

Chapter 1

Introduction: Impoliteness and power in language

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1. Introduction

This collection of papers on impoliteness and power in language seeks to address the enormous imbalance that exists between academic interest in politeness phenomena as opposed to impoliteness phenomena. In 1990 Fraser presented a paper detailing the then four approaches to politeness.¹ Things have moved on somewhat since then. DuFon et al. (1994) identified an extensive bibliography of publications on politeness which runs to 51 pages. Eelen (1999, 2001) and Watts (2003) identified at least nine separate approaches to politeness and, indeed, Fraser (1999) notes that there are well over 1,000 books, papers and articles published on the concept of politeness. At this time little had been written or researched on impoliteness. The notable exceptions being Lachenicht (1980), Culpeper (1996, 1998) and Kienpointner (1997). In addition to Fraser's observation of the profligate nature of research in this area, Chen (2001: 87) has noted the "mammoth-like", and Xie (2003: 811) the "nearly geometric", increase in the number of texts dealing with, critiquing, 'correcting' or commenting upon politeness since Lakoff's seminal article introduced the concept to academic scrutiny in 1973 (Bousfield 2006: 9–10).

Since Fraser's original comments in December 1999 work on politeness has burgeoned yet further with well over a dozen research monographs and collections (cf. Beeching 2002; Bayraktaroğlu and Sifianou 2001; Eelen 2001; Fukushima 2000; Hickey and Stewart 2005; Holmes and Stubbe 2003b; Kumar 2001; Lakoff and Ide 2006; Lee-Wong 2000; Locher 2004; Marquez-Reiter 2000; Mills 2003; Mühleisen and Migge 2005; Pan 2000; Watts 2003; Youmans 2006) and at least 75 individual journal papers in production or in press on the phenomenon; circa 50 of these papers in-press are within the *Journal of Pragmatics* alone. Fraser (2006: 65) notes that the number of publications on politeness (since 1999) has increased "by several hundred." And Watts (2003: xi) mentions that his bibliographic collection of work on politeness "contains roughly 1,200 titles and is growing steadily week by week." Indeed, given Chen's and Xie's observations above, this growth may well be on the path to becoming virtually exponential, especially when we consider that 2005 witnessed the

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launching of *The Journal of Politeness Research* which must surely be testimony to the growing academic interest in the phenomenon. This has wide-reaching implications for such areas as cross-cultural communication, TEFL, TESOL and conflict resolution to name but four.

In the face of this continual rise in interest for politeness phenomena, our understanding of impoliteness, by contrast, has merely crawled forward. For example, at the time of writing this introduction, the *Journal of Pragmatics* lists just five papers dealing with impoliteness since its inception in 1977 (Hickey 1991; Culpeper 1996; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Rudanko 2006; Bousfield 2007b). There are, of course, some few other articles dealing with related phenomena that have been published in different journals (cf. Austin 1990; Beebe 1995; Bousfield 2007a; Culpeper 2005; Harris 2001; Kienpointner 1997; Lachenicht 1980; Mills 2005, to identify a few). However, a little more than a dozen articles on the phenomenon cannot hope to compete with the embarrassment of research riches which the concept of politeness enjoys. The paucity of research into impoliteness is telling, especially when we consider that several researchers (e.g. Craig, Tracey and Spisak 1986; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Tracy 1990) have argued that any adequate account of the dynamics of interpersonal communication (e.g. a model of politeness) should consider hostile as well as cooperative communication. Indeed, in response to claims made by researchers such as Leech (1983: 105), in that “conflictive illocutions tend, thankfully, to be rather marginal to human linguistic behaviour in normal circumstances”, Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) make their case for the necessity of an impoliteness framework by noting (amongst other things) that:

Conflictive talk has been found to play a role – and often a central one – in, for example, army training discourse (Culpeper 1996), courtroom discourse (Lakoff 1989; Penman 1990), family discourse (Vuchinich 1990), adolescent discourse (Labov 1972; Goodwin and Goodwin 1990), doctor-patient discourse (Mehan 1990), therapeutic discourse (Labov and Fanshel 1977), ‘everyday conversation’ (Beebe 1995) and fictional texts (Culpeper 1998; Liu 1986; Tannen 1990).

(Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003: 1545–1546)

In connection with the need to address conflictive interaction in linguistic studies in general, we argue that it is also time to systematically look at impoliteness, the long neglected ‘poor cousin’ of politeness. In what follows, we will address the issues that this collection has raised by discussing the different theoretical stances towards the study of impoliteness, the connection between the exercise of power and impoliteness, and the outline of the book.

2. What is ‘impoliteness’?

After decades of work inspired by Brown and Levinson’s ([1978] 1987) seminal work on politeness, politeness research is on the move again with both revisions to the classic model being suggested and alternative conceptions of politeness, which have been in existence for over a decade, being further tested, applied and developed. As the chapters in this collection show, research on impoliteness is inextricably linked to these developments. All contributors have previously worked in the field of politeness studies and have now decided to answer the call and extend their frameworks in such a way that a meaningful discussion of impoliteness becomes possible. For readers familiar with politeness research, it will also be immediately clear from a quick glance over the list of contributors that they will not find one single methodological approach to impoliteness phenomena in this collection. It was indeed the editors’ aim to invite researchers from rather different theoretical camps to contribute their ideas to this endeavour in order to encourage a critical exchange. Since none of the chapters pursue a purely ‘classical’ Brown and Levinson line of argumentation, it is hoped that this collection can also contribute to broadening the horizons of research into im/politeness by making new paths of research more visible.

Coming from different theoretical camps means that the actual subject of study is already hotly contested. While there is a fair amount of agreement that politeness and impoliteness issues can (some would say should) be discussed together, and that impolite utterances have an impact on the ties between social actors, there is no solid agreement in the chapters as to what ‘impoliteness’ actually is. The lowest common denominator, however, can be summarised like this: *Impoliteness is behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context.* Most researchers would propose that this is ultimately insufficient and have indeed proposed more elaborate definitions. One of the main differences that emerges when comparing some of these is the role assigned to the recognition of intentions in the understanding of impoliteness:

- (1) I take impoliteness as constituting the issuing of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive face-threatening acts (FTAs) that are purposefully performed. (Bousfield, this volume: 132)
- (2) Impoliteness, as I would define it, involves communicative behaviour intending to cause the “face loss” of a target or perceived by the target to be so. (Culpeper, this volume: 36)
- (3) *impoliteness* occurs when the expression used is not conventionalised relative to the context of occurrence; it threatens the addressee’s face (and, through that, the

speaker's face) but no face-threatening intention is attributed to the speaker by the hearer. (Terkourafi, this volume: 70)

As we can see, Bousfield and Culpeper make the hearer's understanding of the speaker's intentions the key for impoliteness. In contrast, Terkourafi maintains that the recognition of intentions constitutes 'rudeness' rather than impoliteness (for an elaboration of these points, see Chapters 2, 3 and 6). It is apparent that more research is needed here to establish whether the recognition of intentions by the interactants involved is indeed the key to define impoliteness and rudeness and to distinguish the terms from each other.

What is clear currently is that the two terms would appear to occupy a very similar conceptual space. This is a point explicitly explored by Locher and Watts, who in fact state that the conceptual space of impoliteness is also shared by other negatively evaluated terms within face-aggravating linguistic behaviour. They note that:

- (4) Negatively marked behaviour, i.e. behaviour that has breached a social norm . . . , evokes negative evaluations such as *impolite* or *over-polite* (or any alternative lexeme such as *rude*, *aggressive*, *insulting*, *sarcastic*, etc. depending upon the degree of the violation and the type of conceptualisation the inappropriate behaviour is profiled against). (Locher and Watts, this volume: 79)

This is only part of a much larger argument made by Locher and Watts that ultimately we need to adopt the terms that members themselves use in order to explain the concepts discussed throughout this collection. We will revisit this issue later in this introduction.

