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Politeness and Rapport Management

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Abstract

This chapter reviews work on politeness and rapport management from an intercultural pragmatics perspective. After an initial introduction, the first main section considers conceptual and methodological challenges and explores three key issues: the various ways in which culture has been conceptualised within politeness theory, the challenge of integrating micro and macro perspectives on intercultural interaction, and first-order and second-order perspectives on politeness and culture. The second main section of the chapter turns to the performance of intercultural politeness. It starts by reporting on the many intercultural studies that have analysed the impact of different speech and behavioural practices on interpersonal relations. It then reviews the much smaller number of intercultural politeness studies that have examined interlocutors' potentially different interpretations of the context. After this, it turns to the possible impact of differing cultural values on intercultural politeness. The third main section focuses on intercultural politeness from an evaluation perspective. It presents recent theorising on the evaluation process and considers methodological challenges in obtaining and interpreting relevant data. The chapter ends by proposing some areas for future research.

Introduction

This chapter explores politeness and rapport management from the perspective of intercultural pragmatics, aiming to give an overview of current perspectives.

Watts (2005, p. xii) has referred to politeness as "a slippery, ultimately indefinable quality of interaction" and Spencer-Oatey (2008b) says she avoids using the term 'politeness' because it is confusing. She uses 'rapport management' instead. This is in line with many early perspectives that explained politeness in terms of its function, saying its purpose is to minimise the risk of confrontation (Lakoff, 1989, p. 102), to maintain friendly relations (Leech, 1983, p. 82), and to show consideration for others and to promote rapport (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986, p. 349). This relational/relating interpretation of politeness is also in line with more recent work (e.g. Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021) and it is the interpretation taken in this chapter. The topic is explored from an intercultural perspective.

Up to now, the vast majority of the work on the interface between culture and politeness has taken a cross-cultural approach. In other words, it has comprised comparative studies of the ways in which politeness is manifested in different languages and linguaculture groups. There has been far less research into intercultural politeness, which concerns the process of relating between or among interlocutors of different cultural backgrounds. For instance, a search in the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) Bibliography of Pragmatics online, which had over 60,000 entries in January 2020, yielded 1034 hits for 'intercultural', 862 hits for 'politeness', but only 35 hits for 'Intercultural + Politeness'. While clearly not definitive, it nevertheless gives an indicative picture of the relative dearth of work in this area.

There are a number of conceptual and methodological reasons that may lie behind the limited amount of focus on intercultural politeness, and these are considered in the next section. This is followed by a review of research into the performance of intercultural politeness, and then by an overview of research into the evaluation process. The chapter ends by discussing future directions.

Conceptual and methodological challenges

Conceptualising culture

The notion of intercultural politeness inevitably raises the question of culture. Within politeness theory, viewpoints on the nature and role of culture have been very varied. Early approaches, notably those of Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Brown and Levinson (1987), were broadly universalist in orientation, although all of them left room for some cultural specificity. They each argued that politeness was motivated by a universal principle, such as the management of face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) or the operation of the Politeness Principle (Leech, 1983; relabelled later as the General Strategy of Politeness, Leech, 2014). For Brown and Levinson (1987), cultural differences could be reflected in differing conceptualisations of the three social variables in their model: the power (P) and distance (D) of the interlocutors and the degree of imposition (R) of the message. Lakoff (1973) argued that although the politeness rules were universal, their order of precedence could vary across cultures. Re Leech's framework, several researchers (e.g. Chen, 1993; Spencer-Oatey, Ng, & Dong, 2008) have argued that the relative importance of his politeness maxims can be used to explain cultural differences in the performance of speech acts such as compliments.

Several criticisms have been directed at some of this early work on politeness and culture: that culture is not unpacked, that it is treated as a monolith (e.g. as encompassing nationality, language, race and ethnicity), and that it is regarded as a fixed and stable influence. For instance, Bond, Žegarac, and Spencer-Oatey (2000), referring to much cross-cultural pragmatic research of the time, argued that different behavioural practices are simply identified as 'cultural differences', without any unpacking of what 'cultural' actually refers to. Blommaert (1991) argued that intercultural studies often assumed that cultural influences are "'always there' a priori" and are regarded as "independent of discourse-internal adaptations" (p.14). However, following a range of criticisms of politeness theory by Eelen (2001), including of the way in which culture had been conceptualised in politeness theories up to that point, several different approaches have emerged, including the discursive turn (e.g. Watts, 2003), the frame-based approach (e.g. Terkourafi, 2005), the genre approach (e.g. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich, 2010), and the rapport management framework (Spencer-Oatey, 2008a), each holding different conceptualisations of culture.

In discursive approaches, culture and politeness are seen as dynamic constructs that emerge in actual interactions, rather than pre-determined constructs. Nevertheless, Locher and Watts (2005) maintain the following:

> While we have repeatedly stressed that no utterance is inherently polite, we do claim that individuals evaluate certain utterances as polite against the background of their own habitus, or, to put it in another way, against the structures of expectation evoked within the frame of the interaction. (p.29)

So, can these 'structures of expectation' be regarded as cultural? They are clearly cognitively based, but are those cognitions individual or social? Such questions bring us to an even more fundamental issue: the micro–macro issue (Haugh, 2010).

Integrating micro and macro perspectives

Most politeness research focuses on interactions between individuals and analyses both participants' behaviour and the cognition underlying their behaviour (including their declarative and procedural knowledge, and other facets of memory, Anderson et al., 2004). This constitutes a micro perspective. However, if we are to analyse intercultural interaction, we also need to include a macro perspective and thereby incorporate the cultural element. In other words, we need to be able to explain how behavioural patterns and expectations that are distributed across members of a cultural group can interface with the dynamics of individual behaviour and interpretation.

