

Discourse strategies: politeness

Role of social relationships: linguistic interaction = social interaction

interaction parameters:

- a.) interaction-external parameters: relative status of participants, age, power relationship etc.)
- b.) interaction-internal parameters: amount of imposition, degree of friendliness (cf. distance-change in address)

Politeness: possible to treat it as fixed concept + general principles

- more narrow definition: politeness in discourse, → "face"

Face: public self-image of a person, emotional and social sense of self

politeness = means to show awareness of another's face

- socially distant awareness: respect, deference, acknowledging that other person is independent
- socially close awareness: friendliness, solidarity

Example: asking either a teacher or a friend if he/she has time

Discourse strategies: face

Face wants:

- face threatening act: violates expectations regarding self-image
- face saving act: action to diminish threat

Negative and positive face:

- negative face = the need to be independent to have freedom of action
- positive face = the need to be accepted to be treated as a group member

Negative politeness:

- face-saving act towards the negative face
- usually an apology or sign of respect

Positive politeness:

- face saving of positive face (= showing solidarity)
- recognizing other's needs when they appear to have a problem

A: <rummages in bag>
B: Here, take my pencil!

Discourse strategies: floor and turns

Floor: "the right to speak", who controls the floor has the turn

- turn-taking → attempts to switch control
- change-of-turn points in discourse: Transition Relevance Place
- TRPs differ from social group to group
- TRP features: speakers 1. cooperate or 2. fight for floor

Pauses:

- enable elegant transition of turns
- long pauses: 1st speaker hands over turn, 2nd speaker: silent
- short pauses → overlaps

Overlaps:

- occur often initially (both speakers start)
- shared rhythm mismatch: repeated start-overlap-stop pattern
- younger speakers: permanent overlap signals closeness
- competing speakers: overlap seen as interruption
- appeal to conversation rules "Could I make this point, please?"

Discourse strategies: conversational style

Two major types of conversational style:

1. high involvement style: active talk, almost no breaks, some overlap
2. high considerateness style: slower rate, longer pauses, no overlap, no interruption

Adjacency pairs: idiomatized structure patterns in discourse

A: *How are you?* B: *Fine!*

- always have first and second part;
- first part always creates **expectation** of second part
- missing** second part: is therefore meaningful

Adjacency pair examples: A: *Thanks!* B: *You are welcome*
A: *Can you help?* B: *Sure*

Insertion sequence: adjacency pair spans over some interaction
A: *Can you help?* B: *What time is it?* A: *8 pm* B: *Sure!*

→ insertion marks potential unavailability, is always meaningful

Adjacency pairs: preference

Preference structure: acceptance as second adjacency part is more likely than refusal → therefore "preference"

- pattern is socially determined (cf. Levinson)

1st part	2nd part	
	preferred	dispreferred
assessment	agree	disagree
invitation	accept	refuse
offer	accept	decline
proposal	agree	disagree
request	accept	refuse

Function of silence: speaker A can revise 1st part or disagree

A: *I really liked her latest novel!*
B: <silence>
A: *Well, some parts were a bit contrived, though*

Adjacency pairs: dispreference

Refusal: dispreferred, can be expressed without saying no

A: *Come over!* B: *I'd love to but...*

→ shows appreciation of the first part

dispreference types (cf. Yule)	forms
delay	<pause>, <i>ahem...</i>
preface	<i>well, oh...</i>
doubt	<i>I'm not sure...</i>
token yes	<i>I'd love to but...</i>
apology	<i>I'm sorry...</i>
other obligation	<i>I actually have to do X</i>
appeal for understanding	<i>you see,...</i>
make it non-personal	<i>everybody else...</i>
give account	<i>too much work, no time!</i>
mitigators	<i>really, mostly, sort of</i>
hedge the negative	<i>I guess not</i>

→ more time/language used for dispreference than for preference

- preference expresses proximity
- dispreference expresses distance, therefore it is more negotiated