

Approaches In Linguistic Politeness: A Critical Evaluation

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Abstract

This research presents the two common approaches to the politeness theory: traditional approach and discursive approach, which have been adopted in politeness research. The traditional approach to politeness is based on the classical views of Grice's cooperative principle and speech act theory. Politeness has been defined as a linguistic device used for interaction based on universal rules. However, the discursive approach depends largely on evaluative strategies by focusing on the participants' perception, the interpretation of politeness, and on the discursive aspect of politeness (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003, 2005). In this paper, the researcher brings to light the contrast between the two approaches and their common essential assumptions. Also, there is a further investigation of how the discursive approach overlaps with the traditional approach. It has been suggested that both approaches are mutually complementary. In addition, they both address politeness at different levels of situation.

Keywords: Politeness Theory, Traditional Approach, Post-modern [discursive] Approach, evaluativity, politeness 1, politeness 2.

Introduction

The rationale of communication is believed not only for the transfer of information, but also for maintaining personal and group relationships between each other. That is, language has other functions such as transactional. This function is concerned with conveying information between the speaker and the hearer and interpersonal function, which is devoted to examining the effect of interaction between interlocutors (Eelen, 2001). Through examining the politeness theory as a linguistic phenomenon and pragmatic investigation, two broad approaches are distinguished. The first approach is labelled as the traditional approach. The term *traditional* may be coined from the scholars' classical views starting with Grecian's cooperative principle, speech act theory, and Brown and Levinson's model. Within such approach, it is reasonable for them to transfer their views from

the actual speaking to the abstract Model Person represented by face and rationality. However, the traditional approach believes that politeness is perceived and realized similarly in all cultures. Politeness, then, has been perceived as a linguistic device used in interaction based on universal rules (Watts, 2003). Consequently, a huge number of empirical studies directed at examining politeness in different cultures adopt this view. However, the theories' claims have not been confirmed by those studies. The traditional approach represented by empirical studies has been challenged by a second view, which is referred to as post-modern 'discursive' approach. This approach is based on social theory (Eelen, 2001), which signifies the disputed nature of politeness across and within cultures. Within the post-modern approach, the role of the addressee has been largely signified. However, certain situations have been examined. In this situation, active potential politeness of any utterance perceived is justified and generalizing politeness is not regarded as the target.

Brown and Levinson's model of politeness has been the most influential in politeness research. On the other hand, this has changed dramatically in recent times. The politeness theory has recently submitted to new challenges represented by the views emerging in the discursive approach of Eelen (2001), Watts (2003), and Mills (2011). Politeness within such new perspective has been regarded as a reasonable objection to the traditional theories of politeness in general, Brown and Levinson (1987) in particular. However, with closer investigation for epistemological and ontological concerns, some contradictions emerge especially in how researchers identify impoliteness in interactional stances.

However, this paper provides a theoretical account of the politeness theory starting from its traditional approach towards the discursive approach. In this paper, I critically review these two approaches with a focus on inconsistencies arising in the discursive approach.

1. Traditional Approach

The origin of the traditional politeness theory lies in the philosophy of Grice and Searle, who introduced politeness through the four maxims of cooperative principles in "Logic and Politeness" Grice (1989a), cited in Lindblom (2001). The cooperative principle assumes that human interaction is generally cooperative in terms of showing polite manners. The signals of politeness can be observed by interlocutors in conversations. Also, these could also be created by non-conventional implicature. Searle (1969) stresses the indirectness of speech act "The chief motivation _ though not the only motivation _ for using these indirect forms is politeness". These traditional views have been availed by other scholars. For instance, Goffman, Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson examined politeness and placed such

phenomena at the appropriate pragmatic place. Those scholars deal with politeness in departure from the cooperative principle. Thus, they try to have their own model of politeness by mean of rules, principles, or maxims.

