Introduction by Editors of the Special Edition

Introduction: Politeness and Impoliteness Research

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Politeness and impoliteness (hereafter (im)politeness) phenomena constitute an important social practice in our everyday and professional interactions. Being once an issue in the code of conduct protocols, (im)politeness nowadays marks an interdisciplinary scientific field. The scientific explanation of politeness started in Pragmatics (an interdisciplinary study of language in communication) since Grice (1975) and Leech (1983), but the publication of Brown and Levinson´s Politeness theory in a paper (1978) that was expanded to a book (1987) marks a significant breakthrough in politeness research, which was very consequential to the development of its mother discipline, Pragmatics. Since then, (im)politeness has attracted the attention of scholars in Pragmatics, Communication, and Social Psychology (among other disciplines) for more than three decades.

In theorizing politeness, Brown and Levinson draw upon the writings of Erving Goffman (an American Sociologist) about ´face´. Face has been defined by Goffman as a positive social value a person claims in interaction (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). Brown and Levinson suggested that politeness involves strategies that are in the service of mitigating the threat to 'face' in communication. They further drew upon speech act theory already introduced to Pragmatics by two philosophers of language, John Austin and John Searle. Brown and Levinson contended that "some speech acts are intrinsically face threatening and thus require softening" (p. 61). They defined face as a "public self-image a person effectively claims for himself in interactions", and assumed politeness as an attempt to mitigate the threat incurred to the face of either the hearer or the speaker (or both). Brown and Levinson proposed that every participant in an interaction cooperates with the interlocutor to maintain each side's face; in their words, he does "facework" (p. 65). The three social factors of power, social distance, and the rank of imposition are the determinants in assessing the degree of threat that is perceived by speakers to incur to face. Following Brown and Levinson, Culpeper (1996) defined impoliteness as a threat to face and as constituting a set of strategies that direct at face-loss in a direction reverse to Brown and Levinson´s face mitigating strategies.

Although Brown and Levinson did not rule out the importance of cultural specifications on politeness, their claim of universality of face and politeness was not well embraced in later research. Criticisms of the face-based theory of politeness gave rise to the second wave of politeness research, which was named discursive or postmodern approach to politeness. Discursive studies on politeness (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005) provide a shift in the epistemology of politeness from politeness as a speaker's intended and strategic concern for face (Brown and Levinson, 1987) to politeness as hearer's 'evaluations' of the speaker's linguistic and nonlinguistic behavior (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005; Kádár and Mills, 2011, Kádár and Haugh, 2013, Izadi, 2015, 2016, 2019). This shift of focus was initiated by Eelen (2001) in his meticulous critique of traditional approaches to politeness. Along the lines of the discursive approaches to politeness, Locher and Watts (2005) provide an alternative theory of politeness to Brown and Levinson´s face saving theory. Locher and Watts (2005) describe a range of possible "judgments" participants make on their own and interlocutors' linguistic behavior within the wider 'discursive' practice of 'relational work' they invest in communication. These judgments are ranged from impolite, through non-polite, through polite to over-polite (p.12). There are two sources for the hearers to resort in the process of their evaluation of utterances as polite/politic/impolite, etc. First is the socially approved norms and canons of appropriateness in a community of practice. Second is their own expectations based on past experience, which is called 'frame' as well as unconscious "predisposition to act in certain ways" (Watts, 2003). This move is important in that it places the significance of (im)politeness evaluations from the intention of the speakers to the interpretation of hearers (Kádár and Haugh, 2013). Politeness and impoliteness, therefore, are judgmental

attitudes that hearers or recipients develop subsequent to the speakers´ eminence of behavior. Such a view expands the scope of (im)politeness to include both linguistic and non-linguistic behavior, both said and unsaid, and to encompass the whole social behavior (Izadi, 2015). Understanding (im)politeness in this sense allows variability in the interpretation of what counts polite, impolite, over-polite, etc., (Kádár and Haugh, 2013) and does not subject such evaluations to an agreeable resolution (Haugh, 2015).

With regard to ´face`_the twin concept of (im)politeness_ critiques of the face-saving view to politeness and to a less extent impoliteness concluded that a distinct theory of face independent of (im)politeness is required (Arundale, 2010, 2020; Izadi, 2017a, b, 2018). This follows a critique of Brown and Levinson´s theory that it is more interpretable as a theory of 'facework' and 'FTA mitigation' rather than a theory of politeness (Locher and Watts, 2005). Locher and Watts (2005), for example, argue that, while face is present in every "relational work", it is not necessarily a motivation for politeness. Locher and Watts (2005) then define "relational work" as "the work individuals invest in negotiating relationship with others". Face is taken as a broad notion that overlays and underlies every kind of interpersonal communication, and politeness is only one of the components of a bigger account of interpersonal communication (Locher and Watts, 2005). In fact, politeness theory provided an opportunity for pragmatics scholars to see the significance of face in human communication, leading to the new conceptualization of face as independent from politeness (Arundale, 2010, 2020). However, the interrelationship between the two concepts of face and (im)politeness can hardly be questioned.

Contributing to the field of (im)politeness, this special issue is allocated to cutting-edge research that significantly advances our understanding of the complex phenomena of (im)politeness both in terms of theory and data. The papers in this special issue represent a diverse range of topics and contexts and draw upon data from a variety of languages and cultures, authored by scholars who are geographically scattered from Taiwan in the east to Brazil in the west of the globe. The first paper by Marti and Portolés focuses on teachers´ (im)politeness in pre-school education in Spain and provides insights into our understanding of the directive speech acts in pre-school teachers´ talk with their students. Oliveira and Miranda, in another paper, investigate impoliteness in the virtual world and particularly on twitter, using tweets that reacted to President Joe Biden´s insult to a journalist. Their analyses draw on online fieldwork that produces both quantitative results and qualitative arguments. Izadi´s paper looks into (im)politeness in intercultural communication and presents an analysis of the data that reveal Iranian students´ evaluation of their professors and supervisors in terms of (im)politeness. His data also include Malaysian professors` evaluations of their Iranian students in terms of (im)politeness. Another paper by Tseng and Chen introduces the theoretical concept of Mutual Face Maintaining Act and uses data in sports context in English to show how some speech acts in the sport context ambivalently attend to both speaker and hearer´s face, and therefore, are considered mutual face maintaining act. Finally, Hosseini´s paper addresses the ubiquitous account of face in Persian and discusses its relevance to the construct of identity from social psychological perspective. Hosseini´s paper uses ethnography of communication and analysis of cultural words in Persian to examine the multifaceted notion of face in Persian. All in all, the papers in this special issue provide significant contributions not only to the field of (im)politeness and face, but to Applied Linguistics in general, as all involve the application of language in different walks of life. We do hope that the readers of Research in Applied Linguistics will find the papers both enjoyable and informative.

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