Solidarity and Politeness

SOLIDARITY AND POLITENESS

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Introduction

❖ The purpose of the present research from a sociolinguistic stance is to consider the aspects of solidarity and politeness including face-threatening acts from the point of view of their linguistic components, relevance for social interaction and their usage in male/female discourse.

❖ In essence, this research will show that certain linguistic choices a speaker makes indicate the social relationship that the speaker perceives to exist between his or her interlocutor.

Generalizations concerning address systems

❖ Aspects of social relationships, such as distance, solidarity or intimacy are given linguistic expression by address systems consisting of a *T/V* distinction and address terms. This way, speakers are given the chance to either be more formal or less formal with their interlocutor on certain occasions (Hickey 2007: 3).

Basic concepts and origin of *T/V* distinction and address terms

❖ The term address denotes a speaker's linguistic reference to his/her interlocutor.

❖ Address means **only the main linguistic interaction without opening forms of address**.

❖ Speaking of forms of address includes words and phrases that are used for addressing.

❖ These words and phrases refer to the interlocutor and thus contain deictic expressions designating the interlocutors, but not necessarily so, since their lexical meaning can differ from or even contradict the addressee's characteristics.

Pronoun of Address

❖ Concerning pronouns of address, it has to be mentioned that pronouns referring to the interlocutors are meant. These pronouns are second person pronouns such as English *you,* German *du* and *Ihr,* French *tu* and *vous*

❖ *)* For convenience sake in order to thus designate a pronoun that either refers to social distance (V) or intimacy (T) in any language (1960: 254).

semantic evolution of the usage of *T* and *V* pronouns of address

❖ Considering the consequence and the semantic evolution of the usage of *T* and *V* pronouns of address, it was apparent that by medieval times the upper classes began to use *V* forms with each other to show "mutual respect and politeness" (Wardhaugh 1992: 259).

❖ Nevertheless, *T* forms of social intimacy or rather solidarity persisted among the lower classes with the upper classes using *T* forms only when addressing the lower classes

semantic evolution of the usage of *T* and *V* pronouns of address

❖ Contrary to this, *V* forms were on the one hand used by the upper classes amongst themselves to show respect or rather politeness and on the other hand *V* forms were used by the lower classes when addressing the upper classes so that a social distance was established between these classes.

❖ . In referring to Brown and Gilman (1960), Wardhaugh points out at that this *T/V* usage of upper classes addressing lower ones with *T* but receiving *V* forms of respect resulted in a non-reciprocal usage of asymmetrical patterns of address that therefore came to semantically symbolize a 'power' relationship such as officer to soldier, priest to penitent or master/mistress to servants (1992: 259

semantic evolution of the usage of *T* and *V* pronouns of address

❖ This power semantic is based upon a strict rule in which the superior says *T* and the inferior addresses the superior with the *V* form.

❖ In contrast to this power semantic of the non-reciprocal usage of *T/V* pronouns of address usage, the reciprocal *V* usage of symmetrical address terms, that is when both interlocutors independent of class address each other with the *V* pronoun of address, then this usage of *V* forms, as Wardhaugh puts it, becomes 'polite' usage.

semantic evolution of the usage of *T* and *V* pronouns of address

❖ On the basis of this statement, the *V* form can be used by both interlocutors to indicate politeness as well as social distance along with the *T* form now being used by both to show solidarity (Lambert/Tucker 1976: 2).

❖). But the non-reciprocal *T/V* usage can still be used to express status differences,

❖ at least in American English when for instance, one person addresses another with a first name and

T/V Usage in English

❖ In English, all kinds of *T/V* usage or rather address terms combinations, whether reciprocal or nonreciprocal, are possible: *Dr Smith, John Smith, Smith, John, Johnnie, Doc, Sir, Mack* and so on, with Dr Smith himself expecting to be addressed *Doctor* from a patient, *Dad* from his son, *John* from his brother, *Dear* from his wife and *Sir* from subordinants.

Politeness

❖ In general sense: taking account of sense: feelings of others, making others feel comfortable.

❖ Linguistically: speaking appropriately to the relationship between speaker and hearer. Linguistic politeness requires understanding how language works in variety of social contexts

Positive and Negative politeness

❖ **Positive politeness: solidarity oriented,**

politeness: oriented, emphasizes shared attitudes and values

❖ **Negative politeness:** power, status and politeness: distance oriented, pays people respect and avoids intruding on them (does not equal lack of politeness or rudeness!!)

Look at the following situations:

A. Paul is in his friend's house with a group of people of his age, and he is saying these things:
'Go and get me that plate.' 'Shut up.'

B. Paul is in his parents' house with a group of adults (of parents' age) and he is saying:
"Could you pass me that plate, if you don't mind?"
"I'm sorry I don't mean to interrupt, but I can't hear the speaker in front of the room."

Is Paul polite in both these situations? What happened if he said 'Shut up' in the second?

LINGUISTIC POLITENESS

❖ Needs assessing relationship b/w speaker and hearer along two social dimensions:

❖ Social distance/solidarity,

❖ Relative status/power.

POWER AND SOLIDARITY

POWER:

   a relation between two people, it determines the negative rights
   they expect of each other: A<B (A subordinate),

 A>B other: (A superior),

 A=B (A equal to B)

SOLIDARITY:

   characteristic of relation b/w two people; determines the positive
   rights, \

 has two types: low and high.

 Concerns   social distance b/w two people in terms of
how much experience they share

FACTORS DETERMINING CHOICE OF LINGUISTIC ITEMS

Rules of speech community govern linguistic politeness, e.g: use of address terms.

Complex system, taking account of solidarity and distance, as well as age, and formality of context.

FACTORS DETERMINING CHOICE OF LINGUISTIC ITEMS

❖ <u>In the past</u>: power and status differences determined address terms exclusively,   status was the major consideration.

❖ <u>Nowadays</u>, solidarity is gaining ground in Western societies.

❖ <u>In Asian countries</u> (rigid, status and power orientated) it is still status that determines   ToA.

SUMMARY

RELEVANT DIMENSIONS IN ALL SOCIETIES DETERMINING WAYS OF LINGUISTIC POLITENESS:

❖ *SOCIAL STATUS*

❖ *SC DISTANCE OR SOLIDARITY*

❖ *DEGREE OF FORMALITY OF CONTEXT*

❖ *TYPE OF INTERACTION*

❖ *RELATIVE AGE*

CONCLUSION

- Expressing the same speech act /speech function may differ markedly from culture to culture. They may seem random, but are not. They reflect social values and attitudes of societies. Being polite involves knowing expression of a range of speech functions in a culturally appropriate way.

- Learning another language means / involves more than just learning literal meaning of words, how to put them together, etc. Learners also need to know what they mean in the cultural context, so they need to understand cultural and social norms of their users. This makes sociolinguistic competence, important component of communicative competence.