Fundamental to this concern is the variability that has been found to exist across members of any cultural group (e.g. Fischer & Schwartz, 2011; Haugh & Chang, 2019). Eelen concludes that, in light of this variability and the risk of simplistic explanations, culture is "at best a non-neutral concept and at worst a stigmatizing one" (Eelen, 2001, p. 173). Yet, as Haugh and Kádár (2017, p. 603) argue, politeness issues are often a very real concern for participants of intercultural encounters, and so the conceptual challenge of integrating the micro and macro perspectives, and accounting for the variability that exists within any cultural group, still needs to be grappled with.

Insights from combined research in cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence and neuroscience may be helpful here. Drawing together work in these various fields, Laird, Lebiere, and Rosenbloom (2017) propose a "standard model of the mind" which is comprised of a set of modules, each of which is dedicated to processing a particular kind of information. They maintain these include the following: long-term memory modules that store factual and episodic information (declarative knowledge) and representations of how we do things (procedural knowledge); perceptual-motor modules that enable us to interface behaviourally with the 'real world' (e.g. visually, in speech); and a working memory module that acts as a "temporary global space" (p.22) that handles the dynamics of input and output from the other modules. Anderson et al. (2004) further explain this as follows:

> Coordination in the behavior of these modules is achieved through a central production system. This central production system is not sensitive to most of the activity of these modules but rather can only respond to a limited amount of information that is deposited in the buffers of these modules. For instance, people are not aware of all the information in the visual field but only the object they are currently attending to. Similarly, people are not aware of all the information in long-term memory but only the fact currently retrieved. (Anderson et al., 2004, p. 1037)

From a perspective such as this, cultural differences reside largely (although not exclusively) in the declarative and procedural long-term memory modules. According to Spencer-Oatey, Lefringhausen, and Debray (2019) and Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021), declarative and procedural cultural knowledge is manifested in various types of patterns and patterning, notably schematic representations (e.g. of communicative activities or role responsibilities), social norms and expectations, and fundamental values and perspectives on life. As Schwartz (2011, p. 476) explains, these are subject to significant within-culture as well as cross-cultural variability. This is because members of a given society are exposed to the press of culture in unique ways, because of their different locations within that society and their membership of multiple social groups. As a result, the contents of different people's declarative and procedural memory modules will display variability, albeit with family resemblance-type similarities and differences within a given social group, as prototype theory makes clear.

Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) maintain that the cultural patterning has a framing impact on the dynamics of interaction as it occurs in specific communicative activities. For example, it may affect the functioning of the perceptual-motor modules, such as by influencing what interlocutors pay attention to. This seems congruent with Garcés-Conejos Blitvich's (2010) genre approach to politeness, in which a top-down predictive perspective (derived from the nature of the communicative event) is combined with a bottom-up co-constructed, emergent perspective, with both affecting the unfolding interaction.

First-order and second-order perspectives on politeness and culture

Watts, Ide, and Ehlich (1992) have argued that a distinction needs to be made between first-order and second-order politeness, which they define as follows:

> We take first-order politeness to correspond to the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of sociocultural groups. […] Second-order politeness, on the other hand, is a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage. (Watts et al., 1992, p. 3)

Moreover, Eelen (2001) contends that the two should be congruent:

> A situation in which the scientific account contradicts informants' claims and dismisses them as being 'wrong' does not represent a healthy situation. Such a practice immediately leads to a rupture between scientific and commonsense notions, causing the theory to lose its grasp of the object of analysis. (Eelen, 2001, p. 253)

Eelen (2001) also maintains that there are actually two sides to first-order politeness:

(a) an intuitive politeness-in-action side, in which participants display politeness through practice, both in their linguistic/behavioural choices (labelled by Eelen as expressive politeness) and in their evaluative comments/judgements on the behaviour of their interlocutors (labelled by Eelen as classificatory politeness);

(b) a conscious conceptual side in which lay people comment explicitly and in a detached manner on the concept of politeness and how it is or should be displayed (labelled by Eelen as metapragmatic politeness).

From a research perspective, this indicates that the following data can (or need to) be analysed: interactional data, data that indicates and/or conveys politeness interpretations/evaluations, and lay metapragmatic comments on the notion of politeness. A second-order theory of politeness should then be able to analyse and explain each of these types of data. In subsequent sections of this chapter, some of the challenges of achieving this are discussed.

Kádár and Haugh (2013, p. 41) mention that the first-order/second-order distinction has been used in other areas of linguistics and beyond. So the question emerges: can it be usefully applied to culture? Schnurr and Zayts (2017) attempt to do so, yet they do not follow the conceptual distinctions described above. For instance, they refer to linguistic and behavioural practices that become normative for members of a specific group as second-order culture when, according to Eelen's (2001) conceptualisation, this would actually count as first-order data.

What kinds of data, then, should be used for studying intercultural politeness? Drawing on the same principles as Eelen (2001) proposes, it would include:

- Interactional data that display manifestations of cultural patterning, both in interlocutors' linguistic/behavioural choices and their evaluative comments/judgements on the behaviour of their interlocutors;

- Lay people's metapragmatic comments on the concept of culture, its influence on behaviour, and their attitudes towards it.