1.1 Goffman

The traditional approach to examining politeness can be seen in the work of Goffman (1967), when investigating the concept of face in human conversation. He tried to set a universal framework for politeness through face. This universality comes from his definition of face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” Goffman (1967: 213). However, face could be defined as the self-image of a person’s negotiating and/or renegotiating throughout an interaction. The main reason behind such universality as he claimed is that face is an image found in every society since societies change their members. He (Ibid.44) notes that “societies everywhere, if they are to be societies, must mobilize their members as self-regulating participants in social encounters”. Thus, the concept of face functions as a *self-regulator* within two processes: avoidance and remedial process. The former indicates that an interlocutor avoids being a part of an interaction by escaping from getting a negative face. On the other hand, the latter involves one who is effectively involved in keeping face. By this way, a social harmony can be established.

Thus, face seems to be the public image that depends on the presence of interlocutors who are involved in an interaction. Face refers to the social value of not only the speaker and the hearer, but also the value of others. In order for a social interaction to move happily, there should be a mutual relationship between the interlocutors, at least temporarily, which requires respect and acceptance of others. Goffman (1967) differentiates between defensive and protective image of face. In terms of defensive face, the speaker tries to save his/her own face, while protective image involves saving someone else’s face. Hence, these two images are combined at the same time for showing respect ‘*politeness*’ in terms of mutual construct.

2.2 Lakoff

Through his innovative analysis of politeness, Lakoff (1973) gave the politeness theory a new perspective in terms of *sociopragmatic* investigation. Depending on the cooperative principle, she (ibid.) put politeness within the pragmatic rule framework, showing whether it is a pragmatically well-formed utterance or not. Though the cooperative principle is based on the communicative rationality of communication, cooperative principle seems almost un-followed or disobeyed. In order to consider this failure of

cooperative principle, Lakoff (1973) confirmed the pragmatic rules of politeness.

Thus, when dealing with politeness, as the rules assume, it must be treated under basic rules of a given language system. On the other hand, considering politeness in terms of strategies reveals that politeness is an individual user's strategy chosen in advance or determined by the situation. Lakoff as a formalist linguist tries to establish language as a system through adopting pragmatic rules.

Lakoff (1973, 1975) defines the politeness phenomena as a set of strategies preferred by the language users. This shows that the term, 'strategies,' implies variability and choice in context, i.e. there is a repertoire of strategies from which some are selected according to addressee and context.

Polite speech act means that the utterance performed is governed by pragmatic rules of politeness, while non-polite speech act is an utterance performed out of politeness norms. This can occur in a context when politeness is not expected as opposed to rude speech act which appears when politeness is required.

Furthermore, politeness was argued by Lakoff to be '*a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange*' (1990:34). From this, we can observe that there is a focus on the addressee's part. Having proposed the pragmatic rules, she claimed that such rules are greatly affected by three pragmatic factors including the relationship with the addressee, the real world situation, and the degree of imposition he/she may have on the addressee. It is then indicated that formulating politeness manners is reinforced by the needs and concerns of the addressee, which the speaker should take into account.

Two pragmatic rules are proposed by Lakoff for minimising the conflict between the speaker and his/ her addressee. These rules are outlined as follows (2011):

- 1- Be clear
 - 1.1 Maxim of Quantity [state as much information as is needed in the conversation, but not more].
 - 1.2 Maxim of Quality [Only say what you believe to be true based on your own knowledge and evidence].
 - 1.3 Maxim of Relations (be relevant)
 - 1.4 Maxims of Manner
 - 1.5 Be concise, avoid confusing and ambiguous statements

The first rule "Be clear" is included and derived from the cooperative principle as stated above.

- 2- Be polite

2.1 Don't impose

2.2 Give options

2.3 Make others feel good

The second rule "Be polite" refers to the maxim of distance, deference, and camaraderie (Johnstone, 2008). These three maxims, according to Lakoff, should have a balance in interaction since all the three maxims cannot be available at the same time. Once the balance of such maxims is violated, the social behaviour could be perceived as impolite.

