

11 Solidarity and Politeness

When we speak, we must constantly make choices of many different kinds: what we want to say, how we want to say it, and the specific sentence types, words, and sounds that best unite the *what* with the *how*. How we say something is at least as important as what we say; in fact, the content and the form are quite inseparable, being but two facets of the same object. One way of looking at this relationship is to examine a few specific aspects of communication: namely, pronominal choice between *tu* and *vous* forms in languages that require a choice; the use of naming and address terms; and the employment of politeness markers. In each case we will see that certain linguistic choices a speaker makes indicate the social relationship that the speaker perceives to exist between him or her and the listener or listeners. Moreover, in many cases it is impossible to avoid making such choices in the actual ‘packaging’ of messages. We will also see that languages vary considerably in this respect, at least in regard to those aspects we will examine.

Tu and Vous

Many languages have a distinction corresponding to the *tu-vous* (T/V) distinction in French, where grammatically there is a ‘singular you’ *tu* (T) and a ‘plural you’ *vous* (V) but usage requires that you use *vous* with individuals on certain occasions. The T form is sometimes described as the ‘familiar’ form and the V form as the ‘polite’ one. Other languages with a similar T/V distinction are Latin (*tu/vos*), Russian (*ty/vy*), Italian (*tu/Lei*), German (*du/Sie*), Swedish (*du/ni*), and Greek (*esi/esis*). English, itself, once had such a distinction, the *thou/you* distinction.

According to Brown and Gilman (1960), the T/V distinction began as a genuine difference between singular and plural. However, a complication arose, which they explain as follows (p. 25):

In the Latin of antiquity there was only *tu* in the singular. The plural *vos* as a form of address to one person was first directed to the emperor, and there are several theories . . . about how this may have come about. The use of the plural to the

emperor began in the fourth century. By that time there were actually two emperors; the ruler of the eastern empire had his seat in Constantinople and the ruler of the west sat in Rome. Because of Diocletian's reforms the imperial office, although vested in two men, was administratively unified. Words addressed to one man were, by implication, addressed to both. The choice of *vos* as a form of address may have been in response to this implicit plurality. An emperor is also plural in another sense; he is the summation of his people and can speak as their representative. Royal persons sometimes say 'we' where an ordinary man would say 'I.' The Roman emperor sometimes spoke of himself as *nos*, and the reverential *vos* is the simple reciprocal of this.

The consequence of this usage was that by medieval times the upper classes apparently began to use V forms with each other to show mutual respect and politeness. However, T forms persisted, so that the upper classes used mutual V, the lower classes used mutual T, and the upper classes addressed the lower classes with T but received V. This latter asymmetrical T/V usage therefore came to symbolize a power relationship. It was extended to such situations as people to animals, master or mistress to servants, parents to children, priest to penitent, officer to soldier, and even God to angels, with, in each case, the first mentioned giving T but receiving V.

Symmetrical V usage became 'polite' usage. This polite usage spread downward in society, but not all the way down, so that in certain classes, but never the lowest, it became expected between husband and wife, parents and children, and lovers. Symmetrical T usage was always available to show intimacy, and its use for that purpose also spread to situations in which two people agreed they had strong common interests, i.e., a feeling of solidarity. This mutual T for solidarity gradually came to replace the mutual V of politeness, since solidarity is often more important than politeness in personal relationships. Moreover, the use of the asymmetrical T/V to express power decreased and mutual V was often used in its place, as between officer and soldier. Today we can still find asymmetrical T/V uses, but solidarity has tended to replace power, so that now mutual T is found quite often in relationships which previously had asymmetrical usage, e.g., father and son, and employer and employee. Brown and Gilman's study of how upper-class French, German, and Italian youth described their use of T/V forms clearly indicates the importance of solidarity over power. They observe as follows (pp. 263–4):

The many particular differences among the three languages are susceptible of a general characterization. Let us first contrast German and French. The German T is more reliably applied within the family than is the French T; in addition to the significantly higher T scores for grandfather and elder brother's wife, there are smaller differences showing a higher score for the German T on father, mother, wife, married elder brother, and remote male cousin. The French T is not automatically applied to remote relatives, but it is more likely than the German pronoun to be used to express the camaraderie of fellow students, fellow clerks, fellow countrymen abroad, and fellow soldiers. In general it may be said that the solidarity coded by the German T is an ascribed solidarity of family relationships. The French T, in greater degree, codes an acquired solidarity, not founded on family relationships but developing out of some sort of shared fate. As for the Italian T,

it very nearly equals the German in family solidarity and it surpasses the French in camaraderie. The camaraderie of the Italian male, incidentally, is extended to the Italian female; unlike the French or German student, the Italian says T to the co-ed almost as readily as to the male fellow student.

Because solidarity is so important, it sometimes falls on one party to initiate the use of T. Brown and Gilman explain how such a change may be initiated, i.e., the change from asymmetrical T/V or polite V/V to mutual T (p. 260):

There is an interesting residual of the power relation in the contemporary notion that the right to initiate the reciprocal T belongs to the member of the dyad having the better power-based claim to say T without reciprocation. The suggestion that solidarity be recognized comes more gracefully from the elder than from the younger, from the richer than from the poorer, from the employer than from the employee, from the noble than from the commoner, from the female than from the male.

It has been observed that Germans who have come to know each other quite well often make almost a little ceremony (*Brüderschaft trinken*) of the occasion when they decide to say *du* to each other rather than *Sie*. One French speaker will also sometimes propose to another that they *tutoyer* each other. Usually, on such occasions it is the superior in the relationship who initiates the change. Once a pair of speakers decide on mutual T, it is also impossible to go back to either T/V or V/V usage without changing the social relationship.

Brown and Gilman's study of T/V usage led them to make the following observation (p. 272):

There is enough consistency of address to justify speaking of a personal-pronoun style which involves a more or less wide use of the solidary T. Even among students of the same socioeconomic level there are differences of style, and these are potentially expressive of radicalism and conservatism in ideology. A Frenchman could, with some confidence, infer that a male university student who regularly said T to female fellow students would favor the nationalization of industry, free love, trial marriage, the abolition of capital punishment, and the weakening of nationalistic and religious loyalties.

This is an interesting claim, that you could at the time of writing listen to a young French male of a certain class and from his T/V usage predict certain opinions he would be likely to hold. As we will see, another study confirmed much the same predictive value for T/V usage among a corresponding social group in Italy.

Lambert and Tucker (1976) pointed out that all French communities and all groups within a community are not alike in their T/V usage. For example, children in Montreal and certain rural parts of Quebec, in the small city of Laval, in Mayenne, France, and in the sparsely populated French islands of Saint-Pierre et Miquelon lying just off the south coast of Newfoundland, Canada, exhibit different T/V usage. In the last two places children use *tu* with all kin and godparents, but in Quebec, especially in rural areas, they still use a considerable amount of *vous* within the family, particularly as distance in age and relationship

increases. Children themselves receive *tu* in all three places: in Quebec this use is almost universal for adults to children and young men, regardless of circumstance. In both Saint-Pierre and Laval, however, either some acquaintanceship or some familiarity is necessary before *tu* is used reciprocally in most circumstances beyond the family. Quebec appears to be the most conservative in T/V usage, with *vous* expected by strangers and older people. When a young person uses *tu* to someone who might expect *vous*, that violation is noted even though it may not lead to comment.

Ager (1990, p. 209) points out that in an advertising agency in Paris everybody uses *tu* except to the owner and the cleaning woman. He adds that in general *tu* is used with intimate acquaintances and people considered to be extremely subordinate, commenting that, 'There is nothing intimate or friendly in the *tu* used by the policeman who is checking the papers of a young person or an immigrant worker.' However, upper-class social leaders still use *vous* widely with intimates: President Giscard d'Estaing in the 1970s used *vous* in talking to everybody in his household – wife, children, and dogs included – and at the time of writing the well-connected wife of President Chirac addresses her husband with *vous* but he uses *tu* to almost everyone.