However, this raises further challenges. Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009, p. 3) define an intercultural situation as one in which the participants perceive the impact of culture in some way. In fact, though, in much intercultural research it is simply assumed that any interactional data involving participants from different linguacultural groups (especially different national groups) counts as intercultural. Yet as Haugh (2010) points out, and as Spencer-Oatey and Franklin's (2009) definition indicates, that perception needs to be demonstrated in a way that can be picked up by a second-order analysis. In relation to this, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) maintain that participants' perceptions of cultural differences may not always relate to cultural patterning, but may also be reflected in 'them and us' comments. This means that a second-order theory of culture needs to be able to explain all facets of culture perceived and revealed by participants, covering the impact of cultural identities as well as cultural patterning. These issues and challenges are discussed further in relation to the interactional data analysed below.

Performing intercultural politeness

Research within politeness theory started by seeking to explain polite (rather than impolite) behaviour and it was quite a number of years later that it turned to seeking to account for impolite/rude behaviour (see Culpeper, 2011, for a useful overview of im/politeness theory). In the intercultural field the reverse has been the case. The majority of work has focused on analysing interactions that have had a negative impact on relations, with far less research into positive or enhanced relations (cf. Spencer-Oatey & Wang, 2020).

In terms of the features analysed, many studies have explored the impact of different speech and behavioural practices on interpersonal relations; sometimes other aspects have been examined, including differing perceptions of the communicative context and the impact of differing cultural values. These different foci are considered in turn in the following sub-sections.

Communication practices

Haugh (2010, p. 152) points out that most research on intercultural politeness has focused on interactional data. This has meant the focus of analysis is usually on whatever differences in communication practices emerge in specific encounters, often with an underlying assumption of pragmatic transfer (Žegarac & Pennington, 2008). Features analysed include, *inter alia,* aspects of the linguistic code, such as intonation (e.g. Gumperz, 1982) and lexis (e.g. Tyler, 1995); participation patterns such as turn-taking (e.g. Holmes, 2018) and silence (e.g. Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2005); speech acts such as apologies (e.g. Grieve, 2010) and disagreement (e.g. Günthner, 2008); and communication styles such as directness–indirectness (e.g. Miller, 2008) and socially minimal–expanded (e.g. Bailey, 1997). Methodologically, Haugh (2010) points out that if analysts are to demonstrate intercultural politeness, they need to provide evidence of the impact that the features have on interpersonal relations and also of the cultural differences that make the encounter into an intercultural one.

Much intercultural interaction research has not actually focused on politeness *per* se, but rather has aimed at analysing miscommunication and discrimination more broadly, especially in contexts of power, such as in court (e.g. Eades, 2003) or in gatekeeping interviews (e.g. Grazia Guido, 2004;

Roberts, Davies, & Jupp, 1992). A key early figure who worked in this area was the anthropologist, John Gumperz, and one of his well-known studies has a politeness and rapport angle. It concerns newly hired Indian and Pakistani women who were working in a staff cafeteria at a major British airport and who were perceived by their supervisors and staff customers to be surly and uncooperative in their serving manner (Gumperz, 1982, pp. 173-174). Gumperz reports that following an observation study, intonation was found to be the problem. The Indian and Pakistani women were using falling intonation when asking if the customer wanted gravy, while a British assistant would say "Gravy?" using rising intonation. Some discussion/teaching sessions were held with the new recruits, in which they were encouraged to listen for differences in intonation and were told what a falling intonation would mean in this context to the local clients. Gumperz reports that the women then understood why they had been getting negative reactions, and the supervisors became aware that no rudeness or indifference was intended when the women used a falling intonation.

In this example, evidence of a relational problem emerged first through a complaint or a request for help (we are not told which), and this then led to the collection and analysis of interactional data. It is not clear whether recordings were also made of British servers, nor of Indian/Pakistani servers functioning in their own language and local context, so that the intonational differences could be empirically substantiated. Nevertheless, the conclusion seemed to make sense to all concerned and Gumperz (1982) reports that relations significantly improved after the intervention. Culture here was interpreted as a habitual linguistic intonation pattern used when requesting information, and the problem arose because of negative pragmatic transfer.

Another study that aimed to investigate a pre-existing relational situation is reported by Bailey (1997, 2000). During the 1980s and 1990s, there were frequent newspaper reports in the USA of conflict between immigrant Korean retailers and African American customers, and Bailey wanted to explore this at an interactional level. He collected data from six different stores in Los Angeles, carrying out interviews, observation, and video recordings. The interviews were held with members of the respective communities, and he asked them about their perceptions of each other's behaviour during service encounters. He reports that African Americans felt disrespected through the following behaviours that they reported experiencing frequently: lack of acknowledgement on entry to the store, failure to smile, and failure to look directly at them. He reports that Korean retailers criticised African American customers for being too self-centred and having too dramatic and forceful an interactional style. Bailey also collected videotaped recordings of both Korean–Korean shopkeeper–customer service encounters and of Korean–African American shopkeeper–customer service encounters. He classifies them into two main types: socially minimal interactions and socially expanded interactions. Data sample 1 illustrates the former.

Data sample 1: Indicative Korean–Korean service encounter, according to Bailey (1997/2000)

Cashier:	*Annyŏng haseyo.*
	Hello/How are you? ((Customer has just entered store))
Customer:	*Annyŏng haseyo.*
	Hello/How are you?
Customer:	*Tambae!*
	Cigarettes!
Cashier:	*Tambae tŭryŏyo?*
	You would like cigarettes? ((Cashier reaches for cigarettes under counter))
Cashier:	*Yŏgi issŭmnida.*

Here you are ((Cashier takes customer’s money and hands her cigarettes: customer turns to leave))
Cashier: *Annyŏnghi kaseyo.*
Good-bye.
Customer: *Nye.*
Okay.