2.3 Leech

Leech (1983) adopted an approach different from Lakoff's which is represented in the notion of indirectness. He argues that politeness in maxims are more flexible than rules since they (maxims) are dedicated as a way of showing how politeness serves as a social manner. Maxims of politeness can be adhered to in communication unless when there is a motivation not to do so. Politeness is clarified by Leech (1983) as a group of social performance by which respect and appreciation are created. Politeness also refers to the speakers' tendency to be involved within a social interaction by means of relative harmony, respect, and coordination. Some illocutionary acts are inherently polite such as offers and apology, while others such as orders are not. This means that people do not completely speak politely nor impolitely. However, there are degrees of politeness. The main function of politeness maxims, according to Leech, is to minimise the degree of rudeness and to maximize the degree of politeness. Thus, Leech's maxims, the well-developed approach are categorised as:

(a) Tact, (b) Approbation, (c) Modesty (d) Agreement (e) Sympathy, and (f) Generosity.

The significance of maxims differs from one maxim to another. Furthermore, it is noted that Leech's maxims involve other minor-maxims. Those maxims come in line with the invalidation of disharmony (negative politeness) which seems more important than seeking concord (positive politeness). The maxim of tact affects people's utterances more than that of generosity, whereas modesty maxim is less important than approbation. When speaking, not only one maxim of politeness is adhered to by speakers, but also more than one could be employed.

Leech's (ibid.) maxims of politeness have been evaluated by some scholars as being out of line with the cooperative principle as stated by Grice. In other word, they are not in the same order. More clearly, they are arbitrary. "The CP defines an 'unmarked' or socially neutral presumptive framework for communication as the essential assumption being 'no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason'. Politeness principles

are, however, such principled reasons for deviation” (Brown & Levinson, 1987:455).

Another problematic issue with Leech’s PP is that all the maxims of politeness emerged in different types of speech acts. Leech links his politeness with specific illocutionary acts. Leech (1983) explains that there is a direct relationship between the different maxims of politeness and speech acts. In a way, maxims of politeness are necessary for determining the nature of speech acts. It seems to us that the need for the maxims is only when people want to perform particular kinds of speech acts. However, this is not entirely satisfactory, either, because not all the forms of politeness are needed nor do all people perform the same forms of politeness. Performing polite speech acts or speech acts accompanied with forms of politeness are different according to the situational context.

2.4 Brown and Levinson

The research movement in politeness research has not changed significantly. In the 1980s, politeness theory in terms of Brown and Levinson’s model was considered the more influential one in politeness research until recently. Nevertheless, it has been hugely criticised. Their theory focused on speakers’ communicative intentions. Thus, the nature of communication was the primary focus of their theory. A new perspective was adopted in their model for achieving and understanding politeness principle in terms of many speech acts being basically threatening to face (1987:7). Threatening refers to speech acts which are not beneficial to the speakers’ and/or the addressee’ face desires. The face is divided into two types: positive face and negative face. Therefore, they define these two terms as follows:

Negative face: the desire of every competent adult member for his actions to be unimpeded by others. Positive face: the desire of every member for his wants to be desirable to, at least, some others (Brown and Levinson, 1987:62).

Consequently, the concept of face-threatening act (FTA) is argued by Brown and Levinson (Ibid.67) as a social behaviour threatening speakers’ and/or addressees’ face desires, either positively or negatively.

The interactional activity according to them is well appropriate if the face image is given or maintained by one of the participants. Thus, the interaction between the interlocutors can be evaluated as polite if normal behaviour is given. Also, it is evaluated as over polite if more politeness is involved. However, if less or no politeness is given, it would be assigned as rudeness. For this, Brown and Levinson (1983) established three scales for measuring the degree of politeness. These scales are:

(a) Relative power which refers to the different relation between the addresser and the addressee. The more relative power possessed by one interlocutor, the more the face threat would be. (b) Ranked imposition which refers to the illocutionary act itself. Certain illocutionary acts involve more face threatening potential than others. (c) Social distance which refers to the type of relationship between the interlocutors (speaker and hearer).

“Face” has been accounted by Brown and Levinson as a universal framework in politeness research. Thus, this universality of face has been criticised by other scholars whose criticisms have been directed at the individualistic aspects of Brown and Levinson’s face (Wierzbicka, 1985). Mao (1994) argues that the Brown and Levinson’s account of face was misused because they could not originally recognize the source of face. They claim that their face comes from the English folk term and Goffman’s view of face. However, their identification of face seems to be different or deviant from the original view, particularly one stemming from the Japanese and the Chinese. At the same time, he argues that Brown and Levinson did not investigate politeness in situations where the behaviour of face threats has already taken place.

