Of babies and bath water: Is there any place for Austin and Grice in interpersonal pragmatics?

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Of babies and bath water: Is there any place for Austin and Grice in discursive pragmatics?

Abstract

What do we mean by a 'discursive' approach to language study? Some scholars may characterise it as placing emphasis on participant evaluations, others may foreground the analysis of contextualised and sequential texts, while still others consider it to include both of these. In general, though, discursive pragmatics often seems to involve a reaction to, and a contrast with, so-called Gricean intention-based approaches. In this paper I argue that, far from discarding the insights of Grice, Austin and others, a discursive approach to pragmatics should embrace those aspects of non-discursive pragmatics that provide us with a 'tool-kit' and a vocabulary for examining talk-in-interaction. At the same time, I will argue that the shortcomings of the speaker-based, intention- focused pragmatics can be compensated for, not by privileging hearer evaluations of meaning, but by taking an ethnomethodological approach to the analysis of naturally-occurring discourse data. By providing a critique of Locher and Watts' (2005) paradigmatic example of a discursive approach to politeness and then a sample analysis of interactional data, I demonstrate how a combination of insights from Gricean pragmatics and from ethnomethodology allows the analyst to comment on the construction and negotiation of meaning in discourse, without having recourse to notions of either intention or evaluation.

Keywords: discursive politeness; discursive pragmatics; Grice; Austin; post-modern

1. Introduction

The aim of this special issue is to make a contribution towards defining, theorising, and perhaps delimiting, the relatively new area of discursive pragmatics. When there is a paradigm shift, such as this, in a research area, the old or 'traditional' ideas are sometimes all too easily discarded in favour of innovative approaches. It could be said that this is in danger of happening with the discursive turn in politeness theory and, hence, in pragmatics generally. The move towards a 'discursive' approach to pragmatics seems to have gained momentum in the field of politeness research largely as a reaction to Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) treatment of linguistic politeness, much of which is entrenched in Gricean and Austinian pragmatics. Critics of Brown and Levinson (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003) have shown that this traditional approach to language in use (also characterised by Leech, 1983 and Levinson, 1983) has a number of weaknesses, largely arising out of a tendency to focus on speaker intention and decontextualised utterances. The 'answer' to these criticisms is generally thought to lie with a discursive approach to data analysis, since it has the benefit of using stretches of naturally- occurring instances of language in use. However, it remains unclear what exactly is entailed in a discursive approach. For some theorists it may simply be the use of interactional data, whereas for others it necessarily involves 'evaluations' of norm-oriented behaviour (Locher 2006). Still others assume that the discourse itself has a crucial role to play in the construction of meaning (for example, Kasper, 2006; Arundale, 1999, 2004, 2010).

In this paper, then, I want to argue that discursive pragmatics should not be regarded as the antidote to traditional, intention-based pragmatics, but rather that it should be regarded as a development of traditional pragmatics, which keeps the best of Austin's and Grice's insights but improves on their approach by applying it to discourse. Furthermore, following Haugh (2007) I shall argue that a discursive approach does not necessarily answer the criticisms levelled at traditional pragmatics unless it incorporates the sociological and ethnomethodological perspectives that underpin the work of Goffman ([1983] 1997), Gumperz (1982) and, more recently, Arundale's (1999, 2010) 'Conjoint Co-constituting Model of Communication'. I shall argue that, in fact, rather than being the antithesis of post-modern thinking, Austin and Grice made many essential observations about language in use which still usefully, and crucially, apply to a discursive approach to pragmatics. I will do this first by outlining how we can separate out those areas of intention-based pragmatics that should be discarded in favour of a discourse approach, whilst also demonstrating which insights should be retained. In other words, this is an attempt to establish which principles and assumptions of traditional pragmatics should be dispensed with (to be thrown out with the bath water, so to speak) and those that should be incorporated into a discursive approach (the all-important 'baby').

Using already published examples of data from Locher and Watts (2005), in which the analysis might be considered a 'prime example' of the post-modern discursive politeness perspective, I will discuss the limitations of such an approach and then illustrate how traditional pragmatics can compensate for some of the pitfalls of a post-modernist analysis as long as it is combined with a sequential analysis of the construction and negotiation of meaning as a social achievement (Arundale, 2006).

After re-working the Locher and Watts (2005) analysis, I will also refer to analyses of my own data, which similarly exemplify a sociological/interactional (Grainger, 2011a) approach to discursive data analysis.