(Bailey, 1997, p. 332)

As can be seen, this encounter comprises just greetings/openings, negotiation of the business exchange, and closing, and according to Bailey, it is typical of the socially minimal interactions of Korean–Korean shopkeeper–customer service encounters in his dataset. He contrasts this kind of interaction with Korean–African American encounters as illustrated in Data sample 2.

Data sample 2: Indicative Korean–African American service encounter, according to Bailey (1997/2000)

Cashier: two fifty ((Cashier rings up purchase and bags beer))
((4.5))
Customer: I just moved in the area. I talked to you the other day. You [remember me]?
Cashier: [oh yesterday] last night
Customer: yeah ((Cashier reaches for cigarettes under counter))
Cashier: [o:h yeah] ((Cashier smiles and nods))
Customer: [goddamn, shit] [then you don’t-]
Owner: [new neighbour, huh?] ((Customer turns half-way to the side toward the owner))
Customer: then you don’t know me
Cashier: [I know you] ((Cashier gets change at register))
Customer: [I want you to know me] so when I walk in here you’ll know me. I smoke Winstons. Your son knows me

(Bailey, 2000, p. 97)

In this example, the African American initiates a personalised conversation, disclosing that he has recently moved to the area and reminding the cashier that he has spoken to him before. Bailey comments that the customer was expecting the cashier to treat him as someone he recognises. He then reports further exchanges between this customer, cashier and store owner, commenting that the customer’s volume and emotional display get higher and higher while the Korean cashier and owner become more and more reticent. He summarises the situation as follows:

> The more that this African American customer cheerfully talks and stresses his camaraderie with the store-owner through speech activities unrelated to the business transaction at hand, the more the retailer withdraws and declines involvement. (Bailey, 2000, p. 99)

Bailey concludes that the divergent patterns of communication have two sources: different linguistic/cultural patterns of interaction for service encounters and pre-existing social conflicts. The former is supported by his interview data, which also seems to guide him in analysing his interactional data. One might question, though, how far the social context and his interview data influenced his analysis, especially since he acknowledges (Bailey, 1997, p. 353) that the overwhelming majority of the Korean–African American encounters in his dataset were very positive and that many shopkeepers engaged in friendly small talk with their customers, building good relations.

This raises two fundamental questions associated with research of this kind: (a) how far interview data reflects people's stereotypical beliefs rather than interactional reality, and (b) how far intercultural politeness studies 'cherry-pick' relational problems which in fact are not representative of a broader picture. It is important to remember, however, that participants' comments and viewpoints count as first-order type data and for that reason should not simply be dismissed as invalid, especially since they are likely to influence participants' evaluative judgements of interactions (see the section below on evaluation). Furthermore, even if many of the intercultural interactions are smooth, gaining insights into the problematic ones, whatever their frequency, can be valuable in order to yield insights into ways of increasing the proportion of smooth interactions.

Another approach to understanding collaborative relations is to examine the features of positive interactions. This is exactly what Ryoo (2005) did in her study of Korean–African American shopkeeper–customer interactions in a US midwestern city. Like Bailey (1997, 2000), she collected three types of data: interview, observation and video-/audio-recordings of interactions. She reports that while some interactions were minimal, many were more elaborate and displayed the following strategies that helped build friendly relations: (a) use of ingroup identity markers, (b) solidarity building by sharing attitudes, (c) complimenting behaviour, (d) initiation of personal communication, and (e) joking and laughing. Data sample 3 illustrates the use of compliments in an exchange involving a female African-American customer with her young son.

Data sample 3: Korean–African-American shopkeeper–customer interaction in a beauty supply shop

1	Shop keeper:	((punches the keys))
2		three dollars fourteen cents.
3	Boy:	((unclear))
4	Customer:	[((to her son)) I don't have no money.
5	Shop keeper:	[oh you have nice comfortable dress
6	Customer:	thank you. it feels good.
7	Shop keeper:	yeah I think that is <u>nice</u> yea?
8	Customer:	yeah thanks.
9	Shop keeper:	okay
10		((to the little boy by the customer)) you be good boy.
11		okay I give to you one sucker for you and (.)
12	Customer:	she has something for [you
13	Shop keeper:	[yes
14	Shop keeper:	you be nice and we give to good boy.
15	Customer:	say thank you.

(Ryoo, 2005, p. 91)

In this encounter, the Korean shop keeper compliments the customer twice (lines 5 and 7) on her dress – something that was nothing to do with the transaction. She also pays attention to the customer's son (lines 10-14), who has been pressing his mother to buy something, and gives him a lollipop (sucker), thereby not only initiating personal communication with the boy, but also showing affective support for the mother by giving her son a small treat at a time when he has been fussing her for something she cannot afford.

Ryoo (2005, p. 92) says that this behaviour "enhanced a feeling of solidarity between them and positively contributed to the creation of rapport". This seems likely to be the case, although there is no actual evidence to confirm this. Ryoo also treats it as an intercultural encounter, although this is based solely on the ethnicity of the participants, not on any objective evidence that the interlocutors perceived any cultural difference in their interaction. Of course, when the focus is on smooth communication, the participants are less likely to perceive a cultural difference in behaviour, making it more difficult to justify why the interaction should be regarded as an intercultural one, unless cultural group membership is used as the criterion.