A book published in France entitled *Savoir-vivre en France* (Vigner, 1978) gives the following advice to foreigners on the current use of *tu* and *vous* there. *Tu* should be used between spouses, between brothers and sisters regardless of age, between parents and children, between close relatives, between young people living or working closely together or older people engaged in some common endeavor, and between adults who have a friendship of long standing, particularly adults of the same gender. *Vous* should be used between strangers, between those who have no ties of any kind, and between inferior and superior. According to Vigner, *tu* is customary in certain types of work relationships and among the young, but there are no precise rules for its use. You should not, however, use *tu* indiscriminately, since such behavior will seem excessively familiar and will not be appreciated. Since there is no precise rule for shifting from *vous* to *tu*, it is best to wait until the other person uses it to address you before you use it to address him or her. This last bit of advice has a certain logic to it: if you cannot judge who has power, settle for politeness and wait until the other indicates solidarity. However, the inescapable linguistic fact is that *tu* continues to replace *vous* everywhere; the historical progression is clearly toward *égalité* and *fraternité* and away from *pouvoir*.

Tamil also has a T/V distinction. One study showed that in one caste-based Tamil-speaking village, the lower the caste, the greater the T usage. In the upper castes there was considerable symmetrical V usage but also instances of asymmetrical T/V usage. It seems that in such circumstances symmetrical T usage is quite non-prestigious and the greater the V usage, the more prestige. In an attempt to explain this phenomenon, Brown and Levinson (1979, pp. 332–3) postulate that 'T/V usage is tied primarily to kinds of social relationship, and the association of T-exchange with low-status groups in stratified societies is due to the way that stratification affects the nature of intra-group social relations.' They believe that people in the lower strata in such societies are necessarily quite interdependent, so that 'relations of equality and solidarity are likely to arise

between adults, appropriately symbolized by mutual T-exchange.' Social networks among the upper strata are much more fragmented, people are more independent, and social distance is more normal. Hence the V-exchange found in such groups. Family relationships are also more hierarchical and that also precludes the use of T-exchange.

Bolivia is a Spanish-speaking country with two-thirds of its inhabitants of indigenous descent, mainly Aymara and Quechua. While Spanish is the language of La Paz, many inhabitants prefer to dress in ways that show their indigenous affiliation. Placencia (2001) looked at what happened when such people participated in a variety of service encounters in public institutions, such as hospitals, a government agency, and a city hall, with the service providers being either whites or indigenous people (white mestizos) who had adopted a Spanish identity in order 'to move up the social ladder' (p. 199). She was particularly interested in the use of the familiar *tú* and *vos*, and the formal *usted* and *ustedes*. Across a variety of different encounters, such as making requests for information and receiving instructions or requests for payment or to move up in a waiting line, she found that in contrast to white mestizos seeking similar services, 'indigenous persons were generally addressed with the familiar form *tú* or *vos*, were not the recipients of titles or politeness formulas, and, in certain interactions were asked for information or were directed to perform actions with more directness than were their white-mestizo counterparts' (pp. 211–12). Placencia says that social discrimination was quite obviously at work. She adds that 'the use of the familiar form in address to indigenous persons seems to be so ingrained in the linguistic behavior of white-mestizos that they are not even aware of it' (p. 123). While they thought they were being polite, actual observations showed they were not. Inequality was ingrained beyond the reach of social consciousness.

Let us return to a more 'democratic' Europe and look at some class differences there in T/V usage. There is some evidence (Bates and Benigni, 1975) to suggest that T/V usage in Italy is continuing to evolve. A survey of such usage among 117 Italian residents of Rome aged between 15 and 35, and 45 and 65 revealed that symmetrical address was the norm in most circumstances, with difference in age the only factor likely to bring about asymmetrical usage. However, upper-class youth and lower-class youth tended to behave differently. On the whole, lower-class youth were more formal in their choices than upper-class youth, who behaved much as they did in the Brown and Gilman study. One reason for the different behaviors may be that lower-class youth aspire to what they consider to be the practices current among higher social groups, and upper-class youth, who quite often show radical tendencies, attempt to imitate what they consider to be the style of the 'people.' Informal observation tended to confirm this interpretation. An upper-class youth faced with the problem of addressing a lower-class youth can use *tu* for solidarity, but *tu* is also a traditional asymmetrical form. The polite *Lei* is safe. The result sometimes is that with certain upper-class youth there is an almost complete reversal in the use of *tu* and *Lei*, with *Lei* used for attempts to achieve solidarity with members of the lower classes, e.g., waiters and servants, and *tu* used to address professors and employers. But the distinction may be no less rigid in practice than the use of *tu* and *Lei* before the reversal occurred.

Bates and Benigni also comment (pp. 280–1) on the following claim that Brown and Gilman (1960, p. 175) make concerning the previously quoted political views of a young upper-class French male: ‘A Frenchman could, with some confidence, infer that a male university student who regularly said T to female fellow students would favor the nationalization of industry, free love, trial marriage, the abolition of capital punishment, and the weakening of nationalistic and religious loyalties.’ They agree that the claim is valid for upper-class Italian youth, but for that class alone: ‘One could not, with any confidence, predict the political philosophy of a young blue-collar worker upon hearing him address a young female as *tu*’ (Bates and Benigni, 1975, p. 281). While upper-class youth appear to be reversing the traditional pattern of T/V usage without necessarily changing the system, change is apparent in other groups in society, particularly a change toward symmetrical usage. Today, most Italians are likely to expect to receive the same address form that they give. For a similar update on German usage, see Clyne (1984, pp. 124–8), who notes a recent move back toward more conservative, i.e., earlier, usage. Braun (1988, p. 30) tells, for example, of an incident in Germany in 1977. A German greengrocer, a woman, used *du* to a policeman, who found such use offensive and took her to court for it. The judge agreed with him and fined the greengrocer 2,250 German marks even though she claimed that in her rural dialect such use of *du* was not offensive.

There is considerable evidence that power is no longer as important as it once was in determining T/V usage; there has been a dramatic shift in recent years to solidarity. However, many local variations still remain. For example, solidarity in the French Revolution called for symmetrical T usage but in the Russian Revolution, symmetrical V usage. Symmetrical T usage has always been characteristic of lower-class relationships, so it may be avoided in certain circumstances to deny any semblance of lower-class membership in a quest for politeness. On the other hand, T forms have sometimes exerted a very special appeal to those of upper-class origin as they have attempted to give their speech a deliberately democratic flavor. We can expect different societies to devise different ways of handling the T/V distinction, and this is indeed what we find, with T/V forms being differently employed currently in Germany, France, and Italy. Moreover, that T/V usage is constantly evolving. It may not even be the case that the evolution is always toward solidarity and away from power. Power is still very much part of modern social structure, and it would be surprising if all traces of its effect were quite suddenly to vanish from T/V pronominal usage. For example, Keevallik (1999) provides an interesting account of how school children in Estonia learn to use the T/V system of that language: *sa* (or *sina*) vs. *te* (or *teie*). There is considerable variety of usage within the system as factors such as age, town vs. country, formality, and changing power relationships are involved. There are also avoidance strategies but these are not always available. The result is that ‘singular and plural address in Estonian is actively and creatively used for establishing and maintaining the character of social relations as well as for accomplishing various activities, such as degrading, condemning, or nagging’ (p. 143).

