignored the interpersonal or social perspective on face.

In line with this, Mao (1994) suggests that two competing forces shape our interactional behaviour: the ideal social identity, and the ideal individual autonomy. The ideal social identity motivates members of a community to associate themselves with each other and to cultivate a sense of homogeneity. The ideal individual autonomy, on the other hand, motivates members to preserve their freedom of action and to mark off separate and almost inviolable space. Mao (1994) labels the preference for one over the other 'relative face orientation', and points out that his distinction corresponds to a large extent to that between independent and interdependent construals of self (e.g. see Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Morisaki and Gudykunst, 1994; Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998).

Similarly, Gu (1990) explains that from a Chinese perspective, speech acts such as offers and invitations do not normally threaten the hearer's negative face (as Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987, maintain); rather they are regarded as intrinsically polite. In fact, such acts are only intrinsically face-threatening if autonomy is assumed to be the desired valence of the dimension *autonomy – association*. But as Spencer-Oatey (2000) argues, it may not be valid to assume that such dimensions have universal valences; rather, in different circumstances, different options or points on the continuum may be favoured. So, for example, in societies or among individuals where association and involvement is valued positively, failure to make an offer or invitation could in fact be face-threatening.

2.4 Face and Interpersonal/Intergroup Orientation

In defining face, many theorists seem to emphasize the personal or individual scope of face, using phrases such as *image of self* (Goffman, 1972), *self-image* (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), and *self-worth* (Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998). Other theorists, however, point out that face concerns are not always personal; sometimes they can be group as well as individual concerns. Gao (1996: 96), for example, argues as follows:

"... 'face need' is not only a personal concern but, more important, a collective concern (King and Bond 1985). As King and Myers (1977) indicate, face is more a concern to the family than to the person and face-losing or face-gaining acts reflect both on persons themselves and on their families. To illustrate, one's failure threatens the face of the family; one's accomplishment, however, gains face for the family."

In line with this, Spencer-Oatey and Xing (2000), in a study of Sino-British business visits and meetings, found that during one delegation visit, both British and Chinese business people seemed to orient towards each other in terms of group rather than individual needs and concerns when relationship and face issues arose during the visits.

So another issue of controversy relates to the focus of people's face concerns: are they personally oriented (i.e. oriented to the speaker and hearer as individual participants), are they group oriented (i.e. oriented to the speaker and hearer as group representatives), or a mixture of the two?

3. RAPPORT SENSITIVE INCIDENTS: REPORTED ISSUES OF CONCERN

Most of the concepts reported in section 2 have emerged either from linguists' theoretical reflections, or else from analyses of linguistic data. However, as Fraser and Nolan (1981: 96) point out, no sentence or linguistic construction is inherently polite or impolite. Rather, politeness is a social judgement, and whether or not an utterance is heard as being polite is, to a large extent, in the hands (or ears) of the hearer (Fraser and Nolan, 1981: 96). This means that we cannot sensibly divorce linguistic politeness from the social context in which it occurs. If we are to understand how relations are managed, including the role of language in this process, we need to have insights into the social expectancies and judgements of the people involved. It is important, therefore, to include the interactants themselves as a source of data. In this section, I report a preliminary study that gathered information from participants about 'rapport sensitive' incidents that they had experienced.

3.1 Data Collection

A number of Chinese students (mostly recent arrivals in Britain) were asked to keep a record of 'rapport sensitive' incidents, viz. incidents involving social interactions that they found to be particularly noticeable in some way, in terms of their relationship with the other person(s). This 'noticeable impact' could be either positive or negative (cf. Goffman's (1963: 7) concept of 'negatively eventful' and 'positively eventful' behaviour). So students were asked to record two types of incidents: those that had some kind of particularly negative effect (i.e. interactions that made them feel particularly annoyed, insulted, embarrassed, humiliated, and so on), and those that had some kind of particularly positive effect (i.e. interactions with other people that made them feel particularly happy, proud, self-satisfied, and so on). The respondents recorded each incident on a record sheet, completing it in either Chinese or English, whichever they preferred. The record sheet was as follows:

Figure 1: Record sheet

Name: _____ Sex: M / F _____ Week No: _____

1) The setting:

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2) Other people involved:

Gender		Age			Nationality				Relationship with you*
M	F	Older	Similar	Younger	Chinese	English	Greek	Unknown	

* Note: You can fill in this column with "friend", "classmate", "teacher" etc. accordingly

3) The event and 4) Your reactions:

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5) The reason for your reactions:

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14 students (6 male and 8 female) kept records of incidents, and a total of 73 incidents were reported (18 in Chinese and 55 in English). Of these, 14 did not involve interactions with other people and were discarded. This left 59 incidents for analysis: 41 of these were negative incidents, 17 were positive incidents, and 1 was mixed, in that it involved more than one person and the interaction effects were different for different people.