Interpretations of context

Context is of central importance within pragmatics, including politeness theory (see Davies, Haugh, & Merrison, 2011, for a discussion, including different interpretations of context). However, less explicit work has been done on this in relation to the performance of intercultural politeness. Lefringhausen, Spencer-Oatey, and Debray (2019) and Spencer-Oatey et al. (2019) have explored the interconnections between culture, context and communication, and Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) have applied it to intercultural politeness. All these studies emphasise a situation-based/ communicative activity approach, since politeness practices are very greatly influenced by the participants' role relations (including power, distance, and role rights and obligations), the normative procedures for conducting the activity, the artifacts needed, and so on. All these elements influence the performance (and interpretation) of politeness, and in fact research into intercultural politeness practices is often closely interconnected with consideration of these contextual elements.

There are relatively few intercultural politeness studies that explicitly explore interloctutors' interpretations of the context. Two are described below; other examples include Marriott (1990), Günthner (2008), and Kim and Spencer-Oatey (2020).

Holmes (2018; Holmes, Marra & Vine, 2011) reports an intercultural workplace meeting where differences in Māori and Pākehā expectations around simultaneous talk emerge explicitly (see Data sample 4).

Data sample 4: Simultaneous talk in workplace meetings
Context: Regular staff meeting of 16 participants in a Māori workplace. Daniel is the CEO, Frank (nickname Ants) is a very senior manager, Steve is subordinate to them both. Steve and Frank are ethnically Pākehā, although Frank is very familiar with Māori practices.

1 Steve: we have capability development um
2 the g m oversight here [is from Ants with Caleb]
3 Frank: ((quietly to Daniel)) [and what's *maraetai* mean?]
4 Frank: ((quietly)) what's *maraetai* mean?
5 Steve: obviously key area
6 [we want to ensure that um]
7 Daniel: ((quietly)) [it's by your left eye:]
8 Frank: ((quietly)) by your left eye:
9 Daniel: ((quietly)) [mm my right eye]
10 Steve: [one of the important] things in communication is
11 not to talk when others are talking
12 ((laughter))
13 Frank: Steve this indicates a need for you to be out in hui ((meetings))
14 ((laughter))
15 Frank: one of the things that you learn very quickly
16 is that a sign of respect is that
17 other people are talking about what [you're saying
18 while you're saying it]
19 (([extended laughter]))
20 Steve: I see I see….

(Holmes et al., 2011, pp. 78-79)

In this extract, we see explicit discussion of overlapping talk and whether it is appropriate in meetings. In line 10, Steve humorously reprimands Frank for talking at the same time as him; Frank responds by criticising Steve for lack of awareness of Māori interactional norms (lines 15-18). In other words, they each have a sense of how turn-taking 'should' take place, and Frank explicitly claims that Māori norms differ in this from Pākehā norms.

Interestingly, Steve publicly criticises two people, Frank and Daniel, who are both much more senior than him, and yet everyone takes it in good part, making a joke out of it. This indicates that all participants assess the power differential between them to be low and/or the closeness to be high. As a result, Steve's negative evaluation is not perceived to be face-threatening and Frank and Daniel are not offended.

Miller (1995, 2008) reports several examples of US American–Japanese exchanges in a Japanese advertising agency, in which the American interlocutors misinterpret the purpose of an interaction. For instance, on one occasion an American copywriter, Moran, was asked to translate into English the Japanese script of a television commercial, so that it could be entered into an international competition with sub-titles (Miller, 1995, pp. 149-154). He viewed the commercial with the two Japanese creators of the commercial and with a division head, Kawasaki, from a different section of the company. In discussion afterwards, Kawasaki commented that Moran had not given a literal translation at one point, noting that the meaning was different from the original, which was literally "We brush our teeth together but we use different toothpaste". Moran explained in a hesitating, indirect manner what he was trying to achieve in his translation, but this was not accepted. They continued to discuss the matter, with Moran maintaining that a direct translation sounded odd in English. After a change of focus for about 8 minutes, Kawasaki returned to the issue and gently told Moran that he wanted the translation changed. Moran continued to put forward his view, but then Kawasaki changed to a direct and blunt style and told Moran explicitly to change the translation.

Miller (1995) analyses the interchanges not only in terms of directness–indirectness, but also in terms of Moran's (mis)understanding of the nature or purpose of their meeting. Referring to specific elements in the interaction (not cited here), she explains this as follows:

> Moran had interpreted the meeting and the viewing of the commercial as a consultation and an opportunity for his Japanese co-workers to solicit advice from him. […] As a native speaker, and as someone who is fluent in Japanese and has professional experience in writing ad copy, he sees himself as the expert on how this ad should be translated into good idiomatic English. […]
>
> Kawasaki, on the other hand, views the meeting as something quite different. He has already read Moran's translation, does not like it, and wants another one. The purpose of the meeting, from his perspective, is to give Moran instructions for a revision.
>
> (Miller, 1995, p. 153)

Miller (1995) further points out a lexical/conceptual issue with regard to the word 'translation'. Kawasaki regarded it as a one-to-one correspondence of word meanings, while Moran was concerned to capture the nuances and feelings of the original. Here again we see the close interconnection of numerous elements: perception of the purpose of the activity, the 'right' of a subordinate to make suggestions, how lexical items are interpreted, and the use of directness–indirectness. All affect interlocutors' management of intercultural politeness.

Cultural values

A third way in which cultural factors can influence interaction and interpersonal relations is through the underlying values of the interlocutors. Schwartz (2011, p. 464) defines values as "broad, desirable goals that serve as standards for evaluating whether actions, events and people are good or bad," and has identified a circular motivational continuum of individual-level values that has been used extensively for cross-cultural research (e.g. Schwartz, 2007; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001; Schwartz et al., 2012). Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) incorporate values into their model of intercultural politeness evaluation, proposing a socio-moral order (see below), but there is only limited piecemeal research on the impact of values on communication processes.