Another criticism directed against Brown and Levinson’s theory is that it is based on philosophical perspective, particularly on speech act theory and cooperative principle. Hayashi (1996) argues that it is necessary to analyse utterances according to their larger linguistic context in order to have more convincing understanding and description of politeness.

Much criticism was directed to Brown and Levinson’s model involving implicated message, a concept constructed based on Grice’s cooperative principle. According to Jary (1998), such a theory of politeness is supposed to be anticipated in terms of the social effects of certain society on speech act behaviour. Sperber and Wilson (1995) and Fraser (1990) claim that polite norms can normally be unnoticed by the interlocutors. Therefore, we can unintentionally and naturally comply with such norms of polite behaviour.

One perspective of politeness that might be overlooked by Brown and Levinson’s theory is discernment type of politeness proposed by Ide (1989). It is worth mentioning that such new perspective has been accepted by a number of scholars such as Koutlaki (2002) and Spencer-Oatey (2002).

Ide (1989) identifies two types of politeness: volitional politeness and discernment politeness. The former is based on the speaker’s intention and realized by his/her verbal strategies, while the latter rationally depends on the speaker’s social norm or conventions. In addition, it is conveyed by linguistic strategies. A speaker can express his/her intention through volitional politeness to show to what extent he/she can be polite in certain situations. The rationale of volitional politeness is to save face in terms of

using linguistic forms such as honorific expressions. This is because these linguistic forms can function as both encoders and conveyers of the speakers' intention and perception of a message involved in specific situations.

Ide (1989) holds the view that Brown and Levinson's theory puts less focus on the discernment politeness. She argues that such politeness relies heavily on linguistic forms, such as 'honorific principles,' rather than the speaker's preference which is more relevant in Japanese culture. Brown and Levinson's theory deals with honorifics as a negative politeness strategy under the principle of 'give deference'. This has led to viewing both verbal strategy and linguistic forms as one principle, which are actually different in their purpose and means.

Politeness, in terms of Spencer-Oatey's view (2000, 2003), refers to social appropriateness, which cannot be evaluated as inherently impolite or polite. However, it can be assessed as being appropriate and inappropriate depending on the cultural context. The cultural context refers to beliefs, conventions, and social values which have effects on people's behaviours and people's perceptions. She argues that the individual behaviour of each person in specific cultural groups cannot be generalized to the group. Thus, people of that cultural group are likely to behave and perceive in the same way, or at least a similar way.

Spencer-Oatey (2000; 2003) has also criticized Brown and Levinson's cultural view of face. She focuses on rapport management referring to a fact that language is used to maintain social relationships in interaction. The term of face in Spencer-Oatey's view has been abandoned, while the term rapport management has gained focus. This is because rapport, unlike face, focuses more on the balance between the self and others, while face involves a concern of only self. She adds that there are two reasons behind using such rapport management, which are face and sociality rights. Challenging Brown and Levinson's view of positive face, she suggests two aspects to explain people's desire for agreement or approval. The first aspect is that people desire a positive evaluation in terms of personal qualities (quality face). The second aspect is that such evaluation can also be accomplished in terms of social identity such as group leader or friends.

The rapport management involves three interrelated elements: face, sociality rights and obligation, and interactional goals. Subsequently, this indicates that Spencer-Oatey has expanded Brown and Levinson's conceptualization of face. Brown and Levinson's concept of face accounts for personal values, while the latest view of Spencer-Oatey is associated with social value. Thus, this modification can be helpful in terms of establishing better understanding of face in other domains such as discourse analysis.

Nevertheless, her theory of rapport management remains in traditional setting rather than post-modern setting, since it still focuses on face. The concept of rapport management is not argued discursively, but it rather contrasts with other theories like Brown and Levinson (1983, 1987) and Leech (1983).