2. Defining a 'discursive' approach

Many commentators link discourse analysis with post-modernism (Haugh, 2007; Mills, 2011) and it is easy to get the impression that a discursive approach necessarily involves post-modern principles. Indeed the terms are often used alongside one another, and sometimes interchangeably (Kadar, 2011). However, if taken literally, a discursive approach to the analysis of language could simply be one that examines 'discourse' rather than sentences. In the first chapter of a volume of essays dedicated to "Discursive approaches to politeness" Mills states that "theorists are no longer content to analyse politeness and impoliteness as if they were realised through the use of isolated phrases and sentences."(Mills, 2011: 26). This summarises what I would regard as the essential difference between discursive approaches and traditional approaches. That is to say, discursive politeness and discursive pragmatics studies sequences of naturally-occurring connected talk and text. Beyond this essentially methodological characteristic, I would argue, it is difficult to generalise as to what constitutes a discursive approach.

One of the problems is, of course, that there are several conceptions of what discourse itself is. According to Schiffrin et al. (2003), they all fall into one of three categories: "(1) anything beyond the sentence, (2) language use, and (3) a broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language" (2003:1). The first of these is linguistically- oriented and treats discourse merely as a structure that is above the level of the sentence (Stubbs, 1983:1, Van Dijk, 1985). The second refers to the more functionalist approach taken within pragmatics, sociolinguistics and the ethnography of communication. Brown and Yule (1983) also identify these two definitions of discourse in suggesting that "discourse analysis on the one hand includes the study of linguistic forms and the regularities of their distribution and, on the other hand, involves a consideration of the general principles of interpretation by which people normally make sense of what they hear and read" (p. x). Fasold (1990:65), on the other hand, defines discourse analysis as simply "the study of any aspect of language in use". This functionalist approach, then, treats discourse as a part of human communication, with all the social and cultural influences that that entails.

However, a third conception of "discourse" can be allied to Foucault's idea of a "system of regulated practices" (1972:80). Thus, 'discourse' for Foucault and for critical discourse analysts such as Fairclough (1995) and Wodak (1996) is the entire socio-cultural context; discourse is "social practice" (Fairclough, 1992: 28). In this conception, very broadly speaking, although language is part of the discourse, it is not necessarily the main object of study and description. According to Mills (2011) the main interest for Foucauldian scholars is "the role of discourse in constituting reality and social norms." (Mills, 2011:27). In this approach, " the term 'discourses; not only becomes a count noun, but further refers to a broad conglomeration of linguistic and nonlinguistic social practices and ideological assumptions that together construct power or racism." (Schiffrin et al., 2003:1). This differs from functionalist and sociolinguistic approaches in that social context (as opposed to language) is the primary focus of analysis.

However, it is the Foucaultian, post-modern definition which has been influential in the 'second wave' (Grainger, 2011a) politeness studies since about 1992, until recently. In this conception of discourse, there is a tendency to assume that speech act theory, Gricean pragmatics and Brown and Levinson's conception of politeness are passe, unenlightened and of no relevance in contemporary theorising (Mills, 2011). At the very least, recent work in politeness theory often underestimates the contribution of traditional pragmatics to our understanding of the links between language form and meaning in interactions.

In the next section I will outline which aspects of traditional pragmatic theory continue to have explanatory value even when applied to discourse, and those which should be abandoned because they hinder, rather than aid, the pragmatic enterprise of accounting for language in use.

2. What's bad, and good, about traditional pragmatics.

In general, I would argue that the weaknesses of the Gricean approach are those assumptions that have been inherited from the field of truth conditional semantics (Lyons, 1977; Thomas, 1995), which formed the launching pad of Austin and Grice's work. That is to say, in response to the assumption within logic that meaning resides in the 'propositional content ' of words and sentences (Searle 1969), Austin and Grice wanted to devise a way of accounting for meaning that goes beyond and between the actual form of language used. Yule (2006) calls this 'invisible' meaning. However, they did this in a way that still harked back to an encoding-decoding model of communication (Arundale, 2008), which tended to refer to an idealised speaker or hearer and to concentrate exclusively on the transactional functions of communication, ignoring any relational function that might be encoded in language. This paradigmatic inheritance leads to a number of problems for the analysis of language as discourse. These problems are covered well by a number of politeness scholars such as Eelen (2001), Watts (2003) and Mills (2003) and it is not my intention here to go into these arguments again in detail. However, I would like to point out what aspects of the traditional approach may be usefully salvaged. For this purpose, I divide the main objections to traditional pragmatics into four main areas: the problem of speaker intention, the problem of constructed examples of utterances, the problem of inherent meaning and the problem of universality.