As with context, cultural values typically interconnect with other aspects, including both practices and interpretations of context. This can be seen clearly in an example by House (2000, 2003), taken from her collection of encounters between international students and local German students and staff. On the basis of her data, she identified a number of differences in communication style, and Data Sample 5 is one of the interactions she analysed. Referring to the interchange itself as well as to post-event interviews with the interlocutors (Norman and Hannes), she reports that Norman felt Hannes was 'an environmental freak' and pushed his point too much, especially given that it was a social event, not a debating club. She further reports that Norman felt increasingly alienated from Hannes; in other words, the interpersonal relations were affected. This indicates that the two held different expectations as to what is a suitable style of conversation for this particular communicative event, and the differences affected their relations. House (2000) argues that these differences were widespread in her dataset, and hence reflected German–Anglophone differences. In this particular example, we also see a values-based element: the source of the beef.

Data Sample 5: The impact of value-based beliefs

Norman, an American exchange student, and Hannes, a German student, live in the same student residence. Norman has cooked a meal for the two of them, and Hannes has just arrived in the kitchen:

01 Norman: *hallo Hannes (0.1) schön dich zu sehn (0.2) wie gehts dir so?*
02 Hannes ((setzt sich)) *ach hallo Norman (.) och Mann ja also (0.2) wenn ich EHRLICH bin du (.) ich hab vielleicht n Hunger was hast dun geKOCHT ?(0.3) [riecht ja]*
03 Norman: *[Spaghetti] (???) [etwas was ich]*
04 Hannes: *[ja Klasse] also ja aber ja ich hoffes is nich Rind-Rind-fleisch die Sache [is ja]*
05 Norman: *[ich ich] also ich hoffe du bist nicht enttäuscht ich hab SPAGHETTI gekocht und die Sauce dabei natürlich ich meine ich hab [nicht besonders]*
06 Hannes: *[worauf ich] hinaus will ist ist also (.) das sollten wir WISSEN es ist aus Argentinien oder?*
07 Norman: *ja (0.2) ich meine(.) weißt du (.) das kann und ist (.) also wahr [scheinlich]*
08 Hannes: *[nein was] ich mein is also die Sache is doch DIE dass eben die Gefahren der Verseuchung und dass also (0.2) du hast ja sicher gelesen wie sie es machen die Exportverbote zu umgehn [und so]*
09 Norman*:* *[hmm ich] (0.2) ich also [ja]*
10 Hannes: *[ich] hab gelesn dass die Engländer ihr Rindfleisch in die irische Republik schmuggeln und also erm (0.2) nach Eire über die gruene Grenze und dann (.) die Sache is DIE* ((continues))
((Norman is silent now))

01 Norman: hallo Hannes (0.1) good to see you (0.2) how are things with you?
02 Hannes: ((sits down)) oh hallo Norman oh man well (0.2) to tell the TRUTH (.) I am very very hungry what have you COOKED? (0.3) [smells]
03 Norman: [spaghetti] (???) [something I]
04 Hannes: [yeah great] so yeah but yeah I hope it’s not beef the thing [is]
05 Norman: [I I] well I hope you are not disappointed I have cooked SPAGHETTI and the sauce with it of course I mean I have [not specially]
06 Hannes: [what I’m] getting at is is well (.) we should KNOW that it is from Argentina or?
07 Norman: yeah (0.2) I mean (.) you know (.) that can be and is (.) well pro[bable]
08 Hannes: [no what] I’m getting at is well the thing IS that the danger of food deterioration and that well (0.2) you have surely read how they go about getting round the ban on exports [and so]
09 Norman: [hmm I] (0.2) I well [yes]
10 Hannes: [I] read that the British are smuggling their beef to the Republic of Ireland to well (0.2) erm Eire via the green border and then (.) the thing IS ((continues))
((Norman is silent now))

(House, 2000, pp. 158–159)

At the time of data collection, BSE, a type of disease in cows, was a problem in the UK and there were concerns about its possible effect on human health. As a result, the European Union banned the import of British beef. It is not clear whether Norman was aware of the controversy around British beef, as he treated Hannes’ reaction as that of an ‘environmental freak’. Yet for Hannes it was a value-based concern that he felt unable to ignore. In Schwartz's terms (e.g. Schwartz, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2012), Hannes was upholding and promoting the value of universalism – appreciation, protection and concern for the welfare of all people and of nature.

It is impossible to argue from this one interaction that the differential emphasis to the source of the beef is in any way cultural, but in combination with the type of performance (argumentative communicative style) in this context (social dinner) it became an intercultural incident.

One very important but under-researched aspect of values and their impact on intercultural politeness is their interconnections with religious beliefs. Bouchara (2015), for instance, explains the role of religion in shaping politeness in Moroccan Arabic, with a particular focus on greetings. He argues as follows:

> Politeness works differently and has different emphases due to different beliefs and values. For example, in Morocco it seems that politeness is tied in with religion and one's relation to *Allah* and the community in a way which is not true in Germany or in Britain. […] Arabic politeness is strongly marked by its religious character. […] In Moroccan Arabic, we often find politeness formulas with a religious content, which have no functional corresponding formulas in German of English. (Bouchara, 2015, p. 75)

He touches on the challenges that these differences can bring in intercultural encounters. This is an area that warrants much more extensive research. Schwartz includes religious beliefs within the value 'tradition' (Schwartz et al., 2012), but this may be too narrow to capture its multiple facets and how they interface with politeness. More research is needed in this area.

