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The pragmatics of politeness. By Geoffrey Leech. (Oxford studies in sociolinguistics.) New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xvi, 343. ISBN 9780195341355. $39.95.

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In the past fifteen years, the field of politeness studies has experienced momentous growth both in the range of phenomena studied and in the number of venues dedicated to the relevant research. In terms of the former, impoliteness, aggression, and mock politeness as well as mock impoliteness are now among the topics regularly addressed; while the latter include no less than two dedicated journals (the *Journal of Politeness Research*, founded in 2005, and the *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, founded in 2013), a lively series of annual conferences and workshops, and, in the past five years alone, numerous book-length publications including a dedicated *Handbook of linguistic (im)politeness* (Culpeper et al. 2016). It is in this climate of renewed interest in im/politeness research that Geoffrey Leech's *The pragmatics of politeness* comes as a welcome addition to remind us of the linguistic roots of the field and, unwittingly, given the author's passing within a month of its publication, to serve as his legacy into the future.

It is hardly an exaggeration to say that L, alongside Robin Lakoff (1973) and Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1978, 1987), was one of the founders of the field. His interest in politeness dates to the 1970s, when he wrote *Language and tact* (Leech 1977), insights from which were later incorporated into his classic *Principles of pragmatics* (Leech 1983). Already in this early text, the seeds of his maxim-based view of politeness are evident: the mapping between (semantic) sense and (pragmatic) force, indirectness, and politeness as a scalar notion are all discussed. For L, politeness (or rather, tact) is about strategic conflict avoidance and showing regard for others. But it also serves a deeper purpose: it ensures the trust and goodwill necessary for enabling the spirit of cooperation that underlies Grice's cooperative principle (CP) to take effect. This is quite a revolutionary view, since, unlike Lakoff (1973), he did not see politeness and cooperation as competing principles alternatingly taking precedence depending on the exigencies of the context; nor did he, like Brown and Levinson (1987:5), think of Grice's CP as a 'presumptive framework for communication' grounded in reality through a set of politeness strategies. Rather, he viewed politeness as primary, as setting the scene for the CP to operate on. As he famously put it, 'unless you are polite to your neighbour, the channel of communication between you will break down and you will no longer be able to borrow his mower' (1983:82).

In this, as in much else of what he wrote, L was unashamedly British. His view of politeness as, first and foremost, showing regard for others' feelings, qualities, and opinions, rings a familiar tone to those who knew him, leading one to suspect that what he aimed to account for theoretically was his own understanding of politeness—a first-order (or politeness1) definition of the term—despite his frequent insistence that his approach was resolutely a second-order (or politeness2) one (48).[1] And justifiably so. For he never was one to undertake the fieldwork that would be required for a true politeness1 analysis of the phenomenon. A more accurate characterization might therefore be to say that his politeness2 definition was rather close to his politeness1 one, the interdependence between the two being a point he was quick to recognize himself (48).

That should not be taken to mean, however, that his theory was founded solely on intuition. This is made abundantly clear in the book under review in the chapters discussing specific phenomena: Ch. 5 on apologies, Ch. 6 on requests, and Ch. 7, which briefly touches on numerous other 'speech events'—a term he felt better captures the complexity of phenomena that involve several acts or moves (115)—including offers, invitations, compliments, criticisms, thanks, agreement and disagreement, advice, congratulations, and more. These chapters draw on corpus data, most notably from the British National Corpus, which he helped compile. Using corpora in politeness research is becoming increasingly popular (Culpeper 2011, Ruhi & Aksan 2015) and represents an important step forward, not least because using data that are publicly available and have been collected following established methodologies increases accountability and enhances possibilities for replication by future studies. While the sources of his English examples are thus well accounted for, those of the Chinese examples used to exemplify the politeness maxims (Ch. 4; see below) are less so. This leaves some room for doubting their representativeness. Native speakers have commented that while the examples are genuine, they seem to have been chosen for their close correspondence to the English data and do not cover the full range of Chinese politeness. Since Chinese is used as a way of countering Anglo-centricity, a frequent criticism of L's earlier work that he set out to redress in Leech 2007, it is rather unfortunate that the rigorousness with which the English data were selected was not applied to the Chinese data as well.

But providing empirical grounding for his claims about politeness is only one of L's concerns in this book, which is essentially his first book-length treatment of the topic. A more pressing concern is to provide a complete and explicit theoretical account of what he means by linguistic politeness and where this fits in with the state of the art in semantics/pragmatics theorizing. In this, he does a superb job. First, by way of a politeness2 definition of the term, he proposes the notion of communicative altruism, inspired by advances in evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology, as well as game theory (21–23). Politeness, we are told, is 'to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s), especially the person(s) you are conversing with' (3). This goes a long way toward explicating the content he attributes to the term and is more than most politeness theorists have previously provided (cf. Eelen 2001:31). But L goes further: communicative altruism, he warns, is not real altruism and ought not to be conflated with it (24). Politeness is about APPEARING to care about others. It is about using language that IN ITSELF communicates concern for others. Whether that concern is sincere is a different matter, and it is a matter that psychologists, not linguists, ought to worry about (90).