In what follows, some of the lines of reasoning that emerged in our reading of the chapters will be commented on. In section 2.1, we deal with impoliteness as a means to negotiate relationships. In Section 2.2, we comment on an important difference that can be found with respect to the general methodological approach taken to study impoliteness phenomena, i.e. whether researchers pursue a first order or a second order approach. In Section 2.3, the aspect of contextualisation and the importance of the norms of discursive practices in judging impoliteness are introduced.

2.1. Impoliteness as a means to negotiate relationships

In all chapters of this collection, the feeling that we are not dealing with an easy to grasp or one-dimensional concept is all pervasive. Several researchers in fact point out that we are only at the beginning of our understanding of the

phenomenon (e.g. Bousfield; Culpeper; Terkourafi). Impoliteness, even if most generally seen as face-aggravating behaviour in a specific context, clearly involves the relational aspect of communication in that social actors negotiate their positions vis-à-vis each other. Locher and Watts (this volume and elsewhere; see also Bousfield, this volume) maintain that impolite behaviour and face-aggravating behaviour more generally is as much part of this negotiation as polite versions of behaviour. Locher and Watts thus claim that “[r]elational work refers to all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice” (Locher and Watts, this volume: 96). This general statement basically sets the stage for claiming that all aspects of relational work should be studied, and indeed that it is time to also focus on impoliteness. At the same time, however, the complex nature of relational work is recognised.

Many of the researchers in this collection make use of the term ‘relational work’ and understand impoliteness as being one aspect of this concept (e.g. Locher and Watts; Schnurr, Marra and Holmes).² Culpeper discusses the term and its usefulness for research in his chapter. As soon as the most general definition of impoliteness as behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context is deemed to be not entirely sufficient, the question arises as to what part of relational work is covered by the term *impolite*. Before we can outline how different approaches have dealt with this question, we need to introduce the terms ‘first order impoliteness’ (impoliteness₁) and ‘second order impoliteness’ (impoliteness₂).

2.2. First order and second order investigations

The distinction between first order and second order approaches in politeness research stems from work which goes back to Watts, Ehlich and Ide (1992) and Eelen (2001). First order concepts are judgements about behaviour, such as *impolite*, *rude*, *polite*, *polished*, made by the social actors themselves. They arrive at these judgements according to the norms of their particular discursive practice. We are, in other words, dealing with a lay-person’s understanding of the concepts italicised above. Second order approaches use the concepts and consider them on a theoretical level. These theories do not disregard first order notions as, in fact, it is argued that the second order theories are necessarily informed by first order notions in the first place (see, e.g. Bousfield, this volume).

To give a concrete example of the most prominent second order theory: Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) treat ‘politeness’ as a universal concept and as a technical term to describe relational work that is carried out to mitigate

face-threatening acts. Whether or not a particular member of a discursive practice is in agreement that a particular utterance is also perceived as *polite* is no longer of relevance (for a discussion of this point, see also Locher 2006a). The way in which Brown and Levinson's theory has been understood and used in the past means that relational work has been split into only two components, namely polite and impolite behaviour. A second order researcher who uncritically follows Brown and Levinson might thus answer the question of what part of interactive behaviour or relational work constitutes impoliteness (raised in the previous section) simply by saying that impoliteness equals non-politeness, i.e. non-adherence to the politeness strategies proposed in Brown and Levinson's framework. After all, Brown and Levinson ([1978] 1987) themselves note that:

... politeness has to be communicated, and the absence of communicated politeness may, *ceteris paribus*, be taken as the absence of a polite attitude. (Brown and Levinson [1978] 1987: 5)

Whilst far from being uncritical of Brown and Levinson's approach, a number of authors (e.g. Bousfield, García-Pastor) who have contributed to this collection are nevertheless at least partially sympathetic³ to the notion of a dichotomous aspect to politeness and impoliteness in certain circumstances. Such circumstances are those explained by Culpeper (1996: 357), who notes that impoliteness may be realised through "... the absence of politeness work *where it would be expected*" (our emphasis), and further gives the example that "failing to thank someone for a present may be taken as deliberate impoliteness" (Culpeper 2005: 42).