The purpose of collecting this data was not to try and obtain a large representative sample, and then to investigate the relative frequency of different types of rapport management concerns, nor to compare one nationality group with another. It was an exploratory study that aimed to identify the rapport management issues that seem to be salient to people in authentic interactions, and thereby to gain insights into the fundamental concerns that give rise to the use of politeness/rapport management strategies. It is very unlikely that one set of concerns underlie verbal behaviour, and another set of concerns underlie non-verbal behaviour, so although many of the incidents reflect concerns over general behaviour rather than specifically linguistic behaviour, I maintain that the incidents are equally relevant to politeness theory. Chinese students were used partly for social welfare reasons (an unusually large number had recently come to the university, and we were concerned about their adjustment), partly for convenience (a Chinese research student, Xiong Zhaoning, was available to collect the data), and partly for theoretical reasons (to help ensure that non-Western perspectives were included). The following sections describe the types of concerns that seem to be reflected in the respondents' reports.

3.2 Incidents concerning Face and/or Rights

Several of the incidents were clearly described in terms of face concerns, in that the respondents reported a sense of humiliation, loss of credibility, or similar kinds of feelings. The following incidents² illustrate this.

Respondent J (male) Incident 2

I often picked my nose when I had a lesson in the homework club. One day, when the teacher was giving a lecture, I started picking it again. An Indian/Pakistani student sitting beside me pointed out that what I was doing was very impolite. My face flushed instantly.

My face flushed because I thought what I had unconsciously done was something foreigners felt disgusting and it damaged my image in the eyes of others.

Respondent G (male) Incident 1

On Monday, we had reading class. Our teacher asked us to partner study together. My partner was a France girl, because my English was not well, so she looks very angry. Then she asked teacher to change the partner. I felt very terrible!

I think we are classmate, so we are friends, we should help each other. She couldn't to look down upon me. So I make my heart to study hard!

Other incidents were not described clearly in terms of face threat/loss, but were rather described in terms of rights and obligations. Rights were either referred to explicitly, or else some reference was made to what people should or should not do. It is possible that the incidents were regarded as threats to face as well as an infringement of sociality rights, but since there was no explicit mention of this, they are treated simply as infringements of sociality rights. The following incidents illustrate this.

Respondent M (female) Incident 1

On our way back from a theme park to the hotel, we felt hungry and went to a café for lunch. Initially, six of us all ordered hotdogs, which we hoped could warm us up a bit. But, the waitress came back and told us there were only 4 hotdogs left. And she suggested two of us have something else. Hearing this, one of the teachers said to us: "I'm afraid two of you can't have hotdogs". At the beginning, there's no response from the group. Then, two people agreed to order sandwiches. I was not happy about what the teacher had done.

In China, the relationship between teachers and students is supposed to be: students respect teachers while teachers are concerned about students, especially in the difficult situation. If

the teacher didn't say that, we might be voluntary to have sandwiches for ourselves. But, she was a bit too selfish: only concerned about herself, but not us students.

Respondent 1 (female) Incident 2

One Saturday morning, I was going to prepare breakfast in the kitchen, but I could not find my dishcloth. I was wondering how it could vanish all of a sudden, so I asked a Greek girl, a flatmate of mine, "Anna, have you seen my dishcloth?" She shrugged her shoulders and shook her head. I suddenly thought of the Greek boy, another flatmate. He might have thrown my cloth away, as he had done that before. Just as I was thinking, the boy came over. I asked him, "You have thrown my dish cloth, haven't you?" He nodded and smiled in embarrassment, replying, "I used it to wash the oven and it smelled awful." I said with a frown, "That was a new dishcloth." "I'll buy you a new one this afternoon." he answered. "This is not a question of who will buy it. The cloth is mine, so nobody but I have the right to decide if it should be thrown away" I said.

I think we overseas students have the same right, though we are from different cultural backgrounds. Take this event as an example. I can easily buy a new dishcloth. This is not a matter of money but a matter of a person's independence. I should claim my right, even though this is a trivial thing. From then on, my personal belongings have never disappeared and I have a harmonious relationship with my flatmates as well. This is what an independent person should do. Only when you respect others, will they respect you.