English, of course, has no active T/V distinction. The use of T forms by such groups as Quakers is very much limited, but these T forms are a solidarity

marker for those who do use them. The T/V use that remains in English is archaic, found in fixed formulas such as prayers or in use in plays written during the era when the T/V distinction was alive or in modern works that try to recapture aspects of that era. It is still possible, however, for speakers of English to show power and solidarity relationships through language; they just have to use other means. As we will see, speakers of English, just like speakers of other languages, can use address terms for that purpose.

Discussion

1. Languages such as Ainu, Tagalog, Tamil, and Turkish also have a T/V distinction. How does that strengthen or weaken Brown and Gilman's claims about the origin of the distinction?
2. Explain the distinction between *you* and *you all* as these are used in parts of the southern United States. Is this a T/V distinction of the kind discussed in this chapter?
3. In a novel based on his experiences and entitled *Men in Prison*, Victor Serge (1977) describes the use of *tu* in a French prison at the beginning of the twentieth century as follows (p. 21):

Once inside prison walls, the use of the familiar *tu* is practically a rule among inmates. At the house of detention, where crowds of transients are always coming and going – in that sudden physical indignity of arrest which is so much harder on new prisoners than on underworld 'regulars' – the guards call almost everyone *tu*. Elsewhere, after a rapid process of classification by social categories, they reserve this vulgarly familiar address for inmates who command no respect or consideration. One of my first observations – the accuracy of which was confirmed many times later on – was that this use of the familiar form by guards to inmates, or by policemen to criminals, is an instinctive recognition of a common existence and a common mentality. Guards and inmates live the same life on both sides of the same bolted door. Policemen and crooks keep the same company, sit on the same barstools, sleep with the same whores in the same furnished rooms. They mold each other like two armies fighting with complementary methods of attack and defense on a common terrain.

Comment on Serge's explanation of the guards' use of *tu*. In a review of Andrei Amalrik's *Notes of a Revolutionary* in *The New Yorker* (March 26, 1984, p. 130), William Maxwell reports the following bit of behavior by Amalrik in a Soviet prison:

To the prison officials who addressed him by the familiar – and, in the circumstances, insulting – second-person singular, he replied by calling them 'ty' also; whereupon they instantly switched to the polite form.

Explain what the officials and the prisoner were attempting to do through their choices of T/V forms on such occasions.

4. In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, Sir Toby Belch urges Andrew Aguecheek to send a challenge to the disguised Viola as follows: 'Taunt him with the license of ink, if thou thou'st him some thrice, it shall not be amiss.' At Sir Walter Raleigh's trial for treason in 1603 Sir Edward Coke attacked him as follows: 'All that he did, was at thy instigation, thou viper; for I thou thee, thou traitor.' Explain why in each case T forms are used instead of V forms.

Address Terms

How do you name or address another? By title (T), by first name (FN), by last name (LN), by a nickname, by some combination of these, or by nothing at all, so deliberately avoiding the problem? What factors govern the choice you make? Is the address process asymmetrical; that is, if I call you *Mr Jones*, do you call me *John*? Or is it symmetrical, so that *Mr Jones* leads to *Mr Smith* and *John* to *Fred*? All kinds of combinations are possible in English: *Dr Smith*, *John Smith*, *Smith*, *John*, *Johnnie*, *Doc*, *Sir*, *Mack*, and so on. Dr Smith himself might also expect *Doctor* from a patient, *Dad* from his son, *John* from his brother, *Dear* from his wife, and *Sir* from a police officer who stops him if he drives too fast, and he might be rather surprised if any one of these is substituted for any other, e.g., 'Excuse me, dear, can I see your licence?' from the police officer.

In looking at some of the issues involved in naming and addressing, let us first examine practices among an 'exotic' people to distance ourselves somewhat from English. A brief look at such a different system may possibly allow us to gain a more objective perspective on what we do with our own language and in our own culture. That objectivity is not just useful; it is quite necessary if we are to avoid conclusions distorted by ethnocentricity.

The Nuer, a Sudanese people, have very different naming practices from those with which we are likely to be familiar (Evans-Pritchard, 1948). Every Nuer has a personal or birth name, which is a name given to the child by the parents shortly after birth and retained for life. A personal name may be handed down, particularly to sons, for a son may be called something equivalent to 'son of [personal name].' Nuer personal names are interesting in what they name, e.g., *Reath* 'drought,' *Nbial* 'rain,' *Pun* 'wild rice,' *Cuol* 'to compensate,' *Mun* 'earth,' and *Met* 'to deceive.' Sometimes the maternal grandparents give a child a second personal name. The consequence is that a child's paternal kin may address the child by one personal name and the child's maternal kin by another. There are also special personal names for twins and children who are born after twins. Males are addressed by their personal names in their paternal villages during boyhood, but this usage shifts in later years when senior males are addressed as *Gwa* 'father' by less senior males, who themselves receive *Gwa* from much younger males. Children, however, call everyone in the village by their personal names, older people and parents included.

Every Nuer child also has a clan name, but this name is largely ceremonial so that its use is confined to such events as weddings and initiations. Use of the

clan name between females expresses considerable formality as when a woman uses it to address her son's wife. The clan name may also be used by mothers to their small children to express approval and pleasure. Clan names are also used when one is addressed outside one's local tribal area by people from other tribes.

In addition to personal names, which are given, and clan names, which are inherited, the Nuer also have ox names, that is, names derived from a favored ox. A man may choose his own ox name. This is a name which a man uses in the triumphs of sport, hunting, and war, and it is the name used among age-mates for purposes of address. Women's ox names come from the bulls calved by the cows they milk. Women's ox names are used mainly among women. Occasionally, young men will address young girls by their ox names as part of flirting behavior or their sisters by these names if they are pleased with them. Married women replace the ox names with cow names taken from the family herds, and men do not use these names at all.

Evans-Pritchard points out a number of further complications in naming and addressing, having to do with the complicated social arrangements found in Nuer life. A person's name varies with circumstances, for each person has a number of names which he or she can use. In addressing another, the choice of name which you use for the other depends both on your knowledge of exactly who that other is (e.g., his or her age and lineage) and on the circumstances of the meeting. (For another fascinating account of naming practices, this time among the Giriama, a coastal people of Kenya, see Parkin, 1989.)

Having taken this brief glance at Nuer name and addressing practices, we can now turn our attention to English usage. Brown and Ford's study (1961) of naming practices in English was based on an analysis of modern plays, the naming practices observed in a business in Boston, and the reported usage of business executives and children in the mid-western United States and in 'Yoredale' in England. They report that the asymmetric use of title, last name, and first name (TLN/FN) indicated inequality in power, that mutual TLN indicated inequality and unfamiliarity, and that mutual FN indicated equality and familiarity. The switch from mutual TLN to FN is also usually initiated by the more powerful member of the relationship. Other options exist too in addressing another: title alone (T), e.g., *Professor* or *Doctor*; last name alone (LN), e.g., *Smith*; or multiple naming, e.g., variation between *Mr Smith* and *Fred*. We should note that in such a classification, titles like *Sir* or *Madam* are generalized variants of the T(title) category, i.e., generic titles, and forms like *Mack*, *Buddy*, *Jack*, or *Mate* are generic first names (FN), as in 'What's up, Mate?' or 'Hey, Mack, I wouldn't do that if I were you.'

Address by title alone is the least intimate form of address in that titles usually designate ranks or occupations, as in *Colonel*, *Doctor*, or *Waiter*. They are devoid of 'personal' content. We can argue therefore that *Doctor Smith* is more intimate than *Doctor* alone, acknowledging as it does that the other person's name is known and can be mentioned. Knowing and using another's first name is, of course, a sign of considerable intimacy or at least of a desire for such intimacy. Using a nickname or pet name shows an even greater intimacy. When someone uses your first name alone in addressing you, you may feel on occasion that that

person is presuming an intimacy you do not recognize or, alternatively, is trying to assert some power over you. Note that a mother's *John Smith* to a misbehaving son reduces the intimacy of first name alone, or first name with diminutive (*Johnny*), or pet name (*Honey*), and consequently serves to signal a rebuke.

We can see some of the possible dangers in cross-cultural communication when different relationships are expressed through what appears, superficially at least, to be the same address system. The dangers are even greater if you learn the terms in a new address system but fail to appreciate how they are related to one another. Ervin-Tripp (1972, p. 231) provides the following example:

Suppose the speaker, but not the listener, has a system in which familiarity, not merely solidarity, is required for use of a first name. He will use TLN in the United States to his new colleagues and be regarded as aloof or excessively formal. He will feel that first-name usage from his colleagues is brash and intrusive. In the same way, encounters across social groups may lead to misunderstandings within the United States. Suppose a used-car salesman regards his relation to his customers as solidary, or a physician so regards his relation to old patients. The American . . . might regard such speakers as intrusive, having made a false claim to a solidary status. In this way, one can pinpoint abrasive features of interaction across groups.

I might add that the use of a person's first name in North America does not necessarily indicate friendship or respect. First names are required among people who work closely together, even though they may not like each other at all. First names may even be used to refer to public figures, but contemptuously as well as admiringly.

The asymmetric use of names and address terms is often a clear indicator of a power differential. School classrooms are almost universally good examples; *John* and *Sally* are likely to be children and *Miss* or *Mr Smith* to be teachers. For a long time in the southern states of the United States, whites used naming and addressing practices to put blacks in their place. Hence the odious use of *Boy* to address black males. The asymmetrical use of names also was part of the system. Whites addressed blacks by their first names in situations which required them to use titles, or titles and last names, if they were addressing whites. There was a clear racial distinction in the practice. According to Johnson (1943, p. 140), one consequence of this practice was that:

middle- and upper-class Negro women never permit their first names to be known. . . . The wife of a well-to-do Negro business man went into a department store in Atlanta to enquire about an account. The clerk asked her first name and she said 'Mrs William Jones.' The clerk insisted on her first name, and when she refused to give it declared that the business could not be completed without it. It was a large account; and the manager, to whom appeal was made, decided that 'Mrs' was simply good business and not 'social equality.'

In this case 'good business' overrode the desire to reinforce the social inequality that would have resulted from the woman's giving the sales-clerk the information requested and then the inevitable use of that first name alone by the clerk in addressing the customer.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* (1989) is the story of an Indian woman Jyoti, who early in life marries a 'modern' man Prakash (p. 77):

He wanted me to call him by his first name. 'Only in feudal societies is the woman still a vassal,' he explained. 'Hasnapur is feudal.' In Hasnapur wives used only pronouns to address their husbands. The first months, eager and obedient as I was, I still had a hard time calling him Prakash. I'd cough to get his attention, or start with 'Are you listening?' Every time I coughed he'd say, 'Do I hear a crow trying human speech?' Prakash. I had to practice and practice (in the bathroom, in the tarped-over corner of the verandah which was our kitchen) so I could say the name without gagging or blushing in front of his friends. He liked to show me off. His friends were like him: disrupters and rebuilders, idealists.

Prakash is opposed to the feudalistic traditions which surround them and asymmetrical naming, being one of them, must go. Jyoti also becomes Jasmine and has to struggle with these new ways and the new identity the name gives her. Such an asymmetrical system between spouses is not at all unusual. In Java a wife may address her husband as *mas* 'elder brother' and get her first name, a nickname, or *dhik* 'younger sibling' from him, a reflection of the traditional difference in status between husband and wife.

Dickey (1996, 1997a, 1997b) examined 11,891 address terms in Greek prose writers over more than six centuries (approximately 450 BCE to 160 CE) plus 1,683 other terms from other sources. In this upper-class Athenian society names – and these Greeks had only a single name, a given name – were commonly used in addressing others, e.g., by free adult males to address each other. Slaves were usually addressed as *paî* 'child'; they in turn addressed their masters and mistresses as *déspota* 'master' or *déspoina* 'mistress,' although they sometimes used names too. Men addressed women by either name or *gúnai* 'woman,' and women and children addressed men by name. Children addressed parents as either *pater* 'father' or *mêter* 'mother,' and parents addressed children as *huié* 'son,' *thúgater* 'daughter,' or *paî* 'child.' Siblings used names or *ádelphe* 'brother' or *adelphé* 'sister.' Husbands usually addressed their wives by *gúnai* and their mistresses by name. A wife used either her husband's name or *áner* 'husband.' Dickey says (1997b, p. 8) that 'there was, to all intents and purposes, only one way to address a man by name in Athens.'

In English, when we are in doubt as to how to address another we can actually avoid the difficulty by not using any address term at all. We can say *Good morning* as well as *Good morning, Sir/Mr Smith/Susie*. In other languages such avoidance may be either impolite or deficient. In France, you cannot say *Bonjour, Au revoir, Merci, or Pardon* without attaching an address term. So the French say *Bonjour, Monsieur or Merci, Pierre*, whereas we can say simply *Good morning or Thank you*.

In English we therefore have the possibility of the avoidance of an address term, that is, Ø use, or of a choice between familiar and polite. One simple test for distinguishing familiar, informal address terms from polite, formal ones in English is to look at them in conjunction with informal and formal greetings and leave-takings, e.g., *Hi, Bye, and So long* in comparison with *Good morning*

and *Goodbye*. *Hi, Sally*; *Bye, Honey*; and *So long, Doc* are possible, just as are *Good morning, Mr Smith* and *Goodbye, Sir*. However, there is something peculiar about *Hi, Colonel Jones*; *Bye, Professor*; *Good morning, Mate*; and *Goodbye, Pussykins*. (See McConnell-Ginet, 2003, for a discussion of naming and addressing in relation to issues of gender.)

As you age and your family relationships change, issues of naming and addressing may arise. For example, knowing how to address your father-in-law (or mother-in-law) has often been a problem for many people: *Mr Smith* is sometimes felt to be too formal, *Bill* too familiar, and *Dad* pre-empted or even ‘unnatural.’ The arrival of grandchildren is sometimes seen as a way out, it being easier to call a father-in-law *Grandad* than *Dad*. Such a move may also be accompanied in some families with a switch of address for your own parents, so that your mother is addressed as *Grandma* rather than *Mom*; sometimes this appears to be intended only as a temporary help to the grandchildren in learning the right terms of address, but it can easily become a permanent change so that *Grandad* and *Grandma* come to replace *Dad* and *Mom*. In some cases *Grandma* may be used for the maternal grandmother and *Gran* or *Nana* for the paternal one, or vice versa.

Some languages actually employ what we regard as kinship terms for use as address terms. We saw the equivalent of English *father* so used among the Nuer. Luong (1990) describes how Vietnamese makes extensive use of kinship terms as forms of address, e.g., *cháu* ‘grandchild,’ *bà* ‘grandmother,’ and *bác* ‘senior uncle/aunt.’ The kinship system itself is generation- and age-oriented with terms for both the paternal and maternal sides. It also gives more weight to males than females. Children are also ordered, for example as ‘sibling two,’ ‘sibling three,’ etc. – there is no ‘sibling one’ – and a term like *anh* can be used for both ‘elder brother’ and ‘male cousin, same generation.’ Bare English translation of Vietnamese terms into English words like *aunt*, *cousin*, etc., always seems deficient to Vietnamese; as Luong says, ‘linguistic forms . . . play a vital instrumental role in the structuring of sociocultural reality’ (p. 166) so that the English equivalents fall far short of Vietnamese understanding of social relationships. As a further instance, Pham (2002) says that ‘Between married couples, *minh* [“body”] is used to address the spouse, by either the husband or wife. If the speaker is the husband, he uses *anh* “elder brother” for self-reference. If the speaker is a wife, she uses *em* “younger sibling” for self-reference’ (p. 295). However, times are changing and in ‘urban settings now, if husbands are younger than their wives, wives – particularly educated ones – consider the term *em* for self-reference to be either humorous or embarrassing. In this case, proper names come to the rescue: wives refer to their husbands and to themselves by proper names, or they use *anh* “elder brother” to address their husbands and their own proper names to refer to themselves’ (p. 308). Vietnamese address non-relatives using various such kinship terms because neither names (patronyms, middle names, and personal names) find extensive use nor do personal pronouns, the latter tending to express non-solidarity or used typically only by children or certain less favored social groups. (See Oyetade, 1995, for still another example of the use of kinship terms to address strangers, this time among the Yoruba of Nigeria.) Dickey (1997a, p. 272) hypothesizes that such systems of terms originated in the tendency

of adults to take the perspective of small children in referring to older relatives in order to teach the children how to address these relatives 'correctly.'

One additional peculiarity of systems of naming and addressing is that people sometimes give names to, and address, non-humans as well as humans. In a society where people keep a lot of pets of different kinds, there is likely to be a considerable variety of names and forms of address used depending on the kind of pet, e.g., horse, cat, or gerbil, and the circumstances, e.g., whether you are alone with the pet or in public view, feeding it, or reprimanding it. It is sometimes said that you can learn a lot about other people from the pets they keep; if this is so, part of that 'keeping' is how those pets are treated linguistically. We should not be surprised that people who view animals very differently are sometimes mystified by our treatment of animals and the way we talk to them, quite often in ways that resemble the way we employ with very young children.

If we look at what is involved in addressing another, it seems that a variety of social factors usually governs our choice of terms: the particular occasion; the social status or rank of the other; gender; age; family relationship; occupational hierarchy; transactional status (i.e., a service encounter, or a doctor-patient relationship, or one of priest-penitent); race; or degree of intimacy. The choice is sometimes quite clear; when racial or caste origin is important in society, that is likely to take preference; when family ties are extremely strong, that is likely to be preferred; and so on. In societies which claim to be egalitarian there may be some doubt as to what is the appropriate address term, and consequently none at all may be used between, say, husband and wife's mother; son who is learning a lowly job in a company and father who is the company president; police officer and young male offender; and older male and much younger feminist. There also seems to be an ordered relationship, something like the steps in courting behavior; you proceed to greater and greater familiarity with no back-tracking! When one party insists on stopping at a point both have previously gone beyond, this is likely to signal a reduction in familiarity and to indicate and be perceived as a kind of violation.

One consequence is that choosing the right terms of address to use in a hierarchical organization may not always be easy. Not many organizations are as rigidly organized as the military, for example, but even here there are occasional difficulties, since soldiers must not only maintain a clear chain of command but sometimes must live together, occasionally in very dangerous circumstances requiring solidarity, for long periods of time. The business world is also hierarchically organized, though generally less rigidly than the military. One unpublished study (Staples, 1971) showed that in a large department store employees had a very good idea of how they should address others and be addressed by them. Relative rank in the organizational structure was the key factor in determining how two employees would address each other, with status in the organization overriding any age difference. However, younger employees tended to be less formal than older employees in their choice of address terms, and informal situations produced greater familiarity in address than formal ones. What is apparent too is that, in such a hierarchical structure, those at the bottom seek to minimize their difference in status from those at the top and those at the top seek to maximize that difference. In trying to do this, members of each group

Table 11.1 Uses of *Tóngzhì* in China

<i>Combination</i>	<i>Example</i>
Ø + Title	<i>Tóngzhì</i> ‘Comrade’
Given name + Title	<i>Wéigúo Tóngzhì</i> ‘Comrade Weiguo’
Modifier + Title	<i>Lǎo Tóngzhì</i> ‘Old Comrade’ <i>Xiǎo Tóngzhì</i> ‘Young Comrade’
Ø + Title + Title	<i>Zhūrèn Tóngzhì</i> ‘Comrade Director’
Family name + Title	<i>Wáng Tóngzhì</i> ‘Comrade Wang’
Family name + Given name + Title	<i>Wáng Wéigúo Tóngzhì</i> ‘Comrade Wang Weiguo’
Modifier + Family name + Title	<i>Lǎo Wáng Tóngzhì</i> ‘Old Comrade Wang’

Source: based on Scotton and Wanjin (1983, pp. 484–5)

use address terms as a resource in the resulting power struggle, with those at the bottom preferring the most familiar terms they can manage to use and those at the top the most formal ones.

We can also note that the terms we use to address others are not necessarily the same as those we use to refer to them when speaking to others. However, Dickey (1997a, p. 268) indicates that when A speaks to B about C there is often ‘a close relationship between the way that person A addresses person C and the way that A refers to C.’ She adds that this is another example of accommodation, specifically of convergence behavior, i.e., the need to gain another’s social approval.

A society undergoing social change is also likely to show certain indications of such change if the language in use in that society has (or had) a complex system of address. One such society is modern China (Scotton and Wanjin, 1983, and Fang and Heng, 1983). The Communist Party of China has promoted the use of *tóngzhì* ‘comrade’ to replace titles for owners and employers, e.g., *lǎobǎn* ‘proprietor,’ and also honorific titles, e.g., *xiān-sheng* ‘mister.’ The party wants to put everyone on an equal footing through encouraging the use of an address form that implies no social or economic differences and unites all politically. Titles, however, have not entirely disappeared from use. Professional titles are still used, e.g., *lǎoshī* ‘teacher’ and *dài-fu* ‘doctor,’ and skilled workers prefer to be addressed as *shī-fu* ‘master.’ Table 11.1 shows that *tóngzhì* can be used in a variety of ways (Scotton and Wanjin, 1983, pp. 484–5). However, there are clear differences among the choices. *Tóngzhì* is used in situations that are somewhat neutral, i.e., when there are no clear indications of power or solidarity and no familiarity between the parties, e.g., to an unknown stranger or to someone whose occupation carries with it no title. *Tóngzhì* can also be used deliberately to keep another at arm’s length, as it were. For example, a superior may use *tóngzhì* rather than an inferior’s title before offering a rebuke. It can also be used in the opposite direction, from inferior to superior, to remind the superior of shared interests, or between equals if such sharing is deemed to be more

important on a particular occasion than some other difference which could be acknowledged through choice of another term.

However, many Chinese still prefer the use of a title to the use of *tóngzhì*, e.g., *zhǔrèn* 'director' or *zhǎng* 'chief.' There is also widespread use of *lǎo* 'old' and *xǎo* 'little' in conjunction with last names as polite forms not only between intimates but also to mark social distinctions between non-intimates. An inferior may therefore address a superior by either *Lǎo* + LN or LN + title, with practice varying according to location (Fang and Heng, 1983, p. 499), the first variant being preferred in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai, the second in less egalitarian medium and small towns. Still another form of address used to elderly officials and scholars and showing great deference is LN + *Lǎo*, e.g., *Wáng Lǎo*. Some old titles are still used but mainly to accommodate non-Chinese, e.g., *tàitai* 'Mrs.' The Chinese address form for a spouse is usually *àiren* 'lover.' The old *xiānsheng* 'Mr' is now applied only to certain older scholars; young teachers are called *lǎoshī* or, if they are professors, *jiàoshòu*. Fang and Heng conclude as follows (p. 506): 'The address norms in China are indeed extremely complicated. . . . What we have discussed . . . [are] . . . some of the changes in address norms brought about by the Revolution. Taken as a whole, changes in address modes in today's China are unique and drastic. Few countries in the world, we believe, have been undergoing such drastic changes in this respect.' In a later report on the same phenomenon, Ju (1991) points out that *shī-fu* has become somewhat devalued through overextension to those not originally deserving it and that *xiānsheng* has lost its previous derogatory connotations, especially among young people. He concludes (p. 390), 'China is changing as are its political and cultural systems. Predictably, there will be further changes in its use of its address terms.' Keshavarz (1988) reports on a somewhat similar situation in Iran. The revolution there that led to the flight of the Shah resulted in the choice of address terms indicating solidarity; however, the old honorifics were also retained. Consequently, the need to express solidarity led to greater use of terms like /bæradær/ 'brother' and /xahær/ 'sister' and honorifics have been reinterpreted as indicators of humility and politeness rather than of flattery.

One interesting hypothesis about address terms (Robinson, 1972, p. 129) is that, in those societies in which a person's status derives from his or her achievements, few distinctions in address are made. In such societies people may use only one basic form of address; they rely on other means for signaling the variety of relationships that we must presume still exist. However, in societies where status is ascribed, i.e., derived from birth into a particular social group, we are much more likely to find sets of finely graded address terms. Such sets reflect the social structures of those societies. Data from the English of North America and from a highly stratified society like Java seem to illustrate the two extremes; data on address forms from Japan and Korea would also suggest that these societies are much more stratified and that social position within them is more ascribed than earned in contrast to the situations in either North America or the United Kingdom. Undoubtedly, some social theorists would strongly disagree, pointing out that in the last two cases it is still birth rather than ability which makes the greater contribution to your life chances. Consequently, no matter how intriguing the thesis is, it remains unproved.

Discussion

1. English naming practices are not quite as simple as they might appear to be. Comment on each of the following: the initial acquisition of a name or names; changing your name on marriage; legal changes of name; adopting a new name when made a peer or becoming an actor, singer, or entertainer; incorporation; trade names; blaspheming; naming pets; signing your name to a document; aliases and pseudo-names; personation; memorializing; and 'keeping your good name.'
2. How do you address a stranger? Does the form of address depend in any way on factors such as that person's gender, age, ethnicity, dress, perceived role, physical well-being, or behavior? Is it true to say that the primary consideration in addressing strangers is 'be polite' and therefore 'be deferential'?
3. A black physician, Dr Poussaint, gave the following account of being stopped a number of years ago by a white policeman in a southern town in the United States:

'What's your name, boy?' the policeman asked. . . .
 'Dr Poussaint. I'm a physician.'
 'What's your first name, boy?'
 'Alvin.'

Explain why Dr Poussaint reports himself to have experienced a feeling of 'profound humiliation' because of this treatment.

4. *Sir* has two corresponding terms for females: *Madam* or *Ma'am* (occasionally *Mrs*), and *Miss*. What brings about the distinction in the terms for females? These terms are used both 'up,' to those who are of higher standing, and (in some cases) 'down.' Find examples of both kinds of usage.
5. In what circumstances might a specific individual be addressed as *Smith*, *Mr Smith*, *Professor Smith*, *Smithie*, *John Smith*, *John*, *Johnnie*, *Honey*, *Sir*, *Mack*, *You*, and by no term at all?
6. A waiter who serves a woman and says 'Here's your drink, my dear,' or a waitress who asks 'What'll you have, dearie?' might give offense in some circumstances. Why?
7. How do you attract the attention of another, e.g., someone who has dropped something on the street or left something behind on a bus? You might want to call this form of address a 'summons'; it would also include addressing a waiter or waitress.
8. Murphy (1988) reports that in a North American university setting a number of factors influenced the choice among various combinations of titles and names when a speaker referred to a third person. Among these were the level of intimacy between the speaker and that person, between the addressee and that person, and between any non-participating audience and that person. In addition, the relationship between the speaker and the addressee also affected the choice. Do your observations of similar situations agree with Murphy's?

9. How do you refer to a third party? ('I've come to see Mr Smith'; 'Is the lady of the house at home?')
10. Comment on each of the following address practices. What is your own practice, if relevant, in each case? Teacher–student: TLN/FN; FN/FN. Physician–patient: T/FN; TLN/TLN; FN/FN. Father–son: T(*Dad*)/FN; FN/FN. Salesperson–customer: TLN/TLN; TLN/FN; FN/FN. Apartment dweller–building superintendent: TLN/TLN; TLN/FN; FN/FN; T(*Sir*)/TLN; TLN/T(*Sir*). Older person who lives next door to you: TLN/TLN; FN/FN; TLN/FN.
11. How do you or your parents address in-laws?
12. One aspect of naming is how people are referred to in accounts in broadcasts, newspapers, and magazines, e.g., 'John Smith, 49, a retired policeman' or 'Smith's daughter, Sarah, a junior at Vassar.' Examine such practices. Do you find any evidence that men and women are treated differently?
13. Ervin-Tripp (1972, p. 242) says that 'one cannot say to a stranger on the street, "My name is George Landers. What time is it?" or "Hello, sir. Where is the post office?".' Explain why these are not possible and mark off the speaker as in some way unfamiliar with correct English usage.

Politeness

Through our choice of pronominal forms when a T/V distinction exists and of address terms, we can show our feelings toward others – solidarity, power, distance, respect, intimacy, and so on – and our awareness of social customs. Such awareness is also shown through the general politeness with which we use language. Politeness itself is socially prescribed. This does not mean, of course, that we must always be polite, for we may be quite impolite to others on occasion. However, we could not be so if there were no rules of politeness to be broken. Impoliteness depends on the existence of standards, or norms, of politeness.

The concept of 'politeness' owes a great deal to Goffman's original work (1955, 1967) on 'face.' In social interaction we present a face to others and to others' faces. We are obliged to protect both our own face and the faces of others to the extent that each time we interact with others we play out a kind of mini-drama, a kind of ritual in which each party is required to recognize the identity that the other claims for himself or herself. The consequence is, as Scollon and Scollon (2001) tell us: 'One of the most important ways in which we reduce the ambiguity of communication is by making assumptions about the people we are talking to' (p. 44). They add: 'Any communication is a risk to face; it is a risk to one's own face, at the same time it is a risk to the other person's. We have to carefully project a face for ourselves and to respect the face rights and claims of other participants. . . . "*There is no faceless communication*"' (p. 48).

In discussing 'politeness,' the concept of interest to them, Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 61) define *face* as 'the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself.' They also distinguish between positive face and negative face.

Positive face is the desire to gain the approval of others, ‘the positive consistent self-image or “personality” . . . claimed by interactants’ (p. 61). *Negative face* is the desire to be unimpeded by others in one’s actions, ‘the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction . . . freedom of action and freedom from imposition’ (p. 61). Positive face looks for solidarity; negative face, however, is more problematic for it requires interactants to recognize each other’s negative face, i.e., the need to act without giving offense.

When we interact with others we must be aware of both kinds of face and therefore have a choice of two kinds of politeness. *Positive politeness* leads to moves to achieve solidarity through offers of friendship, the use of compliments, and informal language use: we treat others as friends and allies, do not impose on them, and never threaten their face. On the other hand, *negative politeness* leads to deference, apologizing, indirectness, and formality in language use: we adopt a variety of strategies so as to avoid any threats to the face others are presenting to us. Symmetric pronominal use is a good example of positive politeness and asymmetric T/V use of negative politeness. This approach to politeness has been quite revealing when applied to many Western societies. However, it has been criticized (Mills, 2003) for encapsulating stereotypical, white, middle-class (and largely female) language behavior. It may also not work so well in other cultures. We will look at two examples: Java and Japan.

Some languages seem to have built into them very complex systems of politeness. Javanese, one of the principal languages of Indonesia, is a language in which, as Geertz (1960, p. 248) says ‘it is nearly impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationships between the speaker and the listener in terms of status and familiarity.’ Before one Javanese speaks to another, he or she must decide on an appropriate speech style (or *styleme*, in Geertz’s terminology): high, middle, or low. Such a decision is necessary because for many words there are three distinct variants according to style. For example, the equivalent to the English word *now* is *samenika* in high style, *saniki* in middle style, and *saiki* in low style. You cannot freely shift styles, so the choice of *saiki* will require the speaker to use *arep* for the verb equivalent to *go* rather than *adjeng* or *bađe*, which would be required by the choices of *saniki* and *samenika*, respectively.

But there is still another level of complication. Javanese has a set of honorifics, referring to such matters as people, body parts, possessions, and human actions. These honorifics can be used to further modulate two of the style levels, the high and the low. There are both high honorifics, e.g., *dahar* for *eat*, and low honorifics, e.g., *neđa* for *eat*. Only high honorifics can accompany high style, but both high and low honorifics can accompany low style. We can also use the equivalent of English *eat* to show a further complication. *Neđa* is found in the high style with no honorifics, the middle style (which cannot have honorifics), and the low style with low honorifics. *Dahar* for *eat* always signals high honorifics in either high or low style. In low style without honorifics *eat* is *mangan*. We can see the various combinations that are possible if we combine the various equivalents of *eat* and *now*, as in table 11.2. In addition, table 11.3 shows the equivalent of the English sentence, ‘Are you going to eat rice and cassava now?’ in the six levels that are possible in Javanese. Geertz adds a further interesting observation: as you move from low to high style, you speak more slowly and

Table 11.2 Levels in Javanese

<i>Speech level</i>	<i>Example</i>	
	<i>eat</i>	<i>now</i>
3a high style, high honorifics	ḍahar	samenika
3 high style, no honorifics	neḍa	samenika
2 middle style, no honorifics	neḍa	saniki
1b low style, high honorifics	ḍahar	saiki
1a low style, low honorifics	neḍa	saiki
1 low style, no honorifics	mangan	saiki

Level names: 3a krama inggil (high style, high honorifics)
 3 krama biasa (high style, no honorifics)
 2 krama madya (middle style, no honorifics)
 1b ngoko sae (low style, high honorifics)
 1a ngoko madya (low style, low honorifics)
 1 ngoko biasa (low style, no honorifics)

Source: Geertz (1960)

Table 11.3 Level differences in a Javanese sentence

	<i>Are</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>going</i>	<i>to eat</i>	<i>rice</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>cassava</i>	<i>now?</i>
3a	menapa	pandjenengan	baḍé	ḍahar	sekul	kalijan	kaspé	samenika
3	menapa	sampéjan	baḍé	neḍa	sekul	lan	kaspé	samenika
2	napa	sampéjan	adjeng	neḍa	sekul	lan	kaspé	saniki
1b	apa	pandjenengan	arep	ḍahar	sega	lan	kaspé	saiki
1a	apa	sampéjan	arep	neḍa	sega	lan	kaspé	saiki
1	apa	kowé	arep	mangan	sega	lan	kaspé	saiki

Source: Geertz (1960, p. 250)

softly and more evenly in terms of rhythm and pitch, so that the highest levels, ‘when spoken correctly, have a kind of stately pomp which can make the simplest conversation seem like a great ceremony’ (p. 173).

It is not at all easy to specify when a particular level is used. As Geertz says (pp. 257–8):

A thorough semantic study of the contexts within which the different levels are employed would in itself be a complex and extended investigation, for the number of variables specifically determining the selection of a particular level are very

numerous. They include not only qualitative characteristics of the speakers – age, sex, kinship relation, occupation, wealth, education, religious commitment, family background – but also more general factors: for instance, the social setting (one would be likely to use a higher level to the same individual at a wedding than in the street); the content of the conversation (in general, one uses lower levels when speaking of commercial matters, higher ones if speaking of religious or aesthetic matters); the history of social interaction between the speakers (one will tend to speak rather high, if one speaks at all, with someone with whom one has quarreled); the presence of a third person (one tends to speak higher to the same individual if others are listening). All these play a role, to say nothing of individual idiosyncratic attitudes. Some people, particularly, it seems, wealthier traders and self-confident village chiefs, who tend to think the whole business rather uncomfortable and somewhat silly, speak *ngoko* to almost everyone except the very high in status. Others will shift levels on any pretext. A complete listing of the determinants of level selection would, therefore, involve a thorough analysis of the whole framework of Javanese culture.

Irvine (1998, p. 56) points out that ‘the higher . . . levels are considered to be governed by an ethic of proper order, peace, and calm. In them one “does not express one’s own feelings” . . . The “lower” levels . . . are the language one loses one’s temper in.’ The levels are addressee-focused: ‘polite conduct toward a respected addressee is conduct that is stylized, depersonalized, and flat-affect . . . use of “high” deferential styles also implies the speaker’s own refinement, as shown by the speaker’s ability to efface emotion, sensitivity to the equanimity of others, and pragmatic delicacy.’ Overall, those of the highest social rank control the widest range of styles and all the subtleties of the highest of those, while those of low rank employ only a small range at the low end.

It is possible to state a few principles that seem to operate. Highest style is used among the old aristocrats or by anyone at the highest levels of society who wants to give the appearance of elegance. Middle style is used by town-dwellers who are not close friends, or by peasants addressing superiors. Village-dwellers would also use this level with very high superiors since they cannot be expected to have any knowledge of high style. Low level is the style all children learn first regardless of social-class origin, and everyone uses it on some occasion, even close acquaintances of the highest classes. It is also used to clear inferiors, e.g., by high government officials to peasants and perhaps even to townspeople. Low honorifics added to low style indicate a lack of intimacy and mark a certain social distance but not much. It is mainly the aristocracy who use the low level with high honorifics but townspeople might use it too; such use seems to indicate a need to express both intimacy through the use of the low style and respect through the use of the honorifics, a kind of compromise solution. Men and women are also required to speak differently. Women are expected to be more talkative than men and to err on the side of being over-polite in their word choices. Javanese men, on the other hand, are required to be extremely careful in manipulating the styles of speech because nuanced speech is highly prized. Moreover, it is just such a difference that maintains men’s dominance in public life and reserves the domestic realm for women.

Geertz's caveat still applies: there are many personal and local variations so that the total system is extremely complex and the possibilities for making wrong choices abound. As Java has modernized, certain changes have occurred. One important change has been the spread of the national language, Bahasa Indonesia, a more 'democratic' language. Bahasa Indonesia already dominates the political life of Java because it enables people to talk about issues without having to choose a particular level of speech which necessarily conveys attitudes they might not want to convey. However, there is no reason to assume that Javanese itself will change and that the various levels will disappear. Rather, the spread of Bahasa Indonesia in Java may best be seen as offering a choice to those who know both Javanese and Bahasa Indonesia. As Geertz says (p. 259), Bahasa Indonesia 'seems destined, at least in the short run, to become part of the general Javanese linguistic system, to become one more type of sentence among those available, to be selected for use in certain special contexts and for certain special purposes.'

One thing that is not clear in the above analysis is just which aspects of usage come from the requirements of positive politeness and which from the requirements of negative politeness. There is reason to believe that many choices in Javanese are determined by a wider need to maintain the existing social arrangement rather than by any individual's need to address his or her momentary wants. Japan offers us another example.

