

IDEOLOGIES OF POLITENESS: FOREWORD

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This special issue contains 9 papers which deal with ideological aspects of politeness. Most of them (8) were first presented within the panel "Ideologies of Politeness" at the 6th International Pragmatics Conference (Reims, 19-24 July 1998) and were later thoroughly revised. At the panel, Gino Eelen acted as a general discussant who gave critical comments on the other papers. His contribution to this special issue is a revised version of these comments.

After the conference, Richard Watts was so kind to agree to act as a critical reader who gave suggestions and critical comments on most of the papers of the panel. More than this, he also helped to improve the English of some papers and contributed a paper of his own. For all this highly valuable and generous support I would like to thank him very much.

I would also like to thank the editors for accepting this collection of papers for publication in "Pragmatics", thus making it accessible for a wide international readership. That ideologies of politeness are indeed an extremely interesting subject for linguistic research is amply demonstrated by the fact that only a few months after the panel was held at the IPrA Conference an international conference dealt exclusively with this important issue. It took place at the University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium (5-6 November 1998) under the title "Politesse et idéologie" ("Politeness and ideology").

As there are so many different uses and definitions of both 'ideology' and 'politeness', it might be useful to introduce a preliminary demarkation of these concepts in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. 'Ideology' here and in most contributions to this special issue is used as a cover term for differing sets of ideas, beliefs, values and goals which together provide a more or less coherent global perspective of the social and political world which is shared within a given group (but cf. Billig 1982: 3ff. on internal inconsistencies of ideologies). These ideas and categories can be part of the world view of lay people, but can also be used to elaborate more systematic and coherent scientific theories about the social world. Defined in this way, 'ideology' does not necessarily have negative connotations as in the Marxist tradition, where ideologies were characterized as "false consciousness". Rather, they could be characterized in a more neutral way as "the basis of the social representations shared by the members of a group" (van Dijk 1998: 8; cf. also Harris 1970 and Woolard 1992: 237ff., who discuss a wide range of definitions of 'ideology').

Seen from this perspective, ideologies are simply indispensable for integrating different beliefs, norms, values into a global perspective of a group in a society or culture. This does not mean, however, that ideologies (or at least some parts of them) are not open to criticism and discussion (for approaches which criticize ideology in

general or more specifically cf. e.g. Habermas 1971, Eco 1975: 365ff., Barthes 1974: 85ff., Gipper 1978; on language ideologies cf. Kroskrity et al. 1992).

As far as politeness is concerned, in a first approximation it can be understood as a set of (verbal) routines and strategies which are used to enhance cooperative interaction by "establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group [...] during the ongoing process of interaction" (Watts 1992: 50, cf. also Kienpointner 1997: 259). Moreover, two types of politeness can be distinguished: "first order politeness", "the common sense notions of politeness", and "second order politeness", "a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage" (Watts et al. 1992: 3).

The contributions to this special issue try to describe and/or criticize ideological aspects of both first order politeness (e.g. stereotypes of lay people about (im)polite behaviour, which only partially correspond to the details of authentic communicative interaction) and second order politeness (e.g. tacit ideological assumptions underlying current politeness theories like Lakoff 1975, Leech 1983, Brown/Levinson 1987). In this way, they all try to create a richer and more adequate theory of politeness. This is achieved both by more theoretically orientated contributions which try to develop alternative theories of politeness and communication (cf. especially Robert Arundale, Gino Eelen) and by more empirically orientated contributions; the latter confront current politeness theories with empirical data which are difficult to explain within these frameworks, and point out possible adjustments in politeness theories (cf. especially the articles of Gudrun Held, Nieves Hernández Flores, Shigeko Okamoto, Renate Rathmayr, Marina Terkourafi). Richard Watts adds a further aspect, namely, the internal discrepancies and the historical change of differing ideologies of politeness in early modern British society. Furthermore, Peter Klotz deals with ideological aspects of the interesting relationship between politeness and political correctness.

In the following, I would like to describe the contributions to this volume in some more detail. They deal with politeness on the basis of authentic data from spoken and written varieties of a remarkably wide range of languages (in alphabetical order): English, French, German, (Modern) Greek, Italian, Japanese, Russian and Spanish.

