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The moral aspect of linguistic politeness: respect and honorification

M Beltrami
mbacad@post.cz

0 Introduction

While reviewing the literature on linguistic politeness[1], I noticed that the all the theories proposed so far fail to take into due consideration or even acknowledge the existence of the ethical aspect of politeness. Linguists devote most of their attention to socio-cultural aspects of politeness and to the exploration of the goal-oriented psychological principles that are supposed to govern politeness processes. Regrettably, the morally-inspired nature that characterises many politeness acts seems to have been totally missed or to have been regarded as irrelevant. I am convinced that without paying the due consideration to the moral aspect of politeness we shall never be able to get the complete picture of the phenomenon, let alone understand and explain its complex mechanism.

The present study is a humble attempt to rouse the interest of linguists in the moral aspect of politeness and to provide a first appraisal of its significance. Being just a preliminary exploration, the first of its kind, it does not aim at completeness, but tentatively attempts to probe the issue of 'moral politeness'[2] and to outline its salient features. This study does not fit into any existing framework and takes a novel approach, based on the categorisation of the nature of the inner motives that trigger politeness phenomena. The different nature of such inner motives is all important here.

So far the scholars have generally assumed that politeness can have only one driving motive (differently identified in the various studies), regarded as the sole factor prompting politeness acts. Overall, each theory explained politeness in the light of the one driving motive that it recognised. In this study, I take issue with this reductionist view and suggest that there are diverse types of motivations capable of triggering politeness devices. I also attempt to identify and classify the categories of motives relevant to politeness phenomena. In the multi-motive framework that I sketch, a politeness act may either be prompted by a single motivation or be the resultant of diverse concurrent motivations.

This study will concentrate particularly on the moral motives of politeness, because a considerable amount of research has already been carried out on the other chief motives[3] that trigger politeness. The second part of the dissertation will be more specific and will investigate the honorific aspect of politeness, that is politeness related to respect and honorification forms.

The study does not feature an extensive amount of empirical research, being mostly based on personal insights. However, linguistic evidence is provided to substantiate the theoretical proposals made. In this connection, data from the Panjabi language will be presented.

Section 1 provides an overview of the literature on linguistic politeness and contains brief comments on the previous works. Section 2 deals mainly with the moral aspect of politeness, here introduced and described. A differentiation of politeness

[1] Henceforth referred to simply as 'politeness'.
[2] The notion is explained in detail in section 2.
[3] That is, 'selfish drives' and 'normative pressures' (section 2).

types is proposed, based on the nature of the triggering motive: 'selfish', 'moral' or 'normative'. It is also argued that some instances of politeness are non-rational and that politeness does not necessarily require social interaction. A moral-indexing function of politeness is proposed. The existence of a metaphysical dimension to which an individual's morality refers is posited. Section 3 provides a general introduction to the concepts of respect and honorification. My own interpretations of these notions, in line with the 'moral' framework outlined in the previous chapter, are introduced, as opposed to the corresponding folk notions and to the conceptualisations found in the politeness literature. Honorifics are cursorily mentioned and commented upon. Chapter 4 presents data on linguistic usage of respect and honorification forms from Panjabi.

1 The linguistic study of politeness

There are several possible approaches to politeness (e.g. sociological, anthropological). Politeness has been studied extensively also from the linguistic perspective and in the last three decades the investigation of politeness phenomena has attracted the interest of an increasing number of sociolinguists and pragmaticians. Research on linguistic politeness falls into three categories:

a) Studies that construct theoretical models of politeness
b) Studies that investigate culture-specific concepts and strategies of politeness
c) Studies that apply existing theories to data from various cultures

The present study can be classified under the first category, though my present aim is not to theorise a complete model of politeness but to contribute to the general understanding of the phenomenon by providing useful insights.

1.1 Theoretical background: the concept of politeness

To date, there is no scholarly consensus on the definition and conceptualisation of linguistic politeness (Dimitrova-Galaczi 2002). Often authors discuss politeness without formally stating what they mean by it (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 3). These omissions may partly be justified by the fact that many theoretical frameworks specifically constructed for the study of politeness presuppose a common understanding of the phenomenon. Lack of clarity or focus on the part of the authors could be another plausible explanation. The theoretical vagueness and uncertainty noticeable in many politeness studies clearly reflect the serious cognitive predicament faced by linguists, whose foremost embarrassment, even before coming to methodological issues, arises from the most fundamental questions, such as 'what is linguistic politeness?', 'how to identify it?', 'what motivates it?'. More advanced issues like 'is politeness universal or culture-specific?', 'what sociolinguistic factors are relevant to politeness?', etc. (cf. Kasper 1990) are even farther from being answered. Overall, the understanding of politeness still appears fuzzy and elusive (cf. Held 1992: 131; Meier 1995: 345). In her panoramic review of politeness studies, Dimitrova-Galaczi (2002) mentions some of the multifarious ways in which politeness has been depicted in the literature, among which figure also formality, deference, indirectness, appropriateness, etiquette and tact (Fraser 1990; Kasper 1994; Meier 1995; Thomas 1995). This notional heterogeneity is quite understandable, considering that a great number of politeness studies are carried out independently and without a common framework of reference. Besides, the wide-

ranging variation in the conceptualisation and manifestation of politeness across the different cultures adds to the complexity of the phenomenon and produces a seemingly kaleidoscopic perception of it.

Of the definitions and conceptualisations of politeness that I came across, none seems to be fully comprehensive or satisfactory[4]. The view presented by Brown and Levinson (1987), for instance, is annoyingly fragmentary and fails to provide a truly comprehensive and uniform account of politeness.[5] Other theoretical models may appear more rigorous and uniform, but one should also note that formal rigorousness and elegance often requires the over-simplification of an ostensibly too complex phenomenon, at the expense of objectivity and comprehensiveness. While narrow-focussed investigations of a sub-target may still have some utility, the insights that they provide are necessarily of a reductionist nature. The literature on politeness abounds with mono-dimensional investigations, devoted to only one particular aspect of politeness. The disproportionate over-estimation of a particular dimension necessarily entails a distortion of the general picture. Above all, a specific aspect of politeness is not politeness as a whole.

In line with the above considerations, I have chosen to employ 'politeness' as a most general cover term subsuming all the multifarious related notions with which politeness is sometimes identified or from which is expressly distinguished.[6] Notions such as appropriateness, formality, deference etc. will neither be regarded as synonymous with politeness nor conceptually distinct from it[7], but just as sub-specifications of politeness or modalities through which politeness is expressed.

As mentioned in the introduction, the present study is chiefly concerned with the investigation of one particular aspect of politeness (the moral aspect) but it should be clear that this does not aim at reducing politeness to a purely moral phenomenon. The author is aware of the cognitive limitations entailed by the restrictiveness of the scope and lays no claims to providing a comprehensive account of politeness.

1.2 Literature review of politeness studies

In the paragraphs below I briefly review the major works relevant to the theoretical investigation of linguistic politeness, so as to provide the reader with a general introduction to the topic of research.

Brown and Gilman (1960) introduced the notion that the pronominal usage could be an expression of two sociological variables: power and solidarity. They argued that pronouns, in addition to their semantic reference (person and number), can encode information regarding social relationships, such as social symmetry / asymmetry, degree of solidarity, social distance. In this particular usage, pronouns are said to function as 'social deictics' (Malsch 1987). Brown and Gilman's seminal contribution was followed by a host of other similar researches (also extended to forms of address) on various languages (e.g. Brown & Ford 1964; Ervin-Tripp 1971; Lambert 1967; Pritchard 1964; Misra 1977; Head 1978; Bates & Benigni 1978; Strick

[4] The review of the various definitions falls beyond the scope of the present study. Moreover, their collation and presentation would not be of much benefit to the understanding of politeness, as no clear and coherent picture would emerge from the disparate and sometimes contradictory accounts (based on different assumptions and different methodologies) that have been proposed so far.

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types is proposed, based on the nature of the triggering motive: 'selfish', 'moral' or 'normative'. It is also argued that some instances of politeness are non-rational and that politeness does not necessarily require social interaction. A moral-indexing function of politeness is proposed. The existence of a metaphysical dimension to which an individual's morality refers is posited. Section 3 provides a general introduction to the concepts of respect and honorification. My own interpretations of these notions, in line with the 'moral' framework outlined in the previous chapter, are introduced, as opposed to the corresponding folk notions and to the conceptualisations found in the politeness literature. Honorifics are cursorily mentioned and commented upon. Chapter 4 presents data on linguistic usage of respect and honorification forms from Panjabi.