2.1. Over-emphasis on speaker intention

Proponents of the discursive politeness paradigm often accuse Gricean and Austinian pragmatics of over-emphasis on speaker intention, partly because this privileges the speaker role at the expense of the hearer (Eelen 2001), and partly because it gives unwarranted status to the analyst's perspective, since it is they who judge what the speaker's intention is. As a reaction to this, the work of Watts and Locher (Watts, 2005; Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher 2006), amongst others, has been prominent in arguing that politeness research should instead concentrate on the hearer's interpretation of utterances. The post-modernist argument that is reflected here is that, since all reality is 'subjective' (including that of the analyst), one can only report the subjective experience, interpretation and evaluation of the participants in an interaction, including that of the hearer. This perspective is especially relevant to studies of impoliteness, where it is said that rudeness is a question of perception, not intention (Bousfield, 2008).

However, it seems to me that for discourse analysts to criticise Austin and Grice for privileging the speaker misses the point slightly. Indeed, it is not completely accurate, since Austin and Grice do both also talk about the role of the hearer. Austin's notion of perlocutionary force (the effect and utterance has on the hearer) is evidence of this. Thus Austin and Grice are fully cognisant of the role both speaker and hearer play in creating meaning. The real problem with their exposition is not that they privilege the speaker role but that it is based on a simplistic encoding-decoding model of communication (Arundale, 2008; Mills, 2011) in which meaning is transmitted in a linear fashion from an idealised speaker (or 'model person', in Brown and Levinson's terms) to an idealised hearer. From a social constructivist point of view, meaning is not to be found *either* in the hearer's interpretation *or* in the speaker's intention, since neither of these can be observed and thereby justified.

This is not to say that speaker intention and hearer evaluation are not important as first order or 'emic' concepts. In everyday discourse the question of whether the 'real' meaning of an utterance resides with the intention or the interpretation is frequently a source of tension. For example, in many UK workplaces anti-bullying policies state that it's how the action was perceived that matters, not how it was intended. Or someone who has caused offence in their remarks may defend themselves by saying "It was only a joke, I didn't mean it". So intention *is* real for participants - people recognise it, claim it, and make moral judgements about it. However I would argue that while the interpretation of intention is important for the participants in the interaction (see Grainger, 2011b), suppositions about intention on the part of the analyst are not methodologically defensible.

Therefore, in discursive politeness, simply shifting the emphasis from speaker intention to hearer evaluation can be just as problematic as focusing on speaker intention alone. As Haugh (2007) and Arundale (2008) point out, this does not necessarily get away from an encoding/decoding model of communication. Furthermore, such post-modern approaches bring further problems of how to access these hearer evaluations (Mills, 2011); using hearers' post hoc evaluations risks reducing politeness to an account of how members use various words that describe moral behaviour (Terkourafi, 2005).

As Arundale (2006; 2010) argues, a discursive analysis needs to instead concentrate on finding the meaning that is negotiated and constructed in the social space *between* the participants and which is observable in the construction and sequencing of linguistic messages. This involves taking the essence of Austin's insight that we "do things with words" (Austin, 1962) and finding an analytic method that can demonstrate what the discourse (not the speaker or the hearer) is doing. This involves invoking another of Austin's invaluable insights regarding the notion of participant 'uptake'. In other words, the chief way in which the analyst can arrive at an interpretation is by showing how utterances are responded to and 'taken up' by the person to whom they are addressed; how participants respond to each others utterances (or take them up) is ultimately what they mean. I illustrate in section 3 and 4 below how Grices' theory of implicature and Austin's notion of uptake form important parts of the discourse analyst's toolkit.

2.2 Decontextualised and contrived examples

Another of the major criticisms levelled at traditional pragmatics is that it does not use 'real' data, situated in either linguistic or socio-cultural context. This is certainly true of Austin and Grice, both of whom give sample 'utterances' which have been constructed, not observed, for the purposes of illustrating their arguments. This, of course, is in the tradition of truth conditional semantics and for the sociolinguist interested in language as a behavioural (rather than philosophical) phenomenon, this is clearly methodologically unacceptable. Indeed, Brown and Levinson (1987), in their introduction to the reissue of their theory of politeness, record their regret at using a mixture of naturally-occurring, elicited and intuitive data, saying that "The state of the art in discourse analysis would not let us get away with this today." (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 11).

However, in placing the emphasis on 'discourse' as a human activity, the post-modern approach to analysis can sometimes neglect the language itself. This is, after all, what 'subjects' do when interacting - they naturally concentrate on interpreting what their interlocutor means not on how they are saying it. As explained above, the post-modernist approach privileges the participant perspective and inevitably concentrates on how subjects themselves interpret intention. Unfortunately for pragmatics, this seems to mean that there is a tendency to focus analysis on the meaning of the context alone, at the expense of analysing how the language interacts with the context. Thus, the traditional focus of pragmatics on language *qua language*, rather than simply a vehicle for thoughts and feelings, is in danger of being lost in the post-modern definition of a discursive approach.