Furthermore, several empirical researchers such as Cousins (1989), Hofstede (1980), Leung (1988), Bond (1989), and Ting-Toomey (2009) have followed Brown and Levinson's assumption of universality. Some others like Ide (1989), Mao (1995), and Matsumoto (1989) continued with criticizing Brown and Levinson, noting that the latter's model is western-biased. They argue that Brown and Levinson's model is fruitless, in particular when interlocutors want to minimize the weight of a face-threatening act (FTA) to the addressee by using three factors of politeness, namely: power, distance, and imposition.

2. Discursive (Post Modern) Approach

Politeness, as a theory, is a multifaceted area of research seen in linguistics, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. It has been investigated as a subfield of pragmatics which studies meaning in interaction. It has developed rapidly in the last three decades that it has its own devoted journal, called the Journal of Politeness Research. The origin of the scientific study of politeness has first done studies of face and face-work (Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003).

Lately in the 20th century, research in politeness has developed significantly. This development has been represented by scholars' works (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003; Mills, 2003). They (ibid.) suggested new perspectives in dealing with politeness, depending on social concepts, particularly the concept of *habitus* "the set of dispositions to behave in a manner which is appropriate to the social structures objectified by an individual through her/his experience of social interaction" (Watts, 2003:274). Politeness theory within this approach is regarded as a social practice. The theoretical foundation upon which the discursive approach is erected is the assumption that politeness is determined by the speakers' intentions and the addressees' recognition of these intentions successfully or to a certain degree of success.

The following subsections explain some account of politeness in terms of post-modern approach.

3.1 Eelen

With the publication of Eelen's (2001) on A Critique of Politeness, a new school of politeness "postmodern or discursive" approach emerged. Eelen (2001) argues that the conceptualization of politeness could be an

alternative for evaluativity and discursiveness. This new approach involves taking into account the addressee's position and the evaluative movement which is capable of determining both politeness and impoliteness. It is also capable of providing the opportunity for the dynamic view of social relationship between the speaker and the hearer as well as showing the progress and change as a basis to the politeness itself (Eelen, 2001:240). The main aim behind Eelen's account is to expose the nature of politeness given by a speaker and received by a hearer. However, the critical comment on the neglecting of hearer's account is still continued by Eelen, who proposed this even though the hearer is treated as an outstanding member of the interaction in the literature.

Through his 'A Critique of Politeness', serious problems in traditional politeness theories have been argued by Eelen (2001). These problems are considered as the starting point for establishing new analytical research models of politeness. One of the apparent problems listed by Eelen (2001) is the fact that there was no adequate approach for accounting impoliteness by the same strategies that examine politeness. In addition, other problems were also emphasized such as impoliteness, which was viewed as the absence of politeness, especially when someone fails to redress adequately FTA. Impoliteness is also treated as the opposite of politeness. Eelen (2001) deals with politeness as a social practice influenced by Bourdieu (1990), who notes that social practice is the interaction people in the social construction. Depending on this idea of social reality, Eelen (2001) signifies the evaluativity of politeness as a representation of reality. Thus, Eelen (2001) emphasizes the interactional activity of politeness noting: *"notions of politeness is not simply the result of a passive learning process in which each individual internalizes 'the' societal/cultural politeness system, but are rather an active expression of that person's social positioning in relation to others and the social world in general"* (2001: 224).

Then, it is worth mentioning that the problem of ignoring the account of impoliteness in traditional models cannot be generalized to all other approaches. For example, impoliteness has been argued and accounted by Leech (1983). It is commonly true that there is no perfect or complete technique by which we can explain or analyse the communicative interaction undertaken by the people to have impoliteness achieved.

I would argue the applicability of Eelen's claim about the necessity for a model of politeness to deal with impoliteness as it is the case with politeness by following the same strategies. On the other hand, is his view considered a unique model? He claims that relational framework takes into account both politeness and impoliteness. Also, he bears in mind that relational framework accounts for interpersonal relationships model, rather than relational model. Yet, it is still an acceptable idea that both politeness

and impoliteness are closely interrelated with each other unless the level of politeness may be different on the basis of politeness excepted, whether cross culturally or intercultural. Being Arabic, if I told my father to be quiet because I was studying, I would expect more offence from him or even from other family members than if I said this to my youngest brother. Another evidence for the overlapping of politeness and impoliteness is that politeness can be traded off when using sarcastic expressions. For example, uttering 'thank you very much' with an exaggerated tone to an addressee to whom a serious disrespect has been done indicates to that addressee the distance between respect (which is normally met by politeness's 'polite thanks') and the disrespect committed by him/her. However, impoliteness in a relational approach can be evaluated differently, negatively or positively, according to the context of the situation and the speech act performed.