In contrast, researchers pursuing a first order approach explicitly leave open the option that there is more in relational work than just impolite or polite behaviour. They claim that judgements with respect to appropriateness of relational work by interactants may lead to a more diverse labelling of behaviour than simply *polite* and *impolite* (e.g. Locher and Watts; Schnurr, Marra and Holmes). While this may be expected from approaches that do not use the italicised lexemes as theoretical concepts, we note that some of the theoretically oriented researchers also break up the dichotomy between politeness and impoliteness. Bousfield, for example, while clearly stating that he pursues a second order approach, still maintains that the aspect of relational work which can most generally be described as face-aggravating is not necessarily synonymous with impoliteness. Archer, too, working with a second order approach, suggests refining the definition of *impoliteness* yet further as she sees the concept as a sub-variety of "linguistic aggression". The approaches that have evolved out of second order conceptualisations (e.g. Archer; Bousfield; Cashman; Culpeper; García-Pastor; Terkourafi) are therefore no longer using a clear dichotomy of theoretical concepts à la Brown and Levinson. It is indeed the case in Bousfield's,

Culpeper's and Terkourafi's contributions that their definitions of impoliteness all contain elements of speaker and/or hearer interpretation and explicitly stress context sensitivity – points on which Archer, Cashman and García-Pastor implicitly agree. Such points have always been at the heart of first order approaches. In addition, Bousfield, Culpeper, and Terkourafi also discuss *rude* behaviour and how it might be distinguished from *impolite* behaviour. All this effectively narrows the scope of the term 'impoliteness' within relational work and shifts the discussion in the direction of a first order approach. What we therefore see in this collection is a rapprochement of the two fields.

Since much of what the researchers sympathetic to a first order approach (Graham; Limberg; Locher and Watts; Mullany; Schnurr, Marra and Holmes) put forward for discussion is connected to an understanding of relational work in a particular discursive context, the notions of Community of Practice and discursiveness have to be introduced next.

2.3. *The negotiation of norms in discursive practices*

In no chapter can we find any claims for a simple form and function correlation with respect to language usage and its impact as impoliteness on a more global level. This might sound like a truism nowadays, but we believe that it is worth repeating it here. What this boils down to, then, is that we wish to highlight the importance of locally made judgements on the relational aspects of language usage, i.e. 'relational work'. In Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) framework an attempt was made to capture these contextual influences on relational work by introducing the variables of power, distance and the ranking of the social imposition. To claim that context matters is therefore no new insight. What has changed is our awareness that judgements about the relational aspect of an utterance may differ from discursive practice to discursive practice.

A number of researchers explicitly argue with a Community of Practice (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), Activity Type (see Levinson 1992) or, more generally, a discursive practice approach when interpreting data (Graham; Locher and Watts; Mullany; Schnurr, Marra and Holmes). This means that the researchers do not link the observation of a linguistic strategy, for example indirectness, directly with a judgement as to whether this strategy is to be interpreted as *impolite* or *polite*. Instead, they claim that this judgement has to be made with the norms of the particular discursive community in mind. In addition, judgements about relational work (be it *polished*, *polite*, *impolite*, *rude*, or *uncouth*, etc.) are said to be points of reference, placed along a continuum with fuzzy borders between the concepts.

It is hypothesised that members of a discursive practice negotiate and renegotiate the norms of the community and thus share expectations about relational work. This means that what is perceived as impolite behaviour in one group may be shared by its members to a large degree. What is highlighted, however, is that the norms themselves are in flux, since they are shaped by the individuals who make up the discursive practice. This discursiveness is one of the reasons proposed for preferring a first order rather than a second order approach by some researchers in this collection (cf. Locher and Watts). At the same time, it needs to be highlighted that the second order researchers are well aware of the fact that expectations about a particular practice influence the participants' judgements about impoliteness. See, for example, Culpeper's and Bousfield's chapters in which they discuss the impact of aggressive verbal behaviour on TV shows and army training camps with respect to whether or not the linguistic behaviour is still interpreted as hurtful and impolite by the participants, despite the fact that this behaviour may have been expected ('sanctioned') from the beginning.