Evaluating intercultural relations

Early in the history of politeness theory, Fraser and Nolan (1981, p. 96) maintained that words and phrases are not inherently polite or impolite, but rather judged as such by participants. In line with this, twenty years later Eelen (2001) argued as follows:

> In everyday practice (im)politeness occurs not so much when the speaker produces behaviour but rather when the hearer evaluates that behaviour. I will go even further and claim that the very essence of (im)politeness lies in this evaluative moment. Whether it involves hearers evaluating speakers, speakers evaluating themselves, or informants evaluating hypothetical speakers or utterances, the evaluative moment is always present. (Eelen, 2001, p. 109)

He therefore proposed an evaluation-centred approach to politeness, and although initially there was little take-up (Kádár & Haugh, 2013, p. 60), recently more attention has been given to this focus (e.g. Chang & Haugh, 2011; Davies, 2018; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2016; Haugh & Chang, 2019; Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2016, 2021; Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2019). From an intercultural politeness perspective, this means there is a need to explain, illustrate and account for (a) the process of making politeness judgements, and (b) the role of culture in this process.

In terms of theorising this, Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) propose an evaluation process that entails the following elements: (a) conceptualisations of the context, (b) contextually-based expectations and zones of normalcy (i.e. how normal or unusual the behaviour is for the given context), (c) an evaluation warrant that comprises interpersonal sensitivities (face, goals, and rights and obligations) and a socio-moral order, and (d) a judgement. They maintain that there can be cultural differences in each of these elements. They argue that the evaluation process is triggered when an interlocutor's behaviour is noticeably different from that which an individual was expecting. This could be omission of expected and desired behaviour (as in Data Sample 2), performance of unexpected unwanted behaviour (as in Data samples 4 and 5), or performance of (unanticipated) positive behaviour (as in Data sample 3). Once the evaluation process is triggered, participants use criteria within their evaluation warrant to assess the behaviour and/or justify their reaction. For instance, in Data sample 2, the customer was concerned that the cashier did not recognise him, and he may have found this face-threatening; in Data sample 3, the shop keeper's compliment may have been perceived by the customer as face-enhancing; in Data sample 4, Steve assessed Frank and Daniel's private chat as a breach of rules in meetings, and he may also have found it face-threatening; in Data sample 5, Hannes pursued a clarification of an issue that was very important to him (the source of the beef), which linked with his environmental concerns, but in the process upset Norman, perhaps by threatening his face as a good host. Hannes' concerns for the environment were value-based and thus went 'deeper' than the rights and obligations of the host-guest context. Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) propose the notion of the socio-moral order to help explain these more fundamental evaluation criteria that people may draw on when assessing behaviour. In doing so, they bring in helpful theorising in moral psychology such as Moral Foundation Theory (Graham et al., 2018; Haidt & Kesebir, 2010) and the Moral Motives Model (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2018).

As mentioned earlier, evidence is actually needed to validate the analyst's interpretation. Participants' sense of rights and obligations can often be captured in comments, either within the text (as in Data sample 4) or in remarks to others afterwards. Goals too may be explicitly mentioned, as may values sometimes (as in Data sample 5; see also another example by House, 2000, discussed in Spencer-Oatey and Kádár, 2021, pp.175–177). Participants' experience of face threat/enhancement, however, can be particularly difficult to demonstrate (hence the use of modals in the last sentence of the previous paragraph). Sometimes they may comment on it explicitly and spontaneously afterwards, as reported in Wang and Spencer-Oatey (2015) and Spencer-Oatey and Wang (2019). It is rare, though, for researchers to be able to capture spontaneous, non-initiated post-event evaluative comments. Usually researchers have to structure the event, and this is done either by playback with comments and/or by interview. With regard to the latter, Haugh (2010) explains the complexity of this. Interviews are co-constructed events and the questioning of the interviewer (e.g. how the interviewer broaches key elements of the original interaction) as well as the way the participants (want to) position themselves vis-à-vis the researcher can all affect what the interviewee(s) report. One way of seeking to address this issue is to use playback, and ask the participant(s) to stop the video at moments they perceive as significant (Fiksdal, 1990). This is what Xing (2002) did in his study of Chinese business delegation post-sales visits to a British company.

One interaction that Xing played back to the participants (separately for the Chinese and the British) was the welcome meeting (reported in Spencer-Oatey & Kádár, 2021; see also Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2019). The Chinese delegates stopped the recording on various occasions, one of which was when they perceived the interpreter (provided by the British company) to be particularly poor (they felt his words were too brief and in too low volume). After mentioning these points, they then focused on a particular incident which occurred after the British chair had given a welcome speech and had then asked each delegate to introduce himself. At this point, the head of the delegation started giving a return speech instead of introducing himself. The interpreter interrupted him and clarified that the chair had asked them each to introduce themselves. After half a minute or so of confusion, they then each introduced themselves. In the playback session, the delegates discussed this and, as can be seen from Data sample 6, there were some different interpretations as to who was responsible for this.

Data sample 6: Who was responsible?