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1980; Jain 1985; Malsch 1987; Braun 1988). While these studies were not specifically aimed at the investigation of politeness phenomena, they served to pave the way and to provide the sociolinguistic coordinates for later studies within the politeness research context.

The Cooperative Principle proposed by Grice (1975)[8] states that speakers are expected to make appropriate, useful and timely contributions to a conversation.[9] Grice's research was not purposely concerned with linguistic politeness, but with pragmatics; even so, it had a substantial influence on the later pragmatic studies on politeness, which built on it.

Fraser's (1990) four-fold classification of linguistic politeness studies is a fairly comprehensive approach to the different conceptualisations of politeness; I follow it in the present literature review. Fraser enumerates four main ways of viewing politeness, as found in the literature:

1. The social norm view

This is a purely sociolinguistic approach[10], based on the assumption that "the variety of ways we express politeness and respond to speech acts featuring politeness are determined by underlying, cultural-based assumptions about what it means to be polite" (Thomas 1983); implying a relativist conceptualisation of politeness. Translated into practical terms, this means that politeness is construed as compliance with socially established norms. In this framework, the degree of politeness of a speech act is measured against the behavioural standards established in a given society.

2. The conversational maxim view

The chief proponents of this approach were Robin Lakoff (1973, 1975) and Leech (1983). Both built their theoretical frameworks on Grice's Cooperative Principle, trying to expand it (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992:6).

Lakoff (1973) argued for the necessity of a Politeness Principle, in addition to Grice's Cooperative Principle, and posited two requirements for pragmatic competence: clarity and politeness.[11] She interpreted politeness as forms of behaviour which have been "developed in societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (1975:64) and stated that "to be polite is saying the socially correct thing" (p. 53), which is partly in agreement with the first view.

Leech (1983) is the second major attempt to explain politeness within the conversational maxim (pragmatic) paradigm. The author defines politeness as forms of behaviour aimed at the establishment and maintenance of comity, i.e. at the ability of participants in a socio-communicative interaction to engage in interaction in a harmonious atmosphere (1983:104). Seeking to identify the rules governing the usage of polite expressions, Leech devotes most of his attention to the categorisation of the underlying intents behind politeness forms[12]. Leech's composite Politeness Principle,

[8] First outlined by Grice in his 1967 series of Harvard lectures on 'conversational implicature'.
[9] The Cooperative Principle is expressed in four 'conversational maxims': (1) maxim of quantity (suitable degree of informativeness), (2) maxim of quality (truthfulness and reliability), (3) maxim of relevance and (4) maxim of manner (clarity of expression and conciseness).
[10] As opposed to the pragmatic approaches.
[11] According to Fraser (1990), Lakoff's 'be polite' requirement is composed of 3 sub-rules: (1) don't impose, (2) give options, and (3) make 'A' feel good.
[12] He does so in a way conceptually different from the one I propose, as explained in section 2.

consisting of six benefit/cost maxims[13], sums up his economic-oriented insights on the nature of politeness.

3. The face-saving view

Brown and Levinson's treatise (1978; re-issued 1987) has been regarded as the classic study on politeness since its first publication, and remains most influential to this date. The primary goal of the work is to codify the underlying principles governing polite expressions and to provide an explanatory model for the motivations that induce speakers to diverge from Grice's Cooperative Principle. In this respect, thus, politeness is considered a marked feature of speech. The argumentations put forth to account for such deviations are rooted in Goffman's notion of 'face' (1967a: 5), which the authors re-define as the 'public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself' (1987: 61). 'Face' consists of two aspects: negative and positive, so that every individual has both a 'negative face' and a 'positive face'. The 'face wants' associated with each face are, respectively, the desire for freedom of action, i.e. freedom from imposition, and the desire for the speaker's self-image to be appreciated and approved of. Based on this notion of face, Brown and Levinson propose two types of politeness: negative and positive politeness. The former is directed to the addressee's negative face wants, the latter to the addressee's positive face. Overall, politeness is seen as a set of strategic devices meant to satisfy the 'face wants' of both the speaker and the addressee (but primarily of the addressee). Each type of politeness actually consists of an assortment of disparate linguistic strategies, whose taxonomy the authors describe in detail. Many utterances (e.g. orders, requests, criticisms, etc.) are viewed as potentially face-threatening, because of the degree of imposition inherent in them. Such expressions, called Face Threatening Acts (FTA's), are classified in different hierarchical levels of direct to indirect verbal acts. Speakers are supposed to act rationally in their choice of appropriate speech strategies, so as to minimise the threat potentially posed by FTA's. Three sociological factors determine the level of politeness: social distance, relative power and rank of imposition of the speech act within the given culture (1987: 74).

While Brown and Levinson attempt to define a universal model of politeness, their claim for universality has been challenged by a host of scholars, mostly Asian (e.g. Mao 1994; Matsumoto 1988, 1989; Gu 1990; Lim 2002); the main target of the criticism is the ethnocentric bias present in Brown and Levinson's concepts of face and face wants[14] (cf. Bargiela et al. 2002; Lim 2002). Moreover, some scholars also regard as insurmountable the well-documented contradictions between the universal and the culture-specific models of politeness (see Janney & Arndt 1993 for discussion).

Politeness, as described by Brown and Levinson, consists of a set of calculating strategies aimed at obtaining the maximum benefit from interpersonal interactions and at facilitating a smooth communication between potentially aggressive partners. Scollon & Scollon (1994) attempted a modification of Brown and Levinson's model

[13] Leech's Politeness Principle (1983: 132) is formulated through six 'politeness maxims': (1) tact maxim: minimise cost and maximise benefit to other; (2) generosity maxim: minimise benefit and maximise cost to self; (3) approbation maxim: minimise dispraise and maximise praise of other; (4) modesty maxim: minimise praise and maximise dispraise of self; (5) agreement maxim: minimise disagreement and maximise agreement between self and other; (6) Sympathy maxim: minimise antipathy and maximise sympathy between self and other.
[14] Western linguists in general have often been criticised for making cross-cultural generalisations of their ethnocentric (mostly Anglocentric) views.

by proposing the notions of 'distancing' and 'involvement' strategies (alternative but analogous to, respectively, 'negative' and 'positive face' strategies). The authors also stress the 'negotiability' of face: face is 'the negotiated public image, mutually granted each other by participants in a communicative event' (p. 35). Face is construed as a paradoxical concept, as it inherently contains the two contrasting aspects: "involvement and independence must be projected simultaneously in any communication" (p. 36). In order to maintain one's own face and respect the face rights of other people, a speaker has to strike the right balance between the two (p. 38). Politeness is still viewed in terms of face-oriented strategies, which the authors subdivided into three categories: 'deference', 'solidarity' and 'hierarchy'.

4. Conversational contract view

This framework was first sketched in Fraser & Nolen (1981) and later elaborated by Fraser (1990). The latter study proposes a theory of politeness in social interaction that views the speakers as parties to a conversational contract. The underlying principles are posited in terms of (social) rights and obligations among the participants of a conversation. Fraser's understanding of politeness is somewhat analogous to Watts' (1992) notion of politic behaviour, which involves maintaining the equilibrium in a relationship through social appropriateness (as per 'conversational rules', for Fraser). Politeness is seen as a set of constraints of verbal behaviour (Fraser & Nolan 1981).

The pragmatic theories outlined above (i.e. views no. 2, 3 and 4) analyse politeness as a strategic device employed by interlocutors to achieve certain goals. Consequently, this type of interpretative approach has been defined as **'strategic'** (Kasper 1990; Escandell-Vidal 1996).

For all its comprehensiveness, Fraser's analysis (1990) does not do full justice to the sociolinguistic approach (no. 1), since it discounts its import within the current politeness research. In particular, Fraser fails to give the due recognition to the **'social-indexing'** approach, which is an evolution of the social-norm view mentioned above. The social-indexing interpretation, alternative to the strategic one, was suggested by a number of scholars (cf. Hills et al. 1986; Ide 1989; Kasper 1990) whose main thrust was to oppose the absolutisation of the strategic function of politeness (cf. Ide 1989 with special reference to Brown & Levinson 1987). This view maintains that politeness is not just a strategic device that utilises "linguistic action in order to reach specific communicative goals...", since its function is also that of "social indexing"[15] (Kasper 1990: 196). By social-indexing function here is meant a instrumental use of politeness to mark the addressee's (or referent's) social status within a social hierarchy and / or in relation to the speaker's status. That is, polite forms of speech (e.g. respect and deference) are construed as means to mark through linguistic means the social position of an individual, with reference to given culture-specific and context-specific parameters. This interpretation goes a step further from the original social-norm view (where politeness was simply seen as compliance with the established social norms), since it gives a rationale to it. Among the salient features of the social-indexing view one could also mention the fact that it sees politeness as being intimately tied to socio-cultural norms; this also entails, according to its proponents, a significant degree of verbal constraint, i.e. a restriction on the speakers' faculty to freely adopt politeness strategies. In fact, the

[15] This role is also called 'social deixis' by some authors.

social-indexing aspect of politeness is construed as non-volitional, along the lines of the distinction between 'discernment' and 'volition'[16] first introduced by Hill et al. (1986). Important to note here is that 'social-indexing' politeness, unlike 'strategic' politeness, operates independently of the specific goal a speaker intends to achieve in a given circumstance. Kasper (1990) regards the apparent variance between the two main views of politeness as a problem to overcome. Yet other scholars (e.g. Lin 1999) regard the two aspects as complementary.