3. Power and impoliteness

In the same way that impoliteness is not a concept upon which all are agreed in this collection, neither can we give a definitive account of power, nor how it operates in impolite, or otherwise face-damaging interactions after our reading of the chapters. A number of different sources have been used by the different researchers contributing to this collection. These include accounts of power adapted or adopted from Foucault (1980), van Dijk (1989, 1996, 1997), Wartenberg (1990), Watts (1991), Thornborrow (2002) and Locher (2004), to name just a few. Culpeper cautions with respect to attempting a single definition of power by saying "I will not, however, attempt a comprehensive overview or critique of the notion of power, as it looms like the many-headed Hydra in a voluminous literature" (this volume: 17–18). This is, perhaps, a wise move, but should not be taken to mean that we can neglect the aspect of power when analyzing impoliteness.

On the contrary, the discussion of power within each chapter is critically relevant to the phenomena under scrutiny: firstly, there is and can be no interaction without power; secondly, and more pertinently, impoliteness is an exercise of power as it has arguably always in some way *an effect* on one's addressees in that it alters the future action-environment of one's interlocutors. Impoliteness – whether understood as intentional face-aggravation (Bousfield; Culpeper) or not (Terkourafi) – is inextricably tied up with the very concept of power because an interlocutor whose face is damaged by an utterance suddenly finds his or

her response options to be sharply restricted. The notion of the restriction of an “action-environment” is taken from Wartenberg’s (1990) definition of power:

A social agent *A* has *power over* another social agent *B* if and only if *A* strategically constrains *B*’s action-environment. (Wartenberg 1990: 85, emphasis in original)⁴

Such restrictions of interactants’ action-environments through the use of face-aggravating behaviour in its ‘impolite’ form can be observed within many of the situations, settings, activity types or communities of practice here discussed. Whilst definitions of power differ throughout the collection, the *lowest common denominator* here centres therefore around this effect of impoliteness in restricting the actions of the target.

Restricting the action environment of an individual, as is apparent from virtually all of the chapters here, is not a sacrosanct, concrete aspect of any one individual, in any one role, in any one setting. In short, there is agreement in this collection that power is not static; rather, power is highly dynamic, fluid and negotiable. Even interactants with a hierarchically lower status can and do exercise power through impoliteness, as many examples demonstrate.

Having outlined the general theoretical tendencies that we perceive to be under discussion in this collection, we will move to an explanation of what is in store in the chapters on impoliteness in language.

4. The organisation of the book

We originally expected a more clear-cut methodological division between the contributors’ texts. This would have allowed us to clearly attribute the chapters to first or second order approaches to the study of impoliteness. As we noted above, however, the approaches the researchers have taken are in many cases based on a fusion of methodologies and/or are elaborated explorations of their own methodological paths.

The sequence of chapters as it presents itself to the reader, then, is along thematic lines. The two chapters by Culpeper and by Terkourafi in Part 1 are predominantly theory-oriented. (Culpeper, however, also discusses empirical data.) While the remaining chapters also have strong theory sections, they are nevertheless ordered according to the type of data that was used for their empirical analyses: Part 2 entails data from political interaction (Locher and Watts; García-Pastor), Part 3 interaction with legally constituted authorities (Bousfield; Limberg; Archer), Part 4 workplace interaction in the factory and offices (Schnurr, Marra and Holmes; Mullany) and Part 5 presents data on code-switching (Cashman) and from the Internet (Graham). By choosing to present theory focused

papers first, it is hoped that the readers can make a comparison of the theoretical ideas at the beginning of this collection, and then see the different approaches in use on similar data sets.

Part 1 of this collection thus contains chapters that have a predominantly theoretical focus. Jonathan Culpeper's work merges a discussion of impoliteness, relational work and power. Coming from a second order approach to impoliteness, Culpeper discusses both the advantages and the drawbacks of the terminology employed in primarily first order approaches, and also engages critically with his own previous work. By offering a discussion of the use of the lexemes *over-polite* on the Internet, Culpeper tests his line of argumentation empirically. His lucid discussion of the connection between impoliteness and power sets the stage for the other chapters in this collection.