6 Ma: 像这种情况<name of interpreter>就不因该打断
at moments like this <name of interpreter> should not have interrupted
7 Lin: 哎
Yes
8 Xu: 中方的，讲几句就是很正常
from the Chinese perspective, it's normal to say a few words
9 Sun: 从礼貌上讲
from the point of politeness
[…] ((several turns omitted where they continue to comment negatively on the interpreter and wonder why he interrupted the Head))
16 Head: 可能他人家没有要我讲。
maybe they didn't want me to speak.
17 Ma: 是，人家没要你讲。[…] 你讲也是应该的。
true, they didn't ask (want?) you to speak. […] but it was right that you should speak.
18 Head: 我讲就是人家不要我讲他[i.e. interpreter]也是对的。你，我，不知道这儿，就说你是不是英国人看不起中国人。从这方面讲是有一点这个意思。 实际上我也不愿意讲，我讲不出什么来。但没办法，说个一句两句话。 那个意思，对吧？但你不让我讲，你讲完了，你们每人自己讲一下，你不就是成了这个意思？就是看不起我们中国人。
I was speaking and if they didn't want me to, he [i.e interpreter] wasn't wrong. You and I are not familiar with things here, that is, perhaps the British look down upon us Chinese, from this point of view, that's what was implied. In fact, I was reluctant to speak, and I had nothing really to say. But I had to, to say a few words. It was like that, right? but you didn't give me the opportunity to say anything, you had spoken, and you all introduced yourselves, doesn't it mean just this, that you look down upon us Chinese?
19 Ma: 不对不对这个这个里面我觉得<name of interpreter> 我当时的情况我还记得很清楚。我觉得就是<name of interpreter> 在这个时候起了很起了很大的作用。
No no. in this in this whole thing I felt <name of interpreter> I still remember it very clearly. I felt <name of interpreter> played played a very important role at this moment.

(Xing, 2002; cited by Spencer-Oatey and Kádár, 2021, pp.180-1)

It is clear from turns 6 and 7 that the delegates held proscriptive role-related obligations for interpreters, arguing that the interpreter should not have intervened in this way. Then another two delegates (turns 8 and 9) commented that it is normal in China to give a return speech, and that this is a matter of politeness. In this they explicitly appeal to national level cultural (procedural) norms. However, they then started to consider who was responsible. Ma felt it was the interpreter's fault, while the head put the blame on the British chair. So, as Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2021) propose, a theory of evaluation also needs to include the notion of responsibility or blame, drawing once again on work within moral psychology (e.g. Malle, Giuglielmo, & Monroe, 2014). In this particular case, whoever was held responsible, the relational impact was negative. The visiting delegation were so annoyed with this and some other incidents within the meeting that they cancelled all the training sessions and went sightseeing for the full ten days of their visit (Spencer-Oatey & Xing, 2008).

From a practical point of view, it is not always feasible to conduct playback sessions with all participants, especially when the participants include visiting members on a tight schedule and when there are long, multiple meetings. Interviews may also not be feasible for interpersonal or ethical reasons (Chang & Haugh, 2011). Nevertheless, post-event playback and/or interviews can be a very valuable option if practicable, so long as the role of the researcher is handled sensitively. An alternative, used by Chang and Haugh (2011) and Haugh and Chang (2019), is to present an interaction of interest to unconnected respondents and ask them to give feedback via a questionnaire. This can be particularly useful when trying to ascertain the extent to which cultural factors play a role, and the degree of variability among members of a particular cultural group. However, such respondents will inevitably lack the personal involvement/emotional engagement of the original participants and this is likely to affect their evaluative judgements (e.g. any sense of face threat would be much more hypothetical than in real life).

Directions for future research

Throughout this chapter several areas have been identified where research has been relatively limited. These include positive perspectives on intercultural politeness; the impact of culturally variable interpretations of context on intercultural politeness; religious belief as a cultural value and its impact on politeness behaviour; culture and the politeness evaluation process. All of these facets are very much in need of further research.

In addition, there is much conceptual work that needs to be done, especially on the issues discussed in the first main section of this chapter. One important topic is the conceptualisation of culture in a way that incorporates the impact of individual variability and the dynamism of discourse, and with respect to its impact on intercultural politeness and relations. Here it would be particularly valuable to combine insights from intercultural pragmatics (e.g. Kecskes, 2014) with those from cultural linguistics (e.g. Sharifian, 2017) and theorising on the structure of the mind within cognitive psychology, artificial intelligence and neuroscience (e.g. Laird et al., 2017). Closely connected with this is the integration of micro and macro perspectives, perhaps again incorporating insights from other disciplines, such as the micro/meso/exo/macro levels specified by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and taken up by Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2013).

Future research also needs to consider methodological issues. A fundamental question is what counts as intercultural data. If interactions are only regarded as intercultural when one or more participants notices a significant difference (e.g. as in the definition given by Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), then how can smooth and positive intercultural interactions be researched, where nothing unusual is noticed? That would seem to suggest the need for including some kind of *a priori* definition on the basis of sociocultural group membership, probably in combination with one or more other elements. More consideration needs to be given to this. In terms of data collection, particular attention needs to be given to a range of robust ways of acquiring evaluation data – methods that yield valid first order perspectives while also distinguishing between idiosyncratic interpretations and reliable cultural group differences.

As societies become increasingly diverse, the agenda becomes ever more challenging but also ever more important and fascinating.

Transcription conventions

Meaning	Symbol	Example
Line/turn numbering	01 02	01 A: hello Hannes 02 B: oh hello Norman
Links between words or utterances Overlapping word(s)	[word] [word]	08 A: I well [yes] 09 B: [I] read
Pausing Brief pause Pause of indicated length (in seconds)	(.) (0.2)	A: I mean (.) you know A: hallo Hannes (0.1) good to see you
Prominence Emphasised syllable/word	WORD	A: I've cooked SPAGHETTI
Text interpretation Relevant additional information Indecipherable wording Replacement words for anonymized information	((word word)) (???) <word word>	((the pair is looking at each other)) A: Spaghetti (???) something I <name of company>
Words omitted from the original text	[...]	A: they didn't ask you to speak [...] but it was right
Words spoken in a language other than English	*word*	A: what's *maraetai* mean

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