In conclusion, an alternative understanding of politeness with reference to new characteristics of evaluative, variability, and discursiveness should be taken into account when dealing with politeness. Throughout this conceptualization of politeness, the hearer's position is fully taken into consideration for understanding both politeness and impoliteness. This view involves dynamic social relationship, evolution, as well as change as basic to the nature of politeness. The main goal of Eelen's view is to examine the nature of politeness throughout dynamic relation between the speaker and the hearer by his critical evaluation on the hearer's absence.

3.2 Watt (2003)

In the post-modern approach, politeness is defined by Watt (2003) as "*linguistic behaviour that carries a value in an emergent network in excess of what is required by the politic behaviour of the overall interaction (2003:162), or linguistic behaviour that "is perceived to be salient or marked behaviour"* (Locher & Watts, 2005).

Watts (2003) claims that the post-modern approach to politeness emerges as a reaction against Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Also, it undeniably represents a challenge to the current sustainability of politeness research itself. Nevertheless, while the post-modern politeness or discursive approach is concerned with epistemological and ontological conventions underlying this approach, certain contradictions appear. Specifically, the issue is on to what extent (im) politeness can be identified by the analysts without imposing their understanding.

What Watts believes is that politeness is a matter of evaluation in a subjective way. Perceiving polite behaviour may be varied from one person or group to others. In order to remove the ambiguity emerging in perceiving politeness, Watts (2003) suggest different ways of examining politeness.

The main premise of this approach shows that it should be what it means to participants to be polite. This focus on the role of participants in interpreting and evaluating politeness has pushed by Watts and Locher (2005) to distinguish between two orders of politeness. They argue: “*We consider it important to take native speakers’ assessments of politeness seriously and to make them the basis of a discursive, data-driven, bottom-up approach to politeness. The discursive dispute over such terms in instances of social practice should represent the locus of attention for politeness research* (p.16).

There is a difference between the common-sense notion of politeness and the theoretical notion of impoliteness. Watts (2005) identifies that common-sense notion of politeness refers to first-order im/politeness ((im)politeness1), while the latter indicates the second-order im/politeness ((im)politeness2). The first order of politeness includes common sense notions of politeness. It is taken by Watts’s account to match with the different ways in which politeness can be perceived, talked about, and argued by members of a community. Watts (2003) emphasizes that:

“We take first-order politeness to correspond to the various ways in which polite behaviour is perceived and talked about by members of socio-cultural groups. It encompasses, in other words, common sense notions of politeness. Second-order politeness, on the other hand, is a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage (Watts et al., 2005a).

The second order of politeness (politeness2) is the main concern of discursive approach of politeness. However, (im)polite behaviour is assessed and commented by individuals ‘participants’ and not by the ways set by social scientists ‘researchers’ by which they exclude the term (impoliteness) from the everyday interaction and theoretically evaluated by them (Watts, 2003). Accounting politeness in this way seems to be problematic in terms of defining politeness, i.e. the researchers are incapable of defining politeness accurately because the researcher is guided by participants’ understanding of politeness.

I would argue that it is still difficult to recognise the participants’ definition (understanding) of politeness where there is no concrete guidance for that. Watts (2003) identifies “fundamental aspects of what is understood as ‘polite’ behaviour in all [...] cultures”. Polite and politeness terms are emphasized so that their meaning may differ from one language to another. The term polite according to him refers to the polite language in which a person avoids being too direct by showing ‘consideration for others’, a view which is seen in the pragmatic perspective to be similar to Goffman’s view of consideration.

Watts (2003) identifies between polite and politeness focusing on how their meaning may differ from one language to another