Marina Terkourafi's chapter is an attempt to unify a theory of politeness, impoliteness, and rudeness. In her theoretical considerations, she reviews both first order and second order approaches to politeness and impoliteness and merges them in a compelling synthesis of her own. In particular, she discusses the concept of 'face' in detail. Terkourafi also proposes that interactants might make first order distinctions between behaviour that is deemed *impolite* and behaviour that is deemed *rude*. According to her, the perception/construction of 'intention' by the receiver is the key to this distinction (see her definition of *impoliteness* in Section 2 of this introduction). While there is much overlap of Terkourafi's approach with, for example, Culpeper (2005) but also Locher and Watts (2005), the author also distinctly goes her own way in theorizing politeness and impoliteness.

In Part 2 the common denominator is interaction in the political sphere of life. Miriam Locher and Richard Watts' chapter, however, first of all explains the point of view of researchers who favour a first order approach over a second order approach to the study of impoliteness, as outlined in section 2.2 above. They then move to an illustration of the discursive nature of concepts such as *polite* or *impolite* by using meta-comments found on an Internet discussion board. The main empirical analysis offered in this chapter is one that looks at a political interview broadcast in 1984. It is argued that a sequence of social practice needs to be studied within its wider socio-political and socio-historical context. Locher and Watts also call for a close analysis of non-linguistic evidence, such as facial expressions or body posture, to arrive at an understanding of what interactants might have perceived or constructed as *impolite* (negatively marked, and inappropriate) behaviour when judging this behaviour against their particular Community of Practice norms.

María Dolores García-Pastor, on the other hand, takes a clearly second order theoretical stance (based on Lachenicht 1980; Kienpointer 1997; Culpeper

1996, 2005; Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann 2003; Blas Arroyo 2001). She studies impoliteness and power in U.S. electoral debates, collected in 2000, and argues that the notion of ‘negativity cycles’ is helpful to describe how interactants constrain and influence each other’s action-environments. In her analysis, García-Pastor uses second order strategies for impoliteness to describe how “[p]oliticians discredit the opponent, and coerce him/her into a specific course of action in their interchanges. This gives place to a discursive struggle which 1) evinces the interrelation between impoliteness and power in debates, and 2) underscores the relational, dynamic and contestable features of this concept”.

Interaction with legally constituted authorities, as can be found in court or police contexts, is at the heart of Part 3. Derek Bousfield’s chapter adds further points to the theoretical discussion of the concept of impoliteness. He develops the second order models proposed by Culpeper (1996, 2005) and Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003) by especially subsuming the five ‘super-strategies’ (Bald on record; positive impoliteness; negative Impoliteness; off-record impoliteness; withhold politeness) within two: *On-record impoliteness* and *Off-record impoliteness*. By doing this, Bousfield stresses that face-considerations are always at the heart of relational work, irrespective of the form a particular utterance may take. Further, he acknowledges that off-record strategies can be as damaging as on-record strategies in terms of impoliteness. Finally, whilst adaptable to the Brown and Levinson notion of face, Bousfield’s approach presupposes no positive/negative aspect. In his discussions of examples, Bousfield focuses especially on the power relations of the interactants and points out that power is dynamic and contestable even in institutional discourses with rigid hierarchies.

Holger Limberg works on threats in conflict talk, derived from police patrolling interaction (as shown on TV). He defines threats as face-damaging and as having pragmatic as well as symbolic power, and discusses their potential to serve manipulation. Limberg’s discussion of power, based largely on Wartenberg’s (1990) distinction between *force*, *coercion* and *influence*, is especially illuminating when he analyses threats uttered both by the police (the institutionally more powerful) and by the offenders (the institutionally less powerful). Limberg maintains that he did not find any meta-comments on whether or not the interactants involved perceived first order impoliteness to have taken place and concludes that “[a]ssessments about impoliteness and the use of threats can only be made on the grounds of the situational usage of this strategy and whether it has been implemented appropriately”.