This special issue is opened with the contribution by Richard Watts, who analyses the changes of ideologies underlying norms of politeness in British society from early modern times to the present day. These ideologies not only reflect changes in the social hierarchy in British society (from nobility and gentry to the middle classes), but also shifts as far as the corresponding language ideology is concerned, which moves away from diversity ("the myth of variety") to uniformity ("the discourse of right English").

Gudrun Held's paper deals with the ideological connection between politeness and power: hierarchical structures can be regulated and stabilized by politeness formulas. Social power is reflected especially in the content of politeness formulas expressing submission, even if the social hierarchies have changed considerably since the formulas first came in use. To illustrate this, she presents a typology of submission formulas, using both diachronic and synchronic French and Italian data.

Nieves Hernández Flores uses audio-taped data from everyday conversations to show that in these dialogues the speech act of giving advice can be a "face-enhancing act" (cf. Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997: 14) rather than a face-threatening act (which would be

presumed by the politeness theory of Brown/Levinson 1987). This means that claims of universality in politeness theory can be criticized because they are actually influenced by culture-specific ideologies of politeness.

Similarly, Renate Rathmayr uses authentic Russian data taken from different kinds of oral and written texts to show 1) that typical Russian politeness strategies (especially the importance of social status and the role of positive politeness) pose problems for a politeness theory of the Brown/Levinson-type and 2) that due to the enormous social change within the past few years and the growing influence of western culture, conflicting views and tendencies concerning politeness have emerged in Russian society.

Shigeko Okamoto treats the usage of Japanese honorifics. She presents audio-taped Japanese conversations from various situational settings. She also uses letters to the editor and passages from etiquette books to show that assumptions of both lay people and linguists concerning the usage of Japanese honorifics are falsified by the complexities of their actual usage. She tries to refine the conversational analysis of Japanese honorifics by assuming a more indirect relationship between the form of these particles and their function in a given context.

Marina Terkourafi deals with differences between the use of diminutive forms in Standard Modern Greek (=SMG) and Cypriot Greek (=CG) which would not be expected according to current theories of politeness. Using empirical data from recordings of everyday conversations and questionnaires, she argues that these differences and the range of conversational uses of diminutives in SMG and CG can be better described by means of a cognitive framework which uses "frames" for explaining their usage.

Robert Arundale tries to solve the problems of current politeness theories of the Brown/Levinson-type by developing a competing theoretical framework ("an alternative model and ideology of communication"), which he calls the "co-constituting model". In this model, communication and politeness are explained as phenomena which emerge in dynamic interaction. This means that conversational understanding is not guaranteed by a shared linguistic code or a given system of rules, but is rather dynamically co-constituted by the interacting individuals in an ongoing process of interpreting and producing utterances. In this framework, the conversational dyad rather than the interacting individuals is the minimum unit of analysis for communication. Arundale introduces a number of more specific principles of this alternative model and points out their advantages for explaining politeness phenomena.

Peter Klotz demonstrates that the various sets of rules for political correctness have an interesting connection with politeness: as soon as one system of political correctness appears to be identical with rules of polite behaviour, the ideological character of political correctness fades into the background and politically correct behaviour simply becomes normal, unmarked, polite behaviour. This is illustrated with a passage from Max Frisch's drama "Andorra".

Finally, Gino Eelen deals with all original contributions to the panel which was held in Reims and points out that despite their valuable improvements of current theoretical assumptions about politeness, they all more or less rely on a somehow vague and problematic concept of "culture" and "sharedness" of politeness rules. More particularly, Eelen argues that they all have problems when dealing with individual variability or

rather try to explain them away by portraying cultures or social groups as "basically like-minded people".

Taken together, the papers in this volume provide interesting theoretical, empirical and historical answers to some of the complex questions which are posed by the description of the fascinating phenomenon of politeness. Hopefully, they can thus contribute to an elaboration of current politeness theory, both as far as theoretical adequacy is concerned and as far as coverage of and compatibility with empirical data is concerned.

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