2 The need to investigate the moral aspect of politeness

Apart from very few and scattered hints, I have not come across any mention of morality within the politeness research context. Goffman extensively dealt with the role of morality in social interaction (1967b)[17], but then his investigation was primarily sociological, not linguistic. In the linguistic arena, the topic is hardly broached. Mao (1994), for example, noted that the Chinese folk concepts of 'face' ('miànzi' and 'liǎn') imply some "moral connotations", but made no attempt to further pursue the investigation in this direction. He tried, instead, to make the moral aspect fit into Brown and Levinson's notion of face, although the latter was not intended to include it. In fact, Brown and Levinson themselves expressly acknowledge a structural shortcoming of their model, that is its inadequacy to deal with culture-specific systems of what they call "cultural ideas". The authors observe that "notions of face naturally link up to some of the most fundamental cultural ideas about the nature of the social persona: honour and virtue, shame and redemption, and thus to religious concepts" and admit that "this emergent character [of politeness] is not something for which our current theoretical models are well equipped" (1987: 62). The "cultural ideas" mentioned here actually include moral values.[18]

Overall, whenever politeness theories deal with the individualistic aspects of politeness, we find that the moral aspect is invariably neglected or erroneously treated as a mere reflection of socio-cultural values onto the individual's inner dimension. Very serious, here, is the failure to recognise the existence of a moral dimension as such. These and other similar conceptual fallacies found in the literature reveal that the current politeness models are far from being clear on the role and significance of morality in the context of linguistic politeness. The moral aspect of politeness still remains virtually unexplored exactly because the scholars failed to identify it as a domain in its own right.

2.1 Revisitation of the 'strategic' and 'social-indexing' views

2.1.1 The strategic view

The 'strategic' interpretative models proposed so far assume that all politeness phenomena are functional to the achievement of some tangible goal, be this an individual or collective benefit, of a physical or psychological nature. The face-saving

[16] *Volition* can be described as a system in which the speaker is "not constrained by sociolinguistic criteria to choose an honorific or polite form of utterance, but rather by considerations of cost and benefit ... and face" (Ide 1989: 132).

[17] Goffman's study provides very useful insights into the role of morality within social interaction. Unfortunately, linguists did not seem to pay the due attention to this aspect of his writings.

[18] A critique of this issue will follow in a later section.

model, for example, postulates that politeness strategies serve to satisfy the 'face wants' (i.e. to gratify the ego) of individuals. In Lakoff's and Leech's models, by contrast, the suggested rationale is less directly egocentric, being aimed at collective benefits. The social aims of politeness have been variously identified as "establishing and maintaining comity" (Leech 1983: 104), "maximising the benefit to self and others [...], avoiding conflict, making sure that social interaction runs smoothly" (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 3), facilitating "smooth communication" (Ide 1989) and 'effective social living' (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 2).

In sum, all the posited goals of 'strategic' politeness, whether individual or social, are essentially of a selfish and materialistic nature. This holds true also for the 'social' goals, i.e. those aimed at collective benefits. In fact, the individual's ultimate incentive for pursuing social goals is arguably traceable to his / her own personal interest.[19] All the above-mentioned 'strategic' interpretations of politeness have a very limited visual scope and fail to envisage goals beyond the materialistic sphere. Consequently, the only motives they admit are utilitarian and selfish. This myopic view creates the false impression that the orientation of politeness must necessarily be set by materialistic targets.

To better fix these ideas, I will introduce some terminology. I label the two afore-mentioned types of strategic politeness, i.e. the 'individual-benefit-oriented' and the 'collective-benefit-oriented', as **'egocentric politeness'** and **'social politeness'** respectively[20]. Also, considering that both types are ultimately based on the same rationale (i.e. selfish and materialistic considerations), I classify them under a superordinate category named **'selfish politeness'**, that is politeness motivated by **'selfish drives'**. My conceptualisation of selfish drives[21] is intentionally undefined and has no specific connotations such as those posited by Brown and Levinson ('face wants'); I regard it as universal, as it can accommodate cultural variation.

2.1.2 The social-indexing view

The social-indexing interpretation of politeness is suggested to be rather dissimilar from the strategic one. Basically, strategic politeness is regarded as volitional, creative, goal-oriented, as opposed to social-indexing politeness, which is described as non-volitional / obligatory, conventional and non-strategic (cf. Kasper 1990). Nonetheless, I would say that social-indexing still is an instrumental, utilitarian device, since its role is to carry out some function, that is to achieve some social goal[22], although the single individual may not intend or perceive it as such. If from an overall (i.e. above-individuals) perspective, social-indexing politeness too is strategic and materialistic-benefit oriented, from the perspective of the single individual, with which we are mostly concerned in this study, it remains non-strategic, due to its non-volitionality. Consequently, the chief motives of an individual for adopting social-

[19] Ultimately, social goals are beneficial to the individual. The parallel with Goody's (1978) suggested calculation of 'long-term costs and gains' seems very fitting here.

[20] The concept of 'social politeness' presented here is analogous to that proposed by Janney and Arndt (1992), according to whom the function of social politeness is to provide routine strategies and rules to coordinate social interaction (p. 24). My interpretation of 'egocentric politeness', however, does not match their notion of 'tact' (or 'interpersonal politeness'), which they posit as complementary to that of social politeness, since the notion of 'tact' is associated with the need to "preserve face and regulate interpersonal relationships" (p. 24). My understanding of 'egocentric politeness' is more comprehensive and not based on the concept of face.

[21] For the notion of 'selfish drives' I am indebted to the traditional Islamic metaphysical literature (especially to the *sufi* works), where the notion very prominently figures under the Arabic term *nafs*.

[22] E.g. to consolidate the established social order.

indexing politeness cannot be selfish. Keeping in view its predominantly normative aspect, I regard social-indexing politeness as a prime instance of **'normative politeness'**, which I introduce here. Normative politeness is triggered by external factors[23] (e.g. socio-cultural normativity) that exert pressures on the individual. The 'social training' in the linguistic conventions that every individual normally undergoes from the very early age entails the inculcation of linguistic habits and formalities[24], so that often certain speech acts (e.g. using the V form of address for elders and strangers) are performed perfunctorily, even without the actual presence of a normative pressure on the speaker's mind in a particular circumstance. Given their undeniably normative origin, I would still regard such utterances as instances of normative politeness. In the literature, the conceptualisation of normative politeness appeared under many shapes and names, such as 'propriety', 'etiquette', 'decorum', 'demeanour'[25], etc.

2.2 Linguistic politeness not necessarily a rationally-motivated act

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), politeness is realised through the speaker's intentional use of strategies, that is through rational calculations. While other theories may not subscribe to this idea in full, the general tendency among the scholars has been to assume that the politeness is essentially rationally-motivated.

I now intend to take issue with the assumption that the complex mechanisms behind politeness phenomena can be reduced to purely utilitarian strategies and, even further, with the assumption that politeness is always rational. Basically, my argument is that certain politeness phenomena do not allow for rational interpretations. Although I admit that very often goal-oriented, rational explanations do provide the most appropriate explanation of politeness phenomena, I also want to stress that this is not always the case, since politeness may also be not instrumental at all. As a matter of fact, some politeness phenomena are simply the natural, spontaneous manifestation of a psychological state of affairs. Certain emotions such as love, compassion and sympathy constitute potential triggers of politeness devices. A mother talking to her child in a loving way does not necessarily do so to achieve a goal. No doubt, at times she may employ politeness as a strategy to soothe him, or for some other aim; but she may also act in that way for no purpose at all. We could further assume that the child falls asleep and yet the mother keeps talking to him. In such circumstances, it is not uncommon for mothers to utter sentences like: "You have been naughty today, haven't you? Well, at least you have eaten all your food, wasn't it good?". Having posited that the child now is asleep, we can obviously rule out the possibility that she employs politeness with any particular intent. Here politeness is simply the spontaneous outpouring of a person's inner sentiments and emotions, straightforwardly projected to and manifested in the linguistic dimension; it has no rationale, nor is it instrumental to an end. In addition to poignant emotions, also personal dispositions or moods, whether temporary or permanent, can act alone as determining factors of politeness. The point that many fail to see is that a good-natured person, in normal circumstances, will speak kindly, hence politely. Here again there is no underlying rationale. Making it a point to find a rational explanation for every single polite utterance may turn into a futile exercise of rational analysis for its own sake. Not every polite utterance can be rationalised.