Dawn Archer is the only researcher in this collection to use historical data that is taken from English courtroom interaction in the 17th and 18th centuries. Archer discusses and adds to the second order theories proposed by Culpeper,

Bousfield and Wichmann, but also calls for more contextualisation. She claims that much of the verbal aggression witnessed in a courtroom, which can be described by super-strategies proposed by second order researchers, should nevertheless not be taken as synonymous to impoliteness. This is, she argues, because the courtroom is a context in which verbal aggression is tolerated (*sanctioned*) to a large degree. In this sense, Archer is one of the researchers in this collection who stress a combination of both first and second order methods.

Part 4 of this collection contains two further studies that discuss data derived from a work context. In both Schnurr, Marra and Holmes' as well as in Mullany's chapter, the focus is on office or factory work, rather than on interaction that is characterised by legally constituted authorities as discussed in Part 3. Stephanie Schnurr, Meredith Marra and Janet Holmes emphasise the importance of a Community of Practice approach and are sympathetic towards a first order approach to the study of impoliteness. The authors investigate the ways in which impoliteness is employed by subordinates as a means to challenge and subvert existing power relations in the workplace. They maintain that behaviour that might be perceived as impolite from the perspective of the researcher should in fact be investigated with the norms of the respective discursive practice in mind, since these norms are negotiated by its members.

Louise Mullany investigates interactions within corporate business meetings. She takes a context-based, Community of Practice perspective to conceptualise impoliteness, and utilises an approach that is influenced by both conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis. In this way, Mullany uses a first order approach to impoliteness that is based on knowledge about the norms negotiated in the discursive practices that she studies by using recordings and questionnaire data. The author adds the aspect of gender to the discussion of impoliteness and power and claims that both concepts have to be seen as possessing a fluid and dynamic nature.

In part 5, one article on code-switching and one on Internet communication can be found. Holly Cashman investigates the function of code-switching with respect to relational work. Cashman proposes that a methodological mixture – a combination of interviews, questionnaire data and role play – can yield fruitful results when zooming in on the function of code-switching in interaction. She uses a second order approach, but combines it with a discussion of the interactants' perception of what was or was not perceived as impolite in real interaction. Code-switching, it turns out, can be used to create polite as well as impolite interpretations.

Sage Lambert Graham offers a study of exchanges on an Internet mailing list. In particular, she investigates the norms of this discursive practice as outlined by the FAQs of the Internet mailing list. This list reflects the expectations that the

members of this community have put into writing with respect to appropriate interaction. The list, however, is also contradictory in its messages and puts new members in a difficult position if they want to follow the guidelines. Graham discusses reactions to violations of these rules and shows how the communities' norms are in a process of being discussed and shaped by its members.

Finally, two points bear making here. First, as this collection is in many ways a joint enterprise in that we are all drawing on and building on existing politeness research and are expanding *impoliteness* research, we are also referring the reader to the same literature in many cases. For this reason and to avoid unnecessary repetition, we have compiled one single reference section for all chapters. This can be found at the end of this collection. Second, while it would be presumptuous to expect that this collection will spark off an equally large interest in impoliteness such as that which already exists for politeness, we do hope that it can serve as a starting point for future, much needed, studies on the phenomenon, and that it will be as well-received as its sister *Politeness in Language* (1992, 2005), also published by Mouton.

Notes

1. The four approaches identified by Fraser are: (1) the social-norm view, (2) the conversational-maxim view, (3) the face-saving view and (4) the conversational-contract view. For a discussion, see Locher (2004: 60–62).
2. However, rather than working with the notion of face outlined in Locher and Watts, some researchers prefer to work with Spencer-Oatey's (2000a/b, 2002, 2005) ideas on 'rapport management' (e.g. Cashman; Culpeper; Graham).
3. As the distinctions between first and second order approaches to the study of impoliteness are not as clear-cut as could have been expected, we have opted for using the adjective 'sympathetic to' to describe a researcher's position. In most cases this is a simplification of the researcher's theoretical stance, and the readers are encouraged to read the chapters to learn more about the different approaches of the contributors.
4. For a discussion of this definition and Wartenberg's ideas on power in general, see Locher (2004: Chapter 2) and Limberg (this volume).

Part 1. Theoretical focus on research on impoliteness