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[1] The politeness1/politeness2 distinction was introduced into politeness theorizing by Watts and colleagues (1992:3–4) and further theorized by Eelen (2001:30ff.). It essentially amounts to a distinction between a layperson's definition of the term and its technical definition within a theory of im/politeness. Typically, lay definitions of politeness are more restrictive, having to do with good manners, using standard language, and sometimes stereotypes about gender and class, while technical definitions are broader, encompassing behaviors that are not explicitly termed 'polite' such as exchanging nicknames and insider jokes ('positive politeness') or even teasing and banter, as well as impoliteness and aggression—all of which are currently studied under the umbrella of 'im/politeness'.

Having made clear that how language expresses politeness (rather than how speakers do) is his primary concern—the former constituting PRAGMALINGUISTICS, the latter SOCIOPRAGMATICS, a distinction that has been extremely influential since he and his student Jenny Thomas first proposed it in 1983 (see Leech 1983, Thomas 1983)—L (91ff.) proceeds to spell out the content of politeness in ten maxims (up from seven in his 1983 book), given below.

    (1) Generosity: 'Give a high value to O[ther]'s wants.'
    (2) Tact: 'Give a low value to S[elf]'s wants.'
    (3) Approbation: 'Give a high value to O's qualities.'
    (4) Modesty: 'Give a low value to S's qualities.'
    (5) Obligation of S to O: 'Give a high value to S's obligation to O.'
    (6) Obligation of O to S: 'Give a low value to O's obligation to S.'
    (7) Agreement: 'Give a high value to O's opinions.'
    (8) Opinion reticence: 'Give a low value to S's opinions.'
    (9) Sympathy: 'Give a high value to O's feelings.'
    (10) Feeling reticence: 'Give a low value to S's feelings.'

As in the earlier work, each maxim is related to a particular class of speech events (e.g. generosity typically applies to commissives, tact to directives, approbation to compliments, and so on). This time, however, there is an additional distinction between POS-POLITENESS maxims—those associated with raising O, which are odd-numbered in the above scheme—and NEG-POLITENESS ones—those concerned with lowering S, which are even-numbered.

The distinction between pos-politeness and neg-politeness is one that is inspired by Brown and Levinson's corresponding distinction between positive and negative politeness, yet L defines these terms somewhat differently (hence his use of the abbreviated rather than the full terms).[2] Most crucially, the incorporation of pos-politeness is his attempt to include alongside face-threat the notion of face-enhancement, shown to be important in previous theoretical work (e.g. Bayraktaroğlu 1991, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997) yet rarely paid as much attention as its negative counterpart, which centers on avoiding imposition. Unfortunately, that is the case also with the current attempt, where, despite the mention of face-enhancing acts (99), the overarching feeling is that neg-politeness, the type that 'typically involves indirectness, hedging and understatement', is 'the most important type' (11). This programmatic assertion, which echoes similar claims by Brown and Levinson (1987:74), is made on the grounds that we 'need, in studying neg-politeness, to develop a pragmatics of politeness that will handle the indirect speech acts and implicit meanings so characteristic of neg-politeness', while 'the intensification of meaning characteristic of pos-politeness, on the whole, does not have such problems' (55). This drives a very interesting discussion of pragmatics as problem solving (from the speaker's and from the hearer's perspectives), of the correspondence between syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic levels in utterance interpretation, and of Neo-Gricean defaults in Ch. 3. Yet, for all of its theoretical sophistication, the proposed view does not break with the tradition of associating politeness with avoidance of imposition, which has been shown to be of limited applicability cross-culturally (Sifianou 1993, Terkourafi 2015).

A more interesting point about L's maxim-based view, and one that is not sufficiently noted, is the content-full nature of his maxims. By attributing to the maxims explicit semantic content, L is claiming (as he did in 1983) that politeness is about maximizing the expression of polite beliefs, and correspondingly minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs (1983:81). This is reiterated in the current formulation of the general principle of politeness, which states that 'in order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to O or associate an unfavorable value with what pertains to S' (90). While this makes the current scheme flexible enough to account for impoliteness as well (essentially, it is doing the opposite of what the maxims enjoin; Ch. 8), it also makes politeness a matter of WHAT we say, rather than, as is

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[2] L's use of these terms comes closest to the notions of MAX[imization] and MIN[imization] discussed by Held (1992), although he does not refer to that study in his book.

often claimed, of HOW we say it. This point sets L apart from others (including Lakoff and Brown and Levinson) who have sought to identify the linguistic devices commonly used to express politeness on the basis of their form (e.g. conditionals, deictic switches, the T/V pronominal system, the subjunctive, diminution, etc.) rather than their meaning. While the maxims of politeness can motivate the conventionalization of particular expressions, conventionalization would be driven by their semantics rather than their grammatical form, allowing also for nonconventionalized instances of politeness to be accounted for under the same scheme. And while L clearly is not suggesting that the polite beliefs encapsulated in the maxims should be sincerely held (see the discussion of communicative altruism above), this is a most interesting proposition that can also be tested crosslinguistically.

With additional chapters on data-collection methods (Ch. 9), interlanguage pragmatics (Ch. 10), and historical aspects of English politeness (Ch. 11), the book is representative of the breadth and depth of its author's theoretical pursuits, as well as true to his intellectual course as a leading figure in pragmatics over the past forty years.

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