Perhaps the advantage for scholars such as Austin and Grice of using isolated sentences for exemplification was that they at least focused attention on the specifics of message construction. Furthermore, we should concede to Austin and Grice that it was they who pointed out the importance of ordinary language and the "utterance" as opposed to the "sentence", which previously had been the unit of analysis for linguistics (Austin, 1962; Grice, 1975). The concept of the 'utterance' at least acknowledges the importance of studying language as it is used naturally (i.e. we speak in utterances, not in sentences). This, then, begins to move us away from the idea that meaning is contained solely in words and sentences and towards the idea that language is part of a system of communication between people (Thomas, 1995).

Brown and Levinson's work on politeness, while still largely in the Gricean tradition, builds on this by using examples of language that are not made up, but have actually been observed in use. Thus, to a large extent, their model of politeness theory is grounded in 'real' data. Furthermore, while it is true that they do not take account of the surrounding linguistic context (preceding and following turns at talk), their model does at least allow that the sociological variables of power and social distance have a bearing on message construction and provides a formula for working out the relationship between these variables and the form of the message (Brown and Levinson, 1987;74ff). Nevertheless, there are still two major drawbacks to a model of language use not based on discourse data. Firstly, as Mills (2011) points out, Brown and Levinson's concept of power and social distance is rather simple and deterministic (i.e. the interaction of certain levels of power and distance will give rise to certain types of politeness) and is a far cry from the Foucauldian and critical discourse analysts' concept of power in which the individual is *subject to* (not the agent of) the power of institutional discourses. (On the other hand, we should note that not all discursive politeness aims to comment on the "wider political" (Mills 2011:26) meaning of discourse). Secondly, the fact that Brown and Levinson only use isolated utterances for exemplification results in their model being flawed. When it is applied to sequences of talk (discourse), it turns out that it does not have the predictive power claimed for it (for example, Brown and Levinson's model cannot predict politeness behaviour, although it may be able to account for it, or describe it) and that certain crucial concepts, such as the distinction between negative and positive politeness are problematic (see, for example, Grainger, 2004).

2.3 Meaning is not inherent in speech acts

Mills (2011) points out that much post- Brown and Levinson politeness research erroneously attempts to tie particular forms of language to particular speech acts. As she quite rightly observes, "this kind of post-Brown and Levinson work does not acknowledge that requests, compliments and apologies can be performed using a very wide range of linguistic realisations" (2011:21-22) and thus Austin's attempt to provide "a list of illocutionary forces" (Austin, 1962: 150) (speech acts) by linking them to particular verbs found in the dictionary is, from the point of view of a discourse analyst, a pointless endeavour. Even Brown and Levinson themselves (1987) acknowledge the limitations of basing their 1978 framework on the notion of the speech act which "forces a sentence-based, speaker-oriented mode of analysis" (p. 10). They propose instead a discursive, sequential approach in which categories of utterance types (such as 'request') are "directly demonstrable" in sequences of utterances (Brown and Levinson 1987:10).

And yet, as Brown and Levinson (1987) also observe, it is difficult to avoid the notion of the speech act, at least as a shorthand for certain utterance-types. I would even go so far as to say that discursive pragmatics needs this concept in order to account for why certain forms of words should be associated with certain meanings and acts of politeness (Kasper, 2006). Of course, there is no one-to-one relationship between linguistic form and meaning. Indeed, it is Austin's (1962) work that first alerted linguistic philosophers to this fundamental observation. Austins' chief observation that all utterances are doing something (complimenting, apologising, requesting and so on), as well as saying something, goes some way to explaining how it is that speakers and hearers understand one another if part of their meaning is "invisible" (Yule, 2006). In other words, participants in an interaction interpret what the other person is doing, as an act of communication. Searle's (1969; 1971) development of Austin's work has also had lasting usefulness in pragmatic theory. He attempted to lay down the conditions under which certain speech acts could be understood, and, although any attempt to produce an exhaustive taxonomy now seems futile, politeness theory can still make use of the notion of 'felicity conditions' in order to explain why a communicative act can be realised in several ways linguistically. Thus, for a promise to be made, any number of linguistic realisations can be used as long as the basic conditions of the propositional content rule (that the utterance predicates some future act), the preparatory rule (that the hearer would like the speaker to do the thing promised), the sincerity rule (that the speaker must intend to do the thing promised), and the essential rule (that the utterance counts as an undertaking to do the thing promised) (Searle, 1971) have been fulfilled. Although one could quibble with the details of these felicity conditions, the existence of such conditions can explain precisely why, for example, uttering the words "I'm sorry" do not necessarily constitute an apology, or conversely, why saying something like "I know I did wrong. I will make it up to you" can be taken up as an apology (Mills, 2003; Grainger and Harris, 2007).

Grice's theory of conversational implicature and Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness also both attempt to account for how and why people say things that they do not literally mean. It is this attempt to explain relationship between the form of words and what it achieves in interaction that provides the analyst with a tool-kit for examining interaction (O'Driscoll, 2007: 486).

2.4 Universal principles of communication and Eurocentric assumptions

It has frequently been pointed out by politeness scholars that Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, although it claims to be universal, in fact makes many Eurocentric and Western assumptions (Kadar and Mills, 2011). In particular, their 'model person' "fetishises" (Coupland, Grainger and Coupland, 1988) the individual as the locus of all interaction and does not take account of group identities and allegiances (Nwoye, 1992; Mao, 1994). Similarly, the notion of negative face (the desire for freedom of action), having equal weight with positive face, (the desire for social affiliation), is thought to be a peculiarly Western idea that stems from individualistic cultural values. Cross cultural discursive pragmatics has clearly shown that these notions do not readily apply to interaction in non-western settings (Spencer-Oatey and Xing, 2000; Cheng, 2003).

The universalist stance is, arguably, anathema to post-modern theorists, since in post-modernism, all meaning-making is fluid, negotiable and relative to the socio-cultural situation in which it takes place. As Mills (2011) states "Post-modernism might be seen as a type of theoretical move which questions all concepts and evaluations and is sceptical of…all overarching theories which attempt to generalise of universalise." (page 28). In this view, there can be no such thing as universal principles of interaction since communication depends so much on participants' interpretation. Thus, while most politeness scholars would agree that politeness itself is universal, they do not all agree that Brown and Levinson's account of it is universally applicable.

Certainly, it seems to me that the particulars of Brown and Levinson's theory concerning the different types of politeness and their rankings can easily be questioned in terms of their universality (they do not even apply to all Western interactional situations, let alone other cultures) and this is especially evident through a discursive approach to analysis, where context is taken to be part of meaning. Austin and Grice are perhaps even more guilty of ethnocentrism than Brown and Levinson since all their examples are from English and they do not make it explicit whether their claims apply to all languages or just to the English-speaking World. Grice's cooperative principle and the four maxims entailed in it can be questioned on the grounds that they assume a particular (Western) idealised view of communication in which clarity, brevity, truth and relevance are valued above other qualities (such as attention to group norms).

However, perhaps the importance (or not) of universality depends on what the analyst is attempting to do. If the aim is to account for how, and whether, people in different parts of the World and in different situations orient towards their own behaviour in terms of 'politeness' (cf. Terkourafi, 2005), then a relativist position may be warranted. However, if one is interested in theorising about how language mediates human relations and how this varies depending on the social conditions, then an account which merely concludes that "it depends on the participants' interpretation" is rather unsatisfactory. Furthermore, to dismiss the universality of the existence of speech acts, of implicatures and of politeness as face mitigation is to lose something valuable that traditional pragmatics can offer the discursive analyst. While it is true that both Grice and Austin may be privileging the role of the individual in interaction, the fundamental ideas of conversational cooperation and speech-as-action still underpin much pragmatic and politeness research that is done beyond the western World (Brown and Levinson, 1987). These central concepts give us the tools with which to provide a robust analysis of socially situated interaction. Furthermore, and perhaps ironically, these two notions are closely allied to a constructivist orientation to discourse analysis, which is one of the central tenets of a post-modern approach.

3. An example and critique of post-modern analysis

At this juncture, I provide an example of a non-Gricean, post-modern discursive analysis of politeness that seems to illustrate many of the problematic features discussed above. A good example can be found in Locher and Watts' (2005) analysis of dinner party conversation. For my purposes I will just examine here two examples of compliment-giving that (amongst others) are discussed in the original article. I first critique Locher and Watts' analysis, before giving my own analysis, which reaches different conclusions about the nature of the speech events under discussion. The data are taken from Locher's set of dinner party conversation, involving 7 friends. Anne and John are the hosts, Anne having cooked the dinner.

Example1: complimenting the cook[1]

This interaction takes place towards the end of the dinner:

1 Kate: Steven is a terrific chef.
2 Steven: nah.
3 Roy: yeah.
4 Steven: X it's a lot of effort. X
5 Roy: but it's not as good as this.
6 Steven: this is very good.
7 Anne: which one?
8 Kate: your [dinner was fantastic.]
9 Anne: [Kate please] for heavens sake @ come on Kate @.
just a bird.
10 Kate: ..nice birds...well this was delightful

[1] the transcription conventions are reduced version of those used by Locher and Watts, which are based on Dubois et al. 1992

11 Anne:	well thank you.		
12 Kate:	just delightful.		
13 Miriam:	thanks very much.	Steven:	this person who came out-
14 Anne:	you're very welcome I'm glad		a week or so ago
			about,
	I re-		about some XX
			genetic XX.

15 Kate: [I've known her since she was four years old. when she was a tiny little girl.]

16 Anne: [I'm trying to think, really,]

Example 2: complimenting the daughter

This interaction takes place at the beginning of the evening, just after Debbie, the hosts' teenage daughter, has entered the room:

1. John: X it's totally totally [iiii] xxx xx. x
2. Kate: [perfect]
3. Roy: nice to see you how are you?
4. nice to see you .
5. Debbie: nice to see you X XX. X
6. Kate: God does she look gorgeous.
7. Roy: here you go lady.
8. Debbie: thank you.
9. Kate: Deb? every time I see you, you're more beautiful.
10. and I don't know how much more beautiful you can get?
11. Miriam: @@.
12. Kate: it's unbelievable.
13. [it doesn't] stop does it.
14. Debbie: [thank you.] thank you @@.
15. Kate: it doesn't stop.
16. Debbie: @@
17. Kate: she looks absolutely gorgeous.
18. Steven: you got on the phone and said Debbie. and I thought,

These data are without question, extremely rich examples of relational face-work, coming from sequences of naturally occurring and contextualised talk. Locher and Watts' main focus at this point in their paper is to argue against the concept of politeness as a universal and to argue for the concept of 'politic' behaviour by comparing the relational work that goes on in the two incidents of compliment -giving. They claim that the difference between the two examples is that compliments to the chef are merely following an expected "line" (p. 25) and so are unmarked, whereas compliments to the hosts' teenage daughter on her appearance are not necessarily an expected part of the interaction. In the former case, complimenting the food at a dinner party is required etiquette, in the other the compliments are strategies that "aim at making a participant feel good" (p. 26). In keeping with the post-modern concern for 'subjectivity' the ensuing analysis apparently reflects participants' perspectives on the interaction, for example, "Kate makes sure that her compliments are heard …" (p. 26) and "The humour in Kate's contributions also makes it easier for Debbie to accept the compliments (p. 26). The analysis is limited to paraphrasing and evaluating the participants utterances, for example, "Roy, Steven and Miriam all compliment and thank Anne, who first rejects the praise…and then accepts" (p. 24), "The compliments are met by laughing acceptance on Debbie's side" (p. 26). This is little more than what the participants themselves do as they are engaged in the conversation and begs the question raised by Mullany (2005) and Haugh (2007) as to what the role of the analyst is in this type of study. Furthermore, the claim that example 1 is unmarked, and therefore not politeness, whereas example 2 is marked and therefore politeness is itself quite subjective and not motivated by any independent criteria. There seems to be an assumption that this is how the participants themselves evaluate the events, but this is not evidenced in the interaction itself. What is missing is a theory of language-in-interaction with which to analyse these data in a less impressionistic way. I will now illustrate how Speech act theory, Grice's theory of implicature and politeness theory do at least provide some of the tools with which to offer a technical account of the pragmatic function of speech events, such as compliments. However, in taking this approach, I reach different conclusions about the way compliments function in interaction.

Firstly, although the speech act of complimenting does not inhere in any particular form of words (as Locher and Watts quite rightly say), neither is it determined solely by the norms of the situation. Without any visible evidence that the participants are orienting to the speech acts as compliments, the observation that example 1 is 'normal' complimenting behaviour (and therefore 'politic') whereas example 2 is non-normative (and therefore 'polite') is simply an assumption. However, invoking some of the concepts from speech act theory helps us to see how the compliments are constructed or received by the participants. Thus, what identifies these two incidents as containing compliments is partly that they fulfill the 'felicity conditions' (Austin, 1962) of a compliment and partly that they are 'taken up' (Austin 1962) as compliments. So, for example, we can posit that a compliment works as a compliment when (a) a favourable assessment is made about a person and (b) this evaluation is directed at the person they are intended for. Therefore, "Does she look gorgeous", said in the presence of the person referred to, has the function of a compliment, not as an observation about someone not present. Furthermore, we can see that in both cases the complimenting speech act (which, of course, are only compliments in this context) ("this was delightful "and " God does she look gorgeous") is oriented to as if it were a gift (Brown and Levinson, 1987), from the speaker to the hearer; in both cases the addressee responds with thanks. This analysis suggests that, in contrast to what Locher and Watts (2005) suggest, the two speech events are in fact similar for the participants. They may or may not inwardly identify them as 'polite' but the evidence from the interaction is that they are being oriented to in similar ways.

Of course, there are differences between the two examples in terms of how the compliments are received, but I argue that the main differences between the two speech events is not to do with which behaviour is normative and therefore unmarked (which it seems to me is taking a fairly deterministic view of behaviour in social situations). Rather, it is to do with the fact that in example 1 the compliment is first rejected before it is accepted and in example 2 it is merely accepted. This, I would suggest, could be explained in terms of the theoretical concept that underpins Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, that of face management. As Cameron (2001) explains, compliments present a dilemma for interlocutors in that any response is potentially face-threatening. Acceptance makes the recipient look immodest, while rejection questions the judgement of the complimenter. Cameron suggests that thanking may be the best compromise. This may explain why Debbie only thanks her complimenter, whereas Kate first rejects the compliment before accepting it. Debbie has a trickier face-management task than Anne because she is in a relatively powerless position (being a generation younger than all the other participants) and because the compliment itself concerns her looks rather than her skill. It is perhaps interactionally more difficult to dispute one's good looks with someone much older than to dispute one's skill at cooking with a peer. Hence Debbie sticks to the 'safer' option of merely thanking Kate.

4. Towards a sociological/interactional discursive pragmatics

The foregoing analysis of Locher and Watts (2005) data has argued that the inclusion of concepts from non-discursive approaches to pragmatics can enhance the analysis of interactional data. Notice, however, that contextual and sequential aspects of the discourse remain important in interpreting the construction of meaning. Thus, as well as speech acts, preceding and subsequent turns at talk are relevant, as are the social roles and relationships of the participants. This would point to an eclectic mix of analytic approaches to interactional data, that combines pragmatics with conversation analysis, as suggested by Goffman [1983] 1997:171-2) and Gumperz (2003 :218). Within pragmatics, some scholars see similar benefits to combining a constructivist orientation with traditional concepts and theories. Kasper (2006) states that we need to apply conversation analysis to speech act research and calls this a "discursive approach to speech act pragmatics" (page 282). As part of the "third wave" of politeness theory (Grainger 2011a; Culpeper 2011), O'Driscoll (2007) suggests that Brown and Levinson's theory provides an objective empirical tool for the analysis of interaction. Haugh (2007), in pointing out some of the weaknesses of the post-modern approach, advocates an empirically sound and primarily ethnomethodological approach to the analysis of politeness phenomena. Arundale's (1999; 2008; 2010) 'Conjoint Co-constituting Model of Communication' regards interaction as a "minimum social system" (Arundale 2010: 2086). Thus, it is in the interaction that we should look for the construction and reconstruction of meaning in terms of individual attiributes (such as identity), societal systems and social norms. Below I illustrate how such an interactional approach can usefully combine the benefits of Gricean pragmatics with those of ethnomethodology.

4.1 An intercultural example

The extract below was first discussed in Grainger (2011b) where I use it as an example of different norms of indirectness as politeness in British and Zimbabwean culture[2]. The extract is taken from a set of data collected by myself from my own interactions with Zimbabwean acquaintances living in Britain. In this instance I am congratulating "Lizzie" on achieving refugee status, but I am also wondering if this means she will no longer want to come and clean house for me, since she will now be able to look elsewhere for employment. The interaction takes place at my house, where Lizzie has arrived to do some cleaning:

1. Karen: Congratulations on getting your papers
2. Lizzie: Yes I was very happy
3. Karen: So you'll be looking for a job now?
4. Lizzie: Yes I'm looking for accommodation at the moment
5. Karen: Oh do you have to move out?
6. Lizzie: Yes on the 13th. That's why I want to move to L___
7. Karen: Oh do you have someone you can stay with there?
8. Lizzie: Yes my brother
9. Karen: We'll miss you if you go
10. Lizzie: Thank you for everything you've done for me. You have helped me a lot
11. Karen: You've helped us too
12. Lizzie: Next week I'll be coming on Wednesday
13. Karen: OK that's OK. And will you be coming the week after that?
14. Lizzie: No. Next week is my last week.

The main thrust of the discussion of these data in Grainger (2011b) is that Lizzie is more indirect in giving me notice to quit than I would have expected in this situation. But rather than couching the argument in terms of the subjective positions of the two participants (for example by giving their *post-facto* explanations of what they 'meant'),

[2] Here I am using "culture" as a shorthand for the different norms and interpretive frameworks that can characterise geographically and socially differentiated groups. I appreciate that it is a problematic concept which is discussed at more length in Grainger, Mills and Sibanda (2010).

the evidence can be found in the interaction itself if concepts from Grice and Austin, along with attention to sequence and structure, are brought to bear on the analysis.

First, if we look at line 3, Karen's question could be a veiled attempt to find out if Lizzie intends to continue cleaning for her. In other words, as a speech act it is ambiguous because the speaker could have more than one 'intention'. In this case Karen is, of course, also the analyst so it would be possible for me to give an explanation of my intentions. However, as Haugh (2007) has pointed out, this would not necessarily be a reliable account of what was intended at the time. Indeed, I would go further than this and say that interactants do not necessarily know even at the time of speaking what it is they intend, because they are busy constructing and negotiating meaning as they go along. So, in this instance I can recount that, yes, I was generally interested in knowing whether Lizzie would continue to clean for me, but I couldn't say with any certainty whether, at that particular juncture in the conversation, this was forefront in my mind. Furthermore, we do not have access to what Lizzie was thinking or feeling as the recipient of this question. However, we do have access to what she says next, and her response can be analysed in ways which combine conversation analysis and pragmatics. First, Lizzie's response is the second part of an adjacency pair (Sacks et al.,1978) and as such is treated as a response, regardless of its content. Secondly, in terms of "uptake" (Austin 1962), Lizzies' response ("yes") is partly an affirmation of the propositional content (Searle, 1969) of Karen's question (that she will be looking for work) but also partly moves away from the topic of job-seeking. In other words, regardless of how she may be inwardly interpreting Karen's question, she does not pursue the topic of job-seeking. Thirdly, Lizzie's response flouts Grice's maxim of quantity (and possibly relevance) which suggests that some additional meaning-making is going on here. Fourthly, a plausible explanation for this conversational non-cooperation is in terms of Brown and Levinson's general conception of politeness: that face-threatening acts motivate politeness strategies. The motivation for changing the subject is because telling your employer that you are looking for another job is face-threatening to both participants. Avoiding the topic is therefore one strategy open to interactants. However, as I have noted elsewhere (Grainger 2011b) Brown and Levinson's treatment of 'off record' strategies (Brown and Levinson, 1978; 1987) is missing a consideration of sequential matters, since it does not specifically account for topic avoidance, such as we see in this example.

In subsequent turns we can further see how the participants construct meaning between them. In line 5 Karen pursues the topic of moving and at line 6 Lizzie introduces the topic of moving cities. This could be a hint that she will no longer be available to work for Karen, but Karen does not apparently take it up as such until line 9 where she uses a conditional formulation ("if you go"). This reflects uncertainty about whether Lizzie will continue to come to the house to clean. Following this, notice that Lizzie's response on line 10 does not take up this conditional directly, but instead includes formulaic politeness that assumes we have come to the end of our arrangement ("thank you for everything you've done for me"). Karen's question at line 13 ("will you be coming the week after that?"), is a direct question about future arrangements but is oriented to the implied message in Lizzie's earlier turn. This suggests that Karen and Lizzie have achieved some level of agreement but it is only after Lizzie has delivered the face-enhancing news on line 12 ("Next week I'll be coming on Wednesday"), that she makes it explicit on line 14 that "next week is my last week".

In sum, the foregoing analysis is what I would like to see in a 'discursive' approach to pragmatics. The data are from a naturally-occurring interaction, about which I (the analyst) have some contextual information. However, any interpretations I may put upon what either speaker 'means' are firmly grounded in what they actually say and how each turn at talk provides a context for the next turn. This consideration of the structure and sequence of turns is complemented by theoretical explanations of how talk-in-interaction works, in terms of speech acts, conversational cooperation and face-work. In this way, the claim that politeness in the form of indirectness is present in this interaction is richly justifiable.

5. Conclusion

There is no question that traditional, Gricean pragmatics is flawed in terms of its focus on speaker intention, the use of decontextualised, invented utterances and ethnocentric assumptions about the nature of interaction. However, a post-modern take on discursive approaches to politeness and pragmatics do not necessarily answer these criticisms adequately. Indeed, they may bring with them their own problems. Specifically, they tend to over-interpret utterances in terms of the contextual norms, without empirical evidence for doing so. I have argued in this paper that some of the analytical rigour that is missing can be brought back by referring to those aspects of Austins', Searle's and Grice's work that are fundamental, universal insights about language- in- interaction. However, what both a post-modernist approach and a traditional approach often lack is an appreciation for the way meaning is achieved collaboratively and dynamically in the moment of talk. A third approach - that of conversation analysis - provides us with the necessary constructivist perspective. The challenge for discursive pragmatics, then, is to exploit the valuable insights from all these approaches in order to reach a rich and empirically sound analysis of interactional data.

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