3.3 Incidents concerning Autonomy and/or Cost–Benefit Considerations

Some of the reports focused clearly on cost–benefit issues; for example:

Respondent N (female) Incident 1

After we were driven outside, after we walked in the street – windy and cold night, at last we found a place sit in, a place where we could live. The friend's room was a small one, it had to accept four of us, and also our luggage. The friend was so kind. He knew we had urgent problem so he said "come here, I can help you". But it could make him problem – if his host know it he will be punished. But he still helped us. We were all grateful from our hearts.

We were driven outside by two bestial persons, and I looked for my other friends for help, but at last only one could help us and in fact he was not a close friend to me. In a short time, I felt the warm and cold from many people. My feel turned from surprising, angry, hopeless, and happy, grateful. It's true that there is kind man in world.

Others could be interpreted from either a cost–benefit or an autonomy–imposition perspective; for example:

Respondent C (male) Incident 2

Last Sunday, my English friend promised that he will visit my house this Sunday. But I waited for him from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. There was nothing for wait. What is wrong with him? He forget this or made a joke for me?

I was very disappointed that my friend didn't visit my family. I think if he promised to visit my family, when he has some very important things to do that he couldn't come here, he could tell me. But he didn't do like this. It made me wasted a whole day to wait for him. I don't like this.

Respondent B (female) Incident 3

The agent promised me there'll be night shift during the holiday. So when I was on holiday I went to ask him everyday, he told me tomorrow. Every time I asked him 'Are you sure?' he said 'Sure'. One day, he's impatient in the end, he said 'OK, there was no work for you, OK?' I was offended.

If there was no work why he didn't tell me directly? And waste my time.

Often there seemed to be a general concern for equity or fairness; for example:

Respondent B (female) Incident 7

The Singapore lady is one of my friend's friends, that's the reason I chose to live in that house. She let the house from the owner and we let the room from her at a higher price. Because of the friend, although I knew she earned my money, I still lived there, but she didn't allow me to open the heating. I ask why people in all the other rooms could use the heating, why I couldn't. She said 'Everyone can open the heating except you'. I was irritated.

I know she is a very caustic (?) and vicious woman, but I still think she's excessive.

Respondent M (female) Incident 2

One evening, I got a call from a friend and we began to talk. While we were talking, I notice the hostess coming near me twice. It seemed she wanted to make a phone call. But, as my friend was speaking, I was not able to hang up the phone immediately. Then, the hostess shouted "tell me after you finish it". I was annoyed by what she said. I knew she was complaining about me. It seemed she had always been making fuss of trivial things since I mentioned that I was going to move out of this house later.

I always pay the full rent in time even though I quite often eat out. On top of that, I buy her flowers occasionally. However, having realised she wouldn't be able to get rents from me later, her attitude changed. According to the contract, our telephone bills are separate and I should have the right to make my phone call as a tenant, and that won't cost her a penny. What she did was unfair to me.

3.4 Incidents reflecting Associative Orientations

Several of the reports conveyed concerns over association issues; they expressed a desire for involvement or association rather than for autonomy or independence. The following incidents illustrate this.

Respondent N (female) Incident 8

My friends who lived with me since came here left this house - which is too far from school and too small also too expensive, but I stayed here. Because another friend of mine introduced it to me. She treated me well before. And the other people in this house are her friend. She promised me they could look after me as her done to me. But I was too disappointed my two friends leave me, we looked after each other like sisters. When the others (newly moved in) came back, they talked to each other, had supper together, looking like I was not here. I was tired and hungry, and no one noticed me. I moved from a warm family to a cold one. I had the sense of loss.

My friends treated me like their own sister. We lived in one house, the atmosphere was unity, but here was cool for me. Though, there were still three people lived with me, but it looked like only myself. And the house was too cold, as to I could (not) bear. That day I didn't have one meal, having nothing with me to eat, no one noticed me.

Respondent J (male) Incident 1

We (a group of students) were chatting the other day. I asked a girl who was strange to me, "Where are you from?" She answered, "Hong Kong". I said, "Oh, I'm a Chinese as well". She responded immediately, "No, I'm not a Chinese. I'm a Hong Kong-er and I wish Britain could take back Hong Kong." Having heard that, I was very angry, but I didn't say anything.

I was angry because as a Chinese, she showed so little filial devotion that she even forgot her Mother (Motherland). I was silent because it's true that the economy in Hong Kong is experiencing some difficulties, but it isn't the fault of the Chinese government. It is the Southeast-Asian economic crisis and the massive withdrawal of foreign capital that have led to the depression in Hong Kong. One day when China becomes a powerful country, I'll say to her, "Even though Mother can tolerate our remarks and acts, we children should never forget their mother, who has borne and brought them up."

3.5 Incidents reflecting Interpersonal and/or Intergroup Orientations

In terms of interpersonal versus intergroup orientation, several of the incidents show a clear intergroup orientation; for example:

Respondent B (female) Incident 8

One evening, I went to work in factory for night shift. I was late because the agency forgot to arrange the transport for me. To be reliable, I went to factory by taxi. It cost me much money, about a half of my wage that night. The supervisor didn't listen to my explanation. He asked me to leave for home, the words he said impressed me very much: "Even whites late, I'll also ask them go back home". I'm insulted.

I know he thought I'm a Chinese. He discriminate me. He thinks Chinese (maybe Colour) are not equal to White.

Respondent L (female) Incident 6

I once went to see a friend. I had to take a taxi since his house is somewhat remote. The taxi driver was an English man in his 50's. He mistook our destination because of my poor English pronunciation, and drove me to a street that I had never been to. After explaining laboriously where I would like to go, he finally understood me and drove me correctly to my friend's house. He just charged me for the right route and kept saying sorry to me.

Although it was my fault that led to the trouble, the driver time and again said that he should take the blame and he charged me fairly. The incident has convinced me that the English are civilised people; it reflects the degree of civilisation of a nation.

Other incidents reflected an intragroup orientation; for example:

Respondent D (female) Incident 3

It was happen in the afternoon. That day, my flat has fire alarm suddenly went off, in this situation. I had to go outside of the flat and my room lock was unlocked. So that my money were stolen by someone, who (is) from the same country with me. The problem is that I trust in him too much.

Even though, I'm very angry with him, I can do nothing to him, because he (is) from the same country.

(See also Respondent J Incident 1 reported in section 3.4.)

Yet others showed a mixture of interpersonal and intergroup orientation; for example:

Respondent J (male) Incident 4

The event took place in a Grammar lesson taught by Mary. When she was talking about the expression "apologise for being late", a French student told Mary that she was not able to follow her explanation because it was different from what she had learned in school in France. Even though Mary explained it to her several times, she couldn't understand it. Then Mary had to move on and continue the lesson. As I was sitting next to her and I understood the expression, I wanted to give her a hand, so I said, "I know its meaning". But she simply turned her book to the other page. I was very angry with her at that moment.

Because I thought she was looking down upon me, or us Chinese. Wasn't I capable of sorting out such a minor grammar problem? I was really angry.

Respondent F (female) Incident 1

That was happened on the first day I worked in Macdonald's. That was the second job for me. I had worked in Burger King before that. The manager introduced my colleagues and asked me that what can I do for the first day. I said that I can do the till, that mean I can be the crew member work in front of the till, deal with the customers. The manager answer "Can you? Are sure you can do that?" with doubt. I just felt "Why you can't believe me, only because I am not native speaker and I am Chinese as well."

The end of the story, I was working on the till. Normal employee must be work after 2 weeks, but I did that on my first day. I thought I must work harder than others, otherwise they might be look down at me.

I don't want to do things after other people. I must do everything well because I am other nationalities. I don't want anyone looking down at me I will do everything hard.

4. FUNDAMENTAL RAPPORT MANAGEMENT CONCERNS: AN ELABORATED FRAMEWORK

These incidents show that relational management is affected by at least the following:

- Concerns about both face and rights
- Concerns not only about autonomy but more broadly about cost–benefit
- Concerns about association as well as autonomy
- Variable orientations, including interpersonal, intergroup and intragroup

Although many of the incidents reported above describe concerns over general behaviour rather than strictly linguistic behaviour, I maintain that they are nevertheless very relevant to politeness theory. They illustrate the fundamental types of issues that people get concerned about, and that people therefore need to pay attention to during verbal interaction if they are to 'maintain the social equilibrium and friendly relations' (Leech 1983: 132). However, unlike politeness theory that takes language use as its starting point, I propose a model that starts with the management of relations and I call this a rapport management model.

I suggest that the motivational force for rapport management involves two main components: the management of face and the management of sociality rights. Face management, as the term indicates, involves the management of face needs and, following Goffman (1972: 5), I define face as 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself [*sic*] by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact' [my emphasis]. I define sociality rights as the 'fundamental personal/social entitlements that a person effectively claims for him/herself in his/her interactions with others', and I suggest that they are derived primarily from personal/social expectancies and need to be handled appropriately. In other words, face is associated with personal/social value, and is concerned with people's sense of worth, credibility, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on. Sociality rights, on the other hand, are concerned with personal/social entitlements, and reflect people's concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusion and so on.

I suggest that face has the following two interrelated aspects:

1. *Quality face*: We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; e.g. our competence, abilities, appearance etc. *Quality face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem.
2. *Social Identity face*: We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend. *Role Identity face* is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles, and is closely associated with our sense of public worth.

Similarly, I suggest that sociality rights have two interrelated aspects:

3. *Equity Rights*: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled. There seem to be two components to this equity entitlement: the notion of *cost–benefit* (the extent to which we are exploited, disadvantaged or benefitted, and the belief that costs and benefits should be kept roughly in balance through the principle of reciprocity), and the related issue of *autonomy–imposition* (the extent to which people control us or impose on us).

4. *Association Rights*: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them. These association rights relate partly to *interactional association – dissociation* (the type and extent of our involvement with others), so that we feel, for example, that we are entitled to an appropriate amount of conversational interaction and social chit-chat with others (e.g. not ignored on the one hand, but not overwhelmed on the other). They also relate to *affective association – dissociation* (the extent to which we share concerns, feelings and interests). Naturally, what counts as ‘an appropriate amount’ depends on the nature of the relationship, as well as sociocultural norms and personal preferences.

The components of the model, and their interrelationships, are shown diagrammatically in Table 1.

Table 1: Components of Rapport Management

RAPPORT MANAGEMENT		
	Face Management (Personal/Social Value)	Sociality Rights Management (Personal/Social Entitlements)
Personal/Independent Perspective	Quality Face (cf. Brown and Levinson’s positive face)	Equity Rights (cf. Brown and Levinson’s negative face)
Social/Interdependent Perspective	Social Identity Face	Association Rights

Source: Spencer-Oatey 2000: 15

As can be seen, rapport management is conceptualised as having two motivational sources: concerns over face and concerns over sociality rights. Face, of course, is central to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model; however, their model primarily emphasises a personal or individual conceptualisation of face, and so this model develops it by making the interpersonal or social component much more explicit. It thereby incorporates the important distinction between independent and interdependent perspectives that was suggested by Markus and Kitayama (1991) and developed by people such as Morisaki and Gudykunst (1994) and Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). The model also takes account of the valid criticisms of people such as Matsumoto (1988), Ide (1989) and Mao (1994) that Brown and Levinson’s model is too focused on individual autonomy.

The notion of sociality rights relates partly to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) concept of negative face but is not synonymous with it, in that it is broader in scope and is not limited to autonomy–imposition issues. It includes concerns about association as well as cost–benefit issues, and does not assume that autonomy/independence is always the preferred option. Moreover, sociality rights are not treated as face issues, in that an infringement of sociality rights may simply lead to annoyance or irritation, rather than to a sense of face threat or loss (although it is possible, of course, that both will occur). Similarly, a request for help, which could be regarded as an imposition or ‘costly’ act, may not in fact be regarded as an infringement of equity rights at all. On the contrary, it may be regarded as a boost to quality face, since the request shows trust in the other person’s qualities (Turner, 1996: 4), or simply as an acknowledgement of association rights. I maintain, therefore, that it is important to separate the two concepts of face and sociality rights.

The following examples illustrate how participants can focus on different rapport management concerns and how relational tensions can result when this happens.

Example 1: A Chinese professor visited a British university for one month in order to collect some data for his research. At the end of his visit, the Head of Department said to him ‘We’ve enjoyed having you here, and hope you found your stay useful. I do hope we can keep in touch.’ The professor gave a courteous reply, but inwardly he was disappointed that he had not been invited to give a guest lecture on his research. He wondered whether the staff in the department looked down on what he was doing, and decided it was not worth maintaining the contact. In fact, the Head of Department had been trying to be considerate – he wanted to give the professor the maximum opportunity to fulfil his research objectives, and simply wanted to avoid giving him any ‘duties’ that might distract him from that (i.e. he was focusing on the professor’s personal cost–benefit equity rights). The professor, on the

other hand, interpreted the lack of invitation as a threat to his quality face. After the professor returned to China, one of his junior colleagues asked him about his trip, including the question 'How many talks did you give on your research?' The professor found this extremely face-threatening and avoided giving a direct answer. He was afraid that if he admitted 'none', his reputation and standing in the department would go down (i.e. that he would lose social identity face).

Example 2: A delegation of Chinese business people visited a British company from whom they had bought some engineering products. During the first few days, a number of problems arose which they very much wanted to talk over with the British sales manager whom they had met in China. Unfortunately, however, he was away on a six week overseas trip, and was not returning until the Thursday evening prior to their departure the following Tuesday. They expected him to come and meet them immediately after his return, and when he did not do so on the Friday, they started asking to see him. This continued all over the weekend (when other British staff were accompanying them on excursions), and the British became irritated. They did not contact the sales manager, and it was Monday before he turned up. The Chinese visitors complained bitterly about this to their local interpreter. They thought the sales manager was their friend since they had hosted him in China, and thus felt that they had the right to see him immediately after his return (i.e. they were focusing on their association rights). The British, on the other hand, were concerned about the manager's personal equity rights – his need for some rest and refreshment after a long trip.

I am not claiming that these different motivational components are totally absent from Brown and Levinson's (1987) model, but rather that an elaboration of them helps bring into clearer focus the different relational tensions that can occur when any of them are ignored or when participants focus on different rapport management concerns.

5. FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

The motivational bases of rapport management described above need to be supplemented with a process perspective: an account of the dynamics of language use, including the factors influencing language production/interpretation. A comprehensive model thus needs to incorporate at least the following:

- the rapport orientations that people hold when interacting with others, including both their rapport management goals (e.g. whether they want to enhance, maintain or challenge social relations), and their interactional orientations (interpersonal, intergroup or both; cf. Gudykunst and Kim, 1997).
- the role of contextual variables (e.g. participant relations, message content, social/interactional roles and communicative activity)
- the role of pragmatic conventions (e.g. sociopragmatic conventions such as Leech's (1983) Politeness Maxims, and pragmalinguistic conventions; cf. Thomas, 1983)

It also needs to examine at least the following:

- the strategies available in a given language for conveying rapport-relevant information (e.g. whether honorifics exist in a given language or not)
- the different domains across which rapport-relevant information can be conveyed (e.g. the illocutionary domain which involves the performance/interpretation of speech acts, the discourse domain which concerns the discourse content and discourse structure of an interchange, the participation domain which concerns the procedural aspects of an interchange such as overlaps or inter-turn pauses, the stylistic domain which concerns the stylistic aspects on an interchange such as choice of tone, and the non-verbal domain which concerns the non-verbal aspects of an interchange such as gestures or other body movements).

Moreover, cultural differences need to be considered, and I suggest that there may be at least the following types of differences:

- There may be cultural differences in people's likely level of sensitivity to the varying rapport management components. For example, people from some cultures (e.g. many Western

societies) may be particularly concerned about personal rights while people in other societies (e.g. many East Asian societies) may be particularly concerned about social identity face (e.g. see Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2000).

- People's conceptions of rights and obligations are likely to be culturally influenced. This is probably especially true of role-related rights and obligations (see, for example, *Respondent M Incident 1*, in section 3.2).
- Cultures may differ in their preferred strategies for mitigating potential threat to rapport. Strategy choice and use is an aspect that has not been dealt with at all in this paper, but is obviously a very important issue.

A detailed discussion of all these issues is beyond the scope of this paper; however, for a more extended description, see Spencer-Oatey (2000).

Finally, it is necessary to consider the extent to which face and sociality rights are distinct concepts: do they exist at two ends of a continuum, do they give rise to different types of affective reaction, or are they inextricably intertwined? The social psychologist, Michael Bond (personal communication), maintains that 'face is too vague and metaphorical for social scientific use', and yet he also acknowledges that it is a very useful concept that needs to be elaborated. A major problem is that we do not know how to measure people's level of face sensitivity, except perhaps very indirectly by examining their use of language. However, if we could develop a way of independently measuring people's face sensitivity, as well as their sense of sociality rights, we could begin to unravel such questions. It is not difficult to measure the latter, but the former is far more challenging. Nevertheless, I believe it is definitely something worth working towards.

Notes

¹ The author would like to thank Xiong Zhaoning for collecting the data reported in this paper.

² The incidents that students reported in English (rather than Chinese) have not been corrected for their grammatical mistakes but are quoted verbatim.

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