The Japanese are also always described as being an extremely polite people. Martin (1964) has summarized some of the ways in which the Japanese use language to show this politeness: honorific forms incorporating negatives (analogous to English 'Wouldn't you like to . . .?') are more polite than those without negatives; the longer the utterance the more polite it is felt to be; utterances with local dialect in them are less polite and those with a few Chinese loan words in them are more polite; you are more polite to strangers than to acquaintances; your gender determines your use of honorifics, with men differentiating more than women among the available honorifics; whereas knowledge of honorifics is associated with education, attitudes toward using them vary with age; politeness is most expected when women address men, the young address the old, and members of the lower classes address members of the upper classes, with the last, i.e., class differences, overriding the first two; and, although people may say that it is inappropriate to use honorifics with your relatives, they still use them. Martin says that there are four basic factors at work here: in choosing the proper, or polite, address term for another, a Japanese considers out-groupness, social position, age difference, and gender difference in that order. Martin observes that anyone who comes to such a complicated system of politeness and address from a simple one may get 'the feeling that Japanese conversation is all formula, with no content' (p. 407). To the argument that such a complicated system must necessarily give way 'as feudalism is replaced by democracy,' Martin replies that 'we shall probably have speech levels in Japanese . . . as long as we have plurals in English' (p. 412).

The Japanese are very polite. But how much of that politeness is negative politeness? According to Matsumoto (1989) and Ide (1989), perhaps not a great deal. Both argue that the concept does not offer the best explanation of what

is happening. The Japanese are always very much aware of the social context of every utterance they use. They are brought up to use *wakimae* ‘discernment,’ i.e., how to do the right thing socially, so personal face requirements, if any, are pushed into the background. The evidence to support this claim and a similar claim by Nwoye (1992) concerning the Igbo of Nigeria is suggestive rather than conclusive. However, it does remind us that while people must be polite everywhere they are not necessarily polite in the same way or for the same reasons. For example, a recent study (Sreetharan, 2004) of the use of a nonstandard variety of Japanese by men in the Kansai (western) region of Japan revealed that in all-male situations while young men between the ages of 19 and 23 preferred to use forms of speech that are stereotypically masculine, older men between 24 and 68 tended to avoid such language. Indeed, the older they were, the greater the preference for polite, traditionally feminine forms. They thereby cultivated a polite image, no longer needing to project their masculinity (and the power associated with that) through their language.

We can turn to a European language, French, to show still another aspect of politeness. In *Savoir-vivre en France* (Vigner, 1978) we find some examples that clearly illustrate how longer utterances are considered to be more polite than shorter ones in certain circumstances. For example, in asking someone to pick you up at three o’clock, you can say each of the following (pp. 77–8):

A trois heures, avec votre voiture.
‘At three o’clock, with your car.’

Vous voudriez bien venir me prendre à trois heures avec votre voiture.
‘You should come and get me at three o’clock with your car.’

Pourriez-vous venir me prendre à trois heures avec votre voiture?
‘Could you come and get me at three o’clock with your car?’

The first sentence is not at all polite; in the last sentence there is a further softening through choice of the question format. Asking a stranger on the street the way to the Gare de Lyon, you can say (pp. 79–80):

La Gare de Lyon?
‘Lyon Station?’

Pour aller à la Gare de Lyon, s’il vous plaît?
‘The way to Lyon Station, please?’

Pourriez-vous m’indiquer le chemin pour me rendre à la Gare de Lyon?
‘Could you tell me which way I should go for Lyon Station?’

Auriez-vous l’obligeance de bien vouloir m’indiquer le chemin pour me rendre à la Gare de Lyon?
‘Would you be so obliging as to want to inform me which way I should go for Lyon Station?’

Whereas the first request is almost certainly too abrupt, the last is almost certainly too obsequious. Finally, you enter an office and must disturb someone who is working there to find out where exactly you should go (pp. 80–1):

Le service des bourses?
 ‘The Finance Office?’

Pardon, le service des bourses, s’il vous plaît?
 ‘Excuse me, the Finance Office, please?’

Je m’excuse de vous déranger, mais pourriez-vous m’indiquer le service des bourses, s’il vous plaît?
 ‘I’m sorry for disturbing you, but would you tell me where the Finance Office is, please?’

According to Vigner (p. 88), this French politeness formula is made up of three components: (1) an initial mitigating component (which can be short, e.g., *Pouvez-vous*, or long, e.g., *Est-ce que vous voudriez bien*) or its absence; (2) the central request or order component; and (3) a final component, the presence or absence of something like *s’il vous plaît*. You can therefore have each of the following:

\emptyset – request – \emptyset
 \emptyset – request – final
 short mitigator – request – final
 long mitigator – request – final

Requests made in the form \emptyset – request – \emptyset are therefore power-loaded, or impolite, or both; requests made in the form, long mitigator – request – final, may be so polite as to appear to be overdone. Notice that a request by a superior to an inferior put in this last form is likely to be interpreted as sarcastic: ‘Would you mind, Mr Smith, if I asked you to try occasionally to get to work on time, please?’

Politeness is a very important principle in language use; we must consider others’ feelings. The next chapter will again take up the issue of politeness and try to place it in a still broader context.

In using a language, we make use of the devices that the language employs to show certain relationships to others and our attitudes toward them. Indeed, to use the language properly, we must do so. In using French, we cannot avoid the *tu–vous* distinction; in communicating in English, we must refer to others and address them on occasion; in speaking Javanese or Japanese, we must observe the conventions having to do with the correct choice of speech level and honorifics. It is quite possible that we may not like what we must do and find the demands made either onerous or undemocratic, or both. It is also possible that such systems will change over a period of time, but that kind of change is slow and, when it does occur, as we saw with the example from China, not at all easy. There seems to be little doubt that language use and certain aspects of social structure are intimately related. The exact nature of that relationship may continue to intrigue us. That is, do speakers of Javanese and Japanese behave the way they do because their languages *require* them to do so, or do their linguistic choices follow inevitably from the social structures they have developed, or is it a bit of both? Was Whorf right, wrong, or partly right? I will, of course, leave these questions unanswered once more.

Discussion

1. Martin states a number of principles that govern politeness in Japanese. Do we have anything at all equivalent in English?
2. Refer back to Martin's observation concerning Japanese speech levels and English plurals. How valid is Martin's point? Look at what is actually said in such a long polite utterance as 'Would I be bothering you awfully if I asked you to move over one seat?' What makes it so polite? Give some other examples. Contrast these polite utterances with some impoliteness.
3. Record a conversation. Note all the signs of politeness. Take them out. What are you left with? How does the resulting conversation sound, i.e., what is its effect? Alternatively, record an impolite exchange and try to specify exactly why it is impolite.
4. If more polite utterances tend to be longer than less polite ones, how do you account for the fact that people who live and work very closely with each other often communicate effectively (and politely) with very few words? Refer to the concept of 'phatic communion' (see pp. 286–7).
5. Observe how young children address each other and try to describe their 'rules of politeness.' Contrast these rules with those of their parents. How do you learn to be polite?
6. Try to work out some of the difficulties one might experience in giving and receiving compliments, particularly the 'power' and 'solidarity' issues. In what ways do compliments given in symmetrical relationships differ from those given in asymmetrical relationships?
7. It has been said that an apology is a special kind of politeness device that addresses the face needs of a hearer or hearers when some kind of offense has been given. Analyze some offenses and apologies from this perspective.

Further Reading

In addition to the sources cited in the text, Friedrich (1972) provides interesting data on the T/V distinction in Russian, and Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) examine T/V usage at length. Adler (1978) offers an overview of naming and addressing, and Braun (1988) deals with terms of address. Parkinson (1986) discusses address in Egyptian Arabic. For additional information on Javanese see Errington (1988) and on Japanese honorifics see Coulmas (1992), Ide (1982), Neustupný (1986), and Shibamoto (1985). For other views of politeness see Meier (1995) and particularly Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), and Mills (2003), and for a bibliography see DuFon et al. (1994).