It should be useful to note that linguistic conventions, especially in those

[23] That is, external to the human mind.

[24] In Goffman's (1967a) terminology they would be called 'rituals'.

[25] As presented by Goffman (1967b: 77-81).

societies where such conventions have a strong normative aspect, tend to take away or cover the naturalness of spontaneous polite acts. Most regrettably, they also seem to obscure the very notion that linguistic politeness can be a genuine expression of kindness. I am convinced that the investigation of linguistic politeness in socio-cultural contexts where there is relatively little pressure from external (social) factors (e.g. linguistic normativity) can offer to linguists useful insights and prompt them to reconsider their all-rational view of politeness.

Keeping in view the fact that in particular circumstances emotional impulses and personal disposition can be pinpointed as the sole possible factors determining a polite verbal behaviour, and that neither depend on rational processes, I conclude that politeness can also be triggered by non-rational factors alone. This non-rational[26] type of politeness cannot possibly be instrumental or goal-oriented, since these features presuppose rationality. To sum up, some instances of politeness are the spontaneous, immediate projection of some inner reality (e.g. an emotion or a general disposition) to the linguistic dimension, in which case politeness is non-rational.

2.3 Linguistic politeness not necessarily a social act

I regard the example of the mother talking to her sleeping child as sufficient evidence that linguistic politeness does not necessarily presuppose social interaction. The situation portrayed above is doubtless anomalous, I agree, but it still constitutes a genuine instantiation of linguistic politeness. Even if no actual interaction takes place, linguistic politeness is still there. Although politeness occurs primarily in a social context, I do not believe it to be "crucially" (Watts, Ide & Ehlich 1992: 2) or "intrinsically" (Marquez-Reiter 2000: 2) a social act or necessarily a "socially motivated phenomenon" (Matsumoto 1988 : 421), as assumed by most scholars.

A common supposition is that linguistic politeness is a marked feature of speech, aimed at producing some effect on the hearer. According to this view, linguistic politeness is believed to exist, in principle, only for the benefit of the hearer.

My view is that the stimulus of linguistic politeness in the human mind can be independent from the presence of a hearer. To be sure, in the near totality of the cases linguistic politeness is utilised in the physical presence of an interlocutor, but this is simply because one does not usually talk alone. Yet, in the rare cases when an individual does so, for whatever reason, linguistic politeness still plays a role into it, sometimes exactly as if a hearer were present. Let us consider the case of a person uttering some words in a (non-formulaic) prayer, far from the earshot of any human being. Let us focus on the polite expressions used to refer to some other person. Here we may observe that, despite the total lack of social interaction, politeness still plays a role. Drawing from personal observations of the politeness usage in Panjabi, I can attest that in suchlike cases a speaker's utterance often contains politeness features (e.g. respectful forms of reference) that are normally used in interpersonal communication. A Panjabi speaker in a prayer to God often uses respect forms (e.g. pluralisation) to refer to an absent referent. I would expect the occurrence of the same politeness features in the writing of a personal (secret) diary, although I lack linguistic evidence for this.

[26] Here 'non-rational' does not mean 'irrational', in the sense of 'contrary to reason'.

2.4 Moral Politeness

2.4.1 Introduction to moral politeness

Now I would like to draw the attention of the reader to a category of politeness phenomena which are indeed instrumental to a goal, and yet not based on any materialistic benefit rationale. Since I did not come across any specific mention to such cases, I will deal extensively with this topic.

Let us suppose the following scene: a person addresses an old vagabond beggar by using a polite form, doing so solely out of respect for the elderly age of the man. This is a clear example of instrumental use of politeness for no selfish aim, as no individual or collective benefits are involved here. Should anyone object that, being the addressee's face involved, we are still dealing with a "face wants", hence selfish rationale (i.e. the concern for the addressee's face), then for the sake of argument we could also posit that the old man is in a mentally confused state or drunk (so that no face threats are involved). In such situation politeness is clearly instrumental, since it serves as a means. It is the linguistic means to express respect. Moreover, I would also rule out the possibility of normative pressures, given the circumstances[27]. I would then conclude that here the only possible motive for politeness relates to a moral obligation (i.e. showing respect to the elders), that the speaker fulfils by enacting the politeness device. Apart from the compliance with a moral duty, here there is no other identifiable aim. I propose to categorise this type of politeness under the denomination of '**moral politeness**', to mark the morally-inspired nature of its driving motive. As illustrated in the above example, moral politeness can be 'strategic', inasmuch as it is instrumental (e.g. the person appropriately chooses the right words to express respect), and yet its inspiration is not selfish.

Moral politeness and selfish politeness differ primarily in the character of their driving motives, which are ethical in the case of moral politeness and egoistic in the case of selfish politeness. They both differ from normative politeness in that their prime triggers are internal factors, while normative politeness is triggered by external factors (i.e. normative social pressures). By definition, the rationale of moral politeness is never materialistic. Instead, it consists in the compliance with the dictates of an inner code of moral principles and obligations; it is regulated by one's conscience. In the linguistic context, such compliance is normally achieved through the use of politeness devices. Obviously, the moral system, taken as a reference, is at the discretion of each individual and does not necessarily correspond to the system of socially recognised morals.

Considering that relatively often the gist of some moral values (e.g. speaking nicely to people) practically happens to coincide with some selfish considerations, one may assume that, ultimately, moral values too are essentially inspired by selfish utilitarian considerations. Once again, the case of the old beggar should prove this intuition wrong. I will try to expound this point in more detail through the following example. While most people would admit that 'speaking nicely to people' is a valid principle, not all of them would agree on the reason for upholding such principle. On the surface, their stance is the same yet underlyingly there is a major rift between the two major logics of argumentation:

[27] I do not think that the use of politeness for a vagabond beggar would be normally prescribed by any social norm in any society (unless moral considerations are involved). In any case, again for the sake of argument, we could further posit that the subject in question is of a patently disreputable character.

(1) I should speak nicely to people because:
- by doing so I could get some benefit out of them
- as a general rule, if I am nice to people, people will be nice to me
- otherwise people / society will penalise me
- if everybody speaks nicely, we will have a better society
- etc.

(2) I should speak nicely to people because it is morally right / my moral obligation

The first line of argumentation is manifestly selfish-oriented, as it evaluates only the material gains and losses entailed. The second argumentation, by contrast, is based solely on ethical considerations. Arguments based on these two logics may or may not yield the same outcome; when they do, like in the example above, the hearer can hardly tell the real motivation behind the choice to employ politeness. This ambiguity is not always unsolvable. In particular instances it is possible to 'read' the actual motivation behind a polite utterance, as the analysis of the linguistic data presented in section 4 will try to demonstrate.

2.4.2 Modes of implementation of moral politeness

As far as its modes of implementation are concerned, moral politeness may be implemented rationally (in which case it is strategic) as well as non-rationally. I do not think there can be a clear-cut demarcation line between these two operational modes. Rather, I envisage a continuum ranging from pure, calculating rationality to utterly instinctive non-rationality.

Except for the different nature of its motivations, the rational aspect of moral politeness is analogous to that of selfish politeness, in that it may involve strategic calculations and *ad hoc* linguistic devices (possibly, the same devices).

Rational politeness devices are not always adopted in a fully conscious and intentional way, as one may speak politely without realising it. In fact, the rational aspect admits varying degrees of consciousness. By this I mean that the individual may be more or less aware of the calculating way in which s/he employs politeness devices.

A purely rational implementation of moral politeness entails full consciousness, hence a fully deliberate use of strategic devices[28]. Before speaking, for example, one may wonder: "Should I address that person with this title or with that other?", then rationally evaluate the two options and take a decision (e.g. "... better to use this title because it is more respectful."). The whole process here is fully conscious.

The less conscious the process, the nearer it is to non-rational instinctiveness, which is at the other extreme of the continuum. For this reason, I would suggest that partially subconscious instances of politeness are only partly rational.

As for the non-rational implementation of moral politeness, its triggers can be 'moral' impulses / emotions and 'moral' personal dispositions / moods. By 'moral' here I mean morally inspired, i.e. ultimately traceable to some moral values.

I may also suggest that the degree of rationality of a moral politeness act is inversely proportional to that of interiorisation of the moral value on which it is based; however, I lack evidence for this hypothesis, which is based more on abstract intuition than on real observation. According to this hypothesis, the implementation of a fully interiorised moral value would be a purely instinctive act. To illustrate this concept, I

[28] Consciousness naturally entails intentionality (or 'volition').

would picture the example of an individual unexpectedly confronted with a seriously offensive act of impoliteness, such as a heavy insult. If the offended person replies in a polite way, we can hypothesise two types of explanations: selfish motives and moral motives. If we admit that the case is about moral motives, we may further ask: to what extent is the reaction rationally motivated? Or, to what extent does it result from a conscious reasoning? A purely instinctive reaction would be one that does not resort to any reasoning at all, not even to moral considerations. I take this to be the height of moral politeness. Morality here is deeply interiorised and immediately reflected through linguistic means. On the other hand, the polite reaction of the insulted person may have been rationally handled (more or less consciously) and thus be less immediate. In the above example, the politeness mechanism would be triggered by a reasoning like 'I must keep my cool and behave politely', based on moral considerations.

2.4.3 Moral politeness versus normative politeness

I do not think there is any need to explain or demonstrate that moral politeness is different from selfish politeness, as it should be obvious to anyone that the two types are mutually opposed. Instead, I think it would be useful to clarify the distinction between moral politeness and normative politeness.

Firstly, it is essential to establish that the notion of moral value is conceptually distinct from that of socio-cultural value. Nonetheless, it is also true that specific instantiations of the two may happen to overlap, owing to contingent reasons. This particular state of affairs could have originated from the social institutionalisation of a moral system, by which a set of moral values, more or less shared by the members of the society, acquires public recognition. These moral values are thus officialised as socio-cultural values and their normativity is extended to the public dimension, through the establishment (and perhaps also enforcement) of socio-cultural norms[29]. Conversely, it may also be the case that socio-cultural values become interiorised by an individual as moral values, that is if the individual's conscience comes to accept them as such. The outcome of both processes is the incidental overlapping of moral and socio-cultural values. Whatever the case, the issue of whether a value was first moral and then socio-cultural or vice versa is not relevant to the present discussion. What really matters here is to establish that the two notions are conceptually distinct and should not be confused. For this purpose, I will now try to point out some crucial distinctions between the two notions.

Unlike socio-cultural values and Leech's (1983) maxims[30], moral values are fully at the discretion of the conscience of each individual, so that each person can accept or reject them arbitrarily. Moral values are therefore personal features, even when they are shared with other individuals, whereas socio-cultural values are impersonal.

As an aside, I also wish to suggest that the variation in language behaviour that is observable among members of one community is closely correlated to the variation in the moral values admitted by the various individuals. Pursuing this hypothesis, we may be able to further analyse the commonplace observation that 'different people speak differently', and explain, at least partially, the variation in the linguistic behaviour in terms of morality variation. In practical terms, we would be able to tell that an individual given to using swearwords and abusive language does so (also)

[29] It should be remembered that, in any case, moral politeness depends only on inner morality, not on public morals.

[30] That are assumed to be universal.

because his/her inner morality seconds such verbal behaviour. Likewise, it can be observed that someone abiding by strict moral standards will abstain from using scurrilous language even in the harshest circumstances. I believe that language behaviour on the whole is significantly dependent on personal moral standards.

The domain of morality is properly the individual's inner self, not the social sphere as in the case of socio-cultural norms. Consequently, the obligations that trigger politeness are the ones handled by one's conscience, not the ones enforced by any external factors. Once again, moral obligations (based on moral values) may happen to coincide with socio-cultural obligations (e.g. civic duties).

The possible sources of moral values may be diverse: a religious doctrine, a secular philosophy, personal reflections, etc. Whatever the case, morality necessarily refers to a system of metaphysical concepts, that constitutes its inspiring source[31]. Socio-cultural values, by contrast, are established by popular consensus or imposition of some authority. What is most crucial to understand here is that, by definition, moral principles and values are recognised by one's conscience as ethically correct, while the same may not be true for socio-cultural values. Ostensible acceptance and compliance with socio-cultural norms does not imply their recognition as moral values (cf. Goffman 1967b: 50).

The point of these considerations is to establish that moral politeness is based on moral values, not on socio-cultural values or norms. Moral politeness is triggered by the individual's inner moral sense and has nothing to do with the external pressures exerted by socio-cultural normativity.

I would like to make a further clarification, in order to prevent a possible misunderstanding regarding the relation between moral politeness and normative politeness. When I say that moral politeness is independent from social normativity I simply mean that it is not influenced by its pressures, which are external factors. I do not mean that the practical modes to implement moral politeness are unrelated with the sociolinguistic norms established in the society. The dependence on established norms is imperative for the realisation of any type of politeness, regardless of its driving motive, simply because without them it would not be possible to linguistically implement any politeness device with the assurance of being understood by the other members of the linguistic community. Without the reference to linguistic norms and conventions, there would be no way to express and interpret politeness. Indeed socially established normativity has significant repercussions on every kind of politeness, since it prescribes the specific utterances (e.g. politeness formulae, conventional forms of address) and general modes of expression (e.g. formality, deference, indirectness) that serve to express politeness.

2.5 The composite nature of politeness phenomena

So far I have identified three types of politeness:

a) selfish politeness (propelled by one's ego)
b) moral politeness (propelled by one's moral conscience)
c) normative politeness (triggered by external normative pressures)

While the driving motives triggering each type of politeness are different, the linguistic devices employed may be identical. The use of the same politeness device (e.g. addressing someone as 'Sir' or 'Dear') may be triggered by any of the above-

[31] This point is further elaborated in a later section.

mentioned possible motives.

So far, the three types of politeness have been purported in a very idealised manner, which presupposed the 'purity' of their respective motives. Selfish politeness, for instance, was described as motivated exclusively by egoistic desires. Similarly, the notion of moral politeness ruled out the possibility of selfish or normative factors. In actuality, however, a politeness act may be triggered by diverse concurrent motives acting simultaneously. In such case, the politeness act should be viewed as the resultant of the concurrent factors, each exerting its own weight. The use of a form of respect, for example, may be concomitantly motivated both by sincere admiration and respect (moral component) and by socio-cultural normativity (normative component). For example, an individual speaking respectfully to an outstanding personality may be acting under the influence of two concurrent factors: the moral one and the normative one. Supposing now that the said speaker actually had more shrewd motivations (e.g. the intent to flatter and achieve some personal gain), we should then posit the involvement of the selfish driving motive, in replacement of the moral one, alongside the normative factor.

Intuitively, I feel inclined to suggest that the selfish and moral motives are mutually exclusive, on the consideration that selfishness and morality are opposed concepts; however, this is an idea which would require further pondering and elaboration, and with which the present dissertation is not directly concerned.

2.6 The dimensions postulated by this theoretical framework

The notions of politeness expounded so far implicitly assumed the existence of three distinct dimensions:

a) the metaphysical dimension
b) the inner dimension
c) the social dimension

The **metaphysical dimension** is the domain where abstract concepts belong. The moral values admitted by an individual are metaphysical realities which serve as a reference and a source of inspiration. I call them metaphysical because they are abstract and incorporeal and yet believed to be 'real', i.e. factually valid and existing beyond the domains of one's psychological sphere. Whether they ontologically exist or not is irrelevant: for the individual they do. Common moral notions such as the 'goodness / duty of being kind' and the 'sacredness of the respect for others' belong to this domain. Socio-cultural values only belong to this domain if they are also recognised as moral values (overlapping). Of the three prototypical kinds of politeness described above (i.e. selfish, moral and normative), only moral politeness envisages the reference to a metaphysical dimension. Selfish politeness has no need to refer to any external concept or reality, being simply based on the inner egoistic drives. As for normative politeness, its norms and values of reference do not exist in the metaphysical dimension, but in the social dimension.

It is important to note that the existence of a metaphysical dimension was not envisaged by any previous study on the subject, as far as I could ascertain, exactly because this feature is peculiar to moral politeness.

By **inner dimension** I mean the psychological sphere of an individual. This domain is the arena of both rational and non-rational activities. All the driving motives of politeness (inter)act within this domain, but not all originate from here. While selfish and moral drives (initiated by one's ego and morality respectively)

develop within the human psyche, social normative pressures originate from without.

The **social dimension** is the public domain, outside the individual's psychological sphere, where the actual manifestation of politeness takes place. As mentioned above, it is the domain where socio-cultural norms are established and implemented and from where they exert their influence on the individual.

3 Respect and honorification

So far the study has dealt with linguistic politeness in general. From now onwards the research will focus on a particular area of politeness: respect and honorification forms. For the sake of terminological clarity, I label this sub-domain as **'honorific politeness'**, to distinguish it from the very broad and multifaceted phenomenon of politeness. My decision to focus on this area rather than on another was not arbitrary, but based on the consideration that moral politeness most commonly finds its natural manifestation through honorific politeness.

3.1 Terminological and conceptual clarifications of 'respect' & 'honorification'

In the politeness literature, 'respect' is usually construed as a formal expression of deference and as means to indicate social status recognition (social-indexing). Sometimes it is also described as an attitude of social distantiation (as opposed to familiarity or solidarity), especially in the case of symmetric relationships. Alternatively but complementarily, respect is understood as compliance with social norms, especially in relation to the rights of other individuals. The latter acceptation is probably the most widespread among the common people.

According to the interpretation of respect that I propose, the notion should be subdivided into three interrelated semantic categories: **deep respect**, **surfaced respect** and **mock respect**. Basing my reasoning on the prototype theory of lexical semantics[32], I identify deep respect as the core notion and surfaced respect as its semantic extension. Mock respect is a still further extension.

Deep respect relates to the inner sphere of the individual, while deep and mock respect concern the external, social dimension. Deep respect consists of a rational aspect[33] (i.e. the rational awareness of the value, respectability or inviolability of someone / something) and of an emotive aspect (i.e. the feeling of respect). Naturally, the latter follows from the former, so that, for instance, the sentiment of respect felt for a sacred thing derives from the very recognition of that thing as sacred. Although in particular cases the emotive aspect may appear to depend exclusively on non-rational factors[34] (like when someone feels overawed by something but cannot tell why), I would think that, underlyingly, such feelings are subconsciously sparked off by the external object's harmoniousness with one's psychological predisposition, of which morality is one of the chief determinants. Thus I would say that deep respect depends chiefly on one's moral judgment, which in turn depends on one's moral values.

[32] The prototype theory posits that the semantic structure of polysemic words has a concentric configuration: the main or core notion of the term is at the centre, while its extensions are at the periphery.

[33] This is somewhat analogous to Goffman's interpretation of deference as 'appreciation' (1971: 56), inasmuch as such appreciation is intimately genuine.

[34] Incidently, Lambert and Tucker observed that "there is a close correspondence between the way we address certain persons and our feelings towards them" (1976: 1). For a more detailed analysis of the bearing of emotive factors on language behaviour see Besnier (1990).

Surfaced respect[35] is the exteriorisation, whether intentional or not, of deep respect. It is most commonly expressed through linguistic means, though not necessarily. Jain (1969) observed that respect can be manifested through both verbal[36] and non-verbal[37] expressions. In the linguistic dimension, respect is normally expressed through politeness devices, which are of various kinds, most commonly involving deferential and formal utterances. I have decided to label this functionally-defined type of politeness[38] as **'honorific politeness'** keeping in view its primarily honorific purpose. The linguistic process through which respect is shown is usually referred to as **honorification**, particularly when its function is to extol the hearer / referent. Often linguists speak of an **honorific system**, meaning the complex set of linguistic conventions pertaining to honorification forms.

Mock respect[39] is a purely formal expression of respect, devoid of any substance. In fact, mock respect is no more than a simulacrum of surfaced respect, instrumentally implemented for some purpose. E.g. addressing someone with ceremonious epithets like 'Sir' or 'Honourable', when the speaker does not hold the addressee in any particular esteem.

The study of linguistic politeness should be concerned with all the three above notions of respect. While it is true that only surfaced and mock respect enter into the scope of direct observation (as linguistic phenomena), it should also be considered that deep respect, if directly unobservable, plays the fundamental role of initiating many honorific politeness processes.

3.2 Honorifics

Honorifics are the specific linguistic markers employed to signal respect. Wenger identified honorifics as language universals and assumed them to be marked forms, as compared to ordinary forms (1983: x, 122). Honorific systems consist of language-specific conventional devices, such as particular usages of pronominal and verbal forms (e.g. pluralisation, personal deixis; cf. Comrie 1975; Head 1978; Malsch 1987), forms of address and reference (e.g. titles, kin terms of address), formulaic phrases and interjections[40] (e.g. 'God bless you'; cf. Ferguson 1976), euphemisms and lexical registers (alternate isosemantic expressions in substitution for a word or phrase), exaltation and humble forms (cf. Jain 1969), honorific affixes and particles, morphological endings, etc.

3.3 The traditional interpretation of honorific politeness

According to Brown and Levinson, honorific expressions are "direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants, or between participants and [referents]" (1987:276). Similarly, Matsumoto interprets honorifics as "morphological and lexical encodings of social factors in communication, such as the relationship

[35] That is, respect that has 'surfaced'.

[36] Verbal expressions of respect (or 'honorifics') are usually characterised by the presence of peculiar paralinguistic features, such as such as intonation, emphasis, loudness and pace.

[37] Respect may also not be verbalised at all (Lakoff 1975), and yet be expressed through extra-linguistic means. From among the non-verbal modes of expressing respect, one may mention physical distance, posture, touch and eye contact. In the convention of some linguistic communities (e.g. Chinese, Korean) silence itself may signify respect and deference.

[38] This functional specification of politeness has nothing to do with the categorisation of politeness mentioned in chapter 2, where politeness was classified on the basis of its motive.

[39] Note: the denomination of 'mock respect' does not imply jest or derision; the term 'mock' here is simply used to signify that this type of 'respect' is not genuine, that is an imitation.

[40] In some languages (e.g. Panjabi) these expressions may also have an honorific function.

between the interlocutors, the referents, the bystanders, the setting, etc." (1988:14). As per this key of interpretation, the main function of honorific devices is that of social-indexing (cf. also Matsumoto 1988; also discussed in Agha 1993, 1994).

Some studies (e.g. Srivastava and Pandit 1988) also suggested that, in addition to being correlated to sociological variables[41], the usage of honorifics depends on pragmatic factors[42] as well. Agha (1998) studied the influence of native stereotypes about language structure and use on the formulation of the pragmatic values of honorific registers and concluded that the bearing of such stereotypes is considerable. In her study on the usage of honorifics and language ideology, Irvine (1992) suggested that the two are indeed correlated. Agha carried out independent research (1993) and discussed the role of ideology in shaping speaker awareness of conventional indexical effects of honorific expressions. Farghal and Shakir (1994) speak of "relational social honorifics" (e.g. kin terms and terms of address) and discuss the socio-pragmatic constraints governing their use.

In all previous studies, the analysis of respect and honorification forms was invariably based on the same assumptions and methodology employed for the analysis of selfish and normative politeness[43]. In sum, all the studies conducted so far have tried to interpret and explain honorifics in the light of sociological and pragmatic considerations. Most notable is the absence of studies correlating honorific usage with moral considerations. What I suggest here is that very often honorifics significantly depend on moral considerations and that their origin is directly traceable to moral politeness.

3.4 A 'moral' interpretation of honorific politeness

In the framework that I propose, honorific politeness can also be motivated by moral factors, although I recognise that this is not always the case. My view is that every (verbal) act of honorific politeness will be either an instantiation of surfaced respect or of mock respect[44]. An honorific expression constitutes surfaced respect when it is a genuine expression of moral politeness. As for mock respect, it could be traceable to both selfish and normative factors; hence, it can be an expression of both selfish and normative politeness. In either case, mock respect is meant to emulate surfaced respect, that is to pretentiously evoke genuine respect (e.g. saying 'my dear' to someone ostensibly implies that the speaker means it).

I further suggest that all honorific expressions, in origin, were meant as tokens of 'genuine' (deep) respect, hence as expressions of moral politeness. Of course, we are not to take all such expressions at their face value, as this would be misleading[45]. Rather, at each occurrence of such expressions we should ask: what is the actual meaning (motivation) of the utterance? What is its actual nature (i.e. moral, selfish or normative)? Often it is impossible to tell, by means of linguistic analysis. However, sometimes these questions can be answered, as I will try to show in section 4.

[41] A more extensive listing of potentially relevant sociological variables would include: social distance; social relationship; relative difference in age, power; social status; sex; topic; setting. Not all of these parameters are necessarily relevant in a given linguistic system.

[42] Such as role relationship, directionality of the benefit of the act, implicit assumptions about the social context of the discourse, etc. (Srivastava and Pandit 1988).

[43] In Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework, for instance, honorifics are straightforwardly construed as negative politeness devices, which leaves no possibility to their being motivated by other factors than face wants.

[44] Again, we may always suppose that there is a continuum between the two concepts.

[45] As Wenger observes, "while honorifics are primarily a public symbol of respect, they do not necessarily indicate a 'real attitude' of respect" (1983: 2).

4 Respect and honorification in Panjabi

In this section I will try to substantiate through empirical evidence the moral nature of some politeness phenomena and thus demonstrate the relevance of moral factors to politeness. To accomplish this, I will disambiguate the underlying motive of some specific instances of politeness and identify it as morally-inspired. For this purpose, I will discuss some aspects of honorific language use in Panjabi, a language with which I am familiar.[46]

4.1 The normative aspect of honorific politeness in Panjabi

The verbal behaviour of a linguistic community is greatly influenced by the socio-cultural and moral values prevalent in that community. As far as the Panjabi society is concerned[47], its traditional values have a significant bearing on the linguistic dimension. As is the case with other languages affected by Islamic moral prescriptions (e.g. Persian; cf. Koutlaki 1997), honorific politeness in Panjabi has a very strong normative aspect. Among Panjabis, respect is universally understood as a fundamental value of social interaction. Overall, the verbal behaviour of the speakers strongly feels the effects of the religious moral prescriptions, as well as of the non-religious socio-cultural norms. As a result, the speaker in this society may be said to be relatively impeded from expressing oneself through a genuine attitude, at least in a public context. Given these premises, one may doubt whether Panjabi could possibly provide any useful evidence to demonstrate a moral component of politeness, since normativity can always be expected to 'overshadow' any differently motivated manifestations of politeness.

With regard to honorific terms of address, for instance, one may wonder: their use being socially prescribed, how can we tell whether their occurrence in a particular circumstance should be attributed to moral factors or to normative factors? The strong normativity which characterises Panjabi, it turns out, is not an impediment to this study; on the contrary, normativity may help bring out the real nature of some politeness acts; that is if we pay attention to those special cases where due to some reasons normativity does not apply, and compare them with those where it does. For this we should then concentrate on non-public contexts, where normativity is less stringent or entirely absent, and compare the verbal behaviour adopted in those circumstances with that typical of public settings, where the tendency is to apply honorific politeness (in varying degrees) to almost any possible target, be it an addressee or a referent.

4.2 Honorification devices in Panjabi and their usage

In Panjabi, honorification is linguistically enacted through various devices, such as honorific titles (e.g. hàzrət, jənab, sáb) that accompany a name, honorific suffixes (e.g. -jì, -hòrì°), the honorific sentence-level particle jì, a particular usage of person deixis applied to pronominal, nominal and verbal forms, viz. pluralisation, humble / exaltation forms (e.g. mɛ° hàzir hòea mɛ° hàzir hòea 'I came' [humble form] vs. təšrìif leae 'he came' [exaltation form]; cf. Jain 1969), lexically-specified honorific verbs (e.g. fərmaṇa fərmaṇa 'to say'; and many Perso-Arabic loans), etc. (cf. Koul & Bala

[46] Although I am not a native speaker of Panjabi, I have attained a fairly good level of intuition about its usage, aided also by my first-hand acquaintance with the Panjabi culture and society. The observations on the language usage presented in this study are mostly based on my own insights.

[47] In this study I take as a reference the Western Panjab (Muslim) sociolinguistic environment.

1989; and Jain 1969 for Hindi).

The honorific devices used for an addressee and a referent are mostly the same. Pluralisation, for example, is maintained in the reference form (e.g. ae 'he came' [honorific], lit. 'they came') and titles are likewise preserved (e.g. ḍakṭər sáb ne kéa... 'Mr Doctor said... [honorific]).

Most importantly, it should be noted that not only does Panjabi provide the linguistic means to express respect for a referent, but also that its sociolinguistic praxis prescribes that such respect be maintained even in the absence of the referent (although, of course, this does not always happen).

4.3 Focus on the inner motivations of honorific language usage

My observation of Panjabi sociolinguistic habits suggests that even if an individual employs a speech style peppered with honorific expressions in a public circumstance, s/he may not be deferent or respectful in the least when it comes to inner attitude and feelings; this would then imply that such honorific practices are no more than mock respect. My intuition seems to be confirmed by the fact that speakers frequently switch to non-honorific forms (used for the same referents) while in a private setting. On the other hand, the individual may maintain the same honorific speech style even in private and confidential setting, which points to an inner attitude of deep respect.

In this study we should be particularly interested in forms of reference, especially those used for an absent referent. By focusing on these cases, we come closer to ruling out the possibility that the speaker's use of honorifics is intended for the benefit of the hearer. However, as mentioned earlier, the speaker is expected to use respect forms even in the absence of the referent, as the failure to do so would be deemed impolite or 'politically incorrect'. I thus suggest examining those situations when a speaker is alone with intimate relations or close friends, and the social requirements of politeness are relented or become irrelevant. My understanding is that the restricted domain of intimate relationships provides a sort of niche where normative social pressures do not apply. This is the kind of ideal setting we were looking for, i.e. where the verbal behaviour of the individual is not conditioned by normative social pressures. By positing the absence of the referent we had already excluded the involvement of direct selfish motivations (e.g. face wants).

Now the crucial issue is: in such circumstances, what is the verbal behaviour of a person like, with respect to honorific politeness? Obviously, this will vary from case to case. From personal observations, I was able to conclude that in such situation the amount of respect given to an absent referent depends solely on a moral judgement made by the speaker. It does not depend from considerations such as the social status or power. Cobblers and fakirs are honorified, if deemed worthy, while a king may be debased. Social hierarchy is no more an absolute reference, as its role is taken over by the system of moral values of the individual. Hence the referent is honorified proportionally to the degree of consideration that s/he enjoys in the eyes of the speaker, so that a direct reading of such degree can be taken from any utterance of the speaker. Considering this, I felt tempted to suggest that the function of honorific politeness is that of 'moral-indexing'[48], that is to index the degree of consideration for a addressee / referent, according to the speaker's moral standards. Yet, this aspect is very secondary and should not be taken as the rationale of honorific politeness. Instead, the chief motivation is the moral drive itself, which characterises all instances of moral politeness. No doubt, however, that the usage of moral politeness depends on

[48] A calque of 'social-indexing'.

a moral hierarchy of values, exactly like the usage of normative politeness depends on a socially established hierarchy.

Where selfish and normative factors are ruled out, as posited above, honorific expressions can only be interpreted as genuine instances of surfaced respect, motivated solely by moral factors. This will lead us to conclude that the use of honorifics may well be motivated by moral factors alone also in a public setting, notwithstanding the pervasive influence of normative factors or the potential involvement of selfish considerations.

The following example should better illustrate the concepts explained above. The utterances in (1) and (2) pertain to two different settings: the public and the private.

(1) nokryaṇi dəssdi e ke jis vele ap / vəkiil sáb kèr təšriif leae, te əpṇi bivi nu° fərmaea: "roṭi lea". fer mənji te leṭ-gee. jədo° bivi khaṇa peš kita, ap bəre tez khaṇ-ləgge, ta° ke khəbbu ləgg-gea. sá néi° si lɛṇa hùnda, te pure hò-gee.

(2) nokryaṇi dəssdi e ke jis vele ó / bala kèr əppərea, te əpṇi rənn nu° kéa: "roṭi lea". fer mənji te ləmma pea. jədo° bivi ónu° ṭukkər paea, te ó bəra tez khaṇa rəgṛən-ləgga, ta° ke khəbbu ləgg-gea. sá néi° si lɛṇa hùnda, te mər-gea.

The (unified) translation of both passages would read:

The housemaid relates that when he / Mr lawyer / Iqbal arrived home, he said to his wife: "Bring some food". Then he laid himself down on the bed. When his wife presented to him the meal, he started eating very fast, so that the food went down the wrong way. He couldn't breathe and (so) he died.

Any Panjabi speaker can immediately tell that the account given in (1) refers to a highly respected person, because of the tell-tale presence of various honorific expressions: honorific titles (vəkiil sáb); extra-honorific pronoun (ap); pluralisation of adjectival (bəre) and verbal (leṭ-gee, khaṇ-ləgge) forms; exaltation verbal forms təšriif leae, fərmaea, peš kita); the polite use of a euphemism (pure hò-gee).

On the contrary, the disrespectful wording used in (2) is markedly '**counter-honorific**', and clearly indicates that the individual referred to is greatly disregarded and despised by the speaker. Apart from the absence of the honorific devices present in (1), we can note: the use of the nickname (bala[49]) or, alternatively, the use of the singular personal pronoun alone (ó); a counter-honorific term (rənn); a markedly disrespectful verbal form (ṭukkər paea[50]).

The utterances in (2) are never used in public (unless wilful disrespect is meant), but are acceptable in a private setting. As for (1), it is perfectly acceptable in a public setting, as well as in private. Now, if the speaker used the form (1) exclusively in a public context, and shifted to a non-honorific or counter-honorific form like (2) in a private setting, we can tell that the honorific style of (1) was motivated exclusively by

[49] A distortion of the name Iqbal.
[50] Verbal form normally used for animals.

selfish / normative factors; hence, we can label it as mock respect. On the other hand, if the honorific style was preserved in an intimate setting, we can unmistakably attribute it to moral politeness alone; it would then be a clear instance of surfaced respect.

Here the existence of moral politeness has been established through the identification of moral factors as the only possible motives in particular situations (as described above) where other potential factors are ruled out. There is no reason to think that this moral component of politeness should be excluded from being involved also in all other situations.

As for the disambiguation of moral and selfish factors, it will be useful to mention that honorifics in Panjabi are also used for non-human referents; I take this fact as constituting weighty evidence against the purely selfish-oriented, addressee-oriented interpretations of politeness (e.g. Brown & Levinson 1987), since it would be preposterous to assume that non-human entities have face wants that demand the use of honorifics.

In Panjabi, respect is linguistically shown to sacred objects (e.g. kaba šəriif 'noble Ka'ba', kuran pak / šəriif 'pure / noble Quran', dərbar šəriif 'venerable shrine', etc.) and to geographical locations (e.g. mədiina šəriif 'holy Madina', pèra šəriif 'venerable Bhera', multan šəriif 'venerable Multan')[51]. Honorification is accomplished primarily through the use of encomiastic epithets and adjectives (e.g. šəriif, pak) or honorific suffixes (-ji, -mia°). It is worth mentioning that honorifics are used also for God (e.g. allá-ji, allá-mia°).

Analogous epithets plus honorific titles (sometimes long and elaborate) are similarly employed for saintly persons who passed away e.g. Hazrat Zia-ul-Ummat Pir Muhammad Karam Shah and, less commonly, for folk heros e.g. Hazrat Muhammad Jinnah. It is also customary to follow the names with the optative invocation rémətullá əlée ('may Allah's mercy be on him').

From the above examples, it should be clear that some uses of honorific expressions are not explainable in terms of 'face wants' or collective-benefits. The reason is that such expressions are motivated by moral politeness, not by selfish considerations.

I found further evidence in favour of moral politeness in the linguistic behaviour of bilingual individuals. The first case that I present relates to a native Panjabi speaker who speaks Italian as the second language. Sometimes, while talking (in Italian) about another (absent) person, this speaker used the plural pronoun 'loro' ('they')[52], although Italian does not envisage pluralisation among the honorific devices for absent referents. Here someone may object that this usage can be easily explained as an interference from L_1. Possibly, but there is no conclusive evidence for either explanations. Not so in the case of the second subject, who was born, grown-up and

[51] Here it could be objected that such honorific expressions still have a human being as the target, since according to the Panjabi concept of *nisbat* ('reference', 'relation'), the respect shown to non-human targets is to be construed as respect for the human beings with whom those targets are related. For example, every Panjabi knows that the city of Multan is linguistically honorified on account of the saints buried there; so here the respect is meant primarily for the saints. This is quite true, yet there are two points to consider: (a) the actual referents of such respect are (almost always) defunct, so that in any case the respect cannot to be construed as being paid for the benefit of, say, their 'face wants', (b) by further following the same line of *nisbat*, it will be found out that, in turn, the respect for the saints is meant as respect for God.

[52] Personal communication with Samaira Sajjad [23/12/2001].

educated in Britain[53]: while speaking in English he deliberately and repeatedly used the pronoun 'they' to refer to an absent person whom he held in high consideration, fully conscious of the fact that such usage is ungrammatical in English. Of course he did so knowing that his interlocutor, a Panjabi, would get the intended meaning[54]; what matters most here is the intention, which was undoubtedly morally-inspired.

My point here is that these cross-linguistic instances of honorification suggest that if honorification can go beyond the normative usage (e.g. through the adoption of non-prescribed, even ungrammatical, forms), it is exactly because its motives too can fall beyond the sphere of normativity. The speaker in the second case above had used pluralisation as a makeshift means to convey in English the respect which he felt for the referent, and for which he could not find a better way of expression. Once again, moral politeness here appears the most appropriate explanation.

5 Conclusions

Linguistic politeness has a moral component. In addition to being motivated by selfish and normative factors, politeness can also be triggered by moral drives acting alone (moral politeness). This was demonstrated by disambiguating the motive of particular instances of politeness and proving that the moral drive was the only possible trigger.

The categorisation of politeness proposed here is based on the distinction between the diverse natures of the triggering motives. Accordingly, politeness is classified as selfish politeness, normative politeness and moral politeness. A politeness act may be triggered by concurrent factors of different natures (selfish / normative / moral).

It was also suggested that politeness is not necessarily a social act and that it is not necessarily rationally-motivated. Honorific politeness is the prime instantiation of moral politeness. The notion of respect has been subdivided into deep respect (inner awareness and sentiment), surfaced respect (natural manifestation of deep respect) and mock respect (emulation of surfaced respect). While both surfaced and mock respect are expressed through honorific politeness, only surfaced respect is an instantiation of moral politeness. It is also suggested that, in origin, all honorifics were meant as expressions of genuine respect.

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[53] The subject is of Panjabi origins, but probably knows English much better than Panjabi.

[54] As the interlocutor himself knew English very well, it can be excluded that the intention of the speaker was to facilitate the understanding of the communication by using a 'Panjabised' form. [Communication reported by Bilal Ahmad].

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Pragmatic uses of participles in Egyptian Arabic

Malcolm Edwards
m.edwards@bbk.ac.uk

1 Introduction

In Egyptian Arabic (EA) participles are used in all finite verb contexts to express aspectual categories which complement those expressed by the inflected verbal paradigms. This paper is concerned with contexts in which the AP contrasts with the Perfective (1, 2).

1. 'ana Talabt 'ahwa min nuSS sa:9a
   I order(Perf) coffee from half hour
   'I ordered coffee half an hour ago'

2. 'ana Ta:lib 'ahwa min nuSS sa:9a
   I order(Part) coffee from half hour
   'I ordered coffee half an hour ago'

Both (1) and (2) refer to an event which occurred prior to the time of speaking, but 2, with the Active Participle (AP) *Ta:lib* generates implications which are absent with the Perfective. (2) would be appropriately used in a context in which, for example, the speaker is drawing attention to the fact that his coffee has not yet been served, rather than one in which he is merely stating that he placed an order. Discussions of the Participle in the literature have for the most part been concerned with classifying the various putative functions of the semantics of the AP in relation to the inflected forms of the verb, and with the attempt identify one or more 'core' meanings for the AP. In the case of examples such as (2) above, the use of the AP is typically attributed to its role in indicating 'current relevance' (CR). Although most studies of the AP acknowledge that contextual factors are central to its interpretation, the distribution of labour between semantic and pragmatic contributions to meaning has not been explored.

The present paper examines the specifically contextual aspects of the interpretation of the AP, and argues that the role of the AP can only be fully characterised in terms of the complementary nature of semantic and pragmatic meaning. Of particular importance here is the distinction between entailments and implicatures, and it is demonstrated that in at least one function, the AP may be chosen by speakers specifically to generate implicatures which act to construct context, and which do not arise with the Perfective. The paper ends with a tentative explanation of the relationship between the semantics of the AP, current relevance, and context.

2 Verbs in Arabic

We begin with a brief overview of the verbal system of EA. EA has two inflected tense/aspect paradigms, referred to here as *Perfective* and *Imperfective*. The Perfective is exclusively suffixal, and the Imperfective predominantly prefixal. The Imperfective, uniquely, can host the progressive/habitual prefix *bi-*, and the Future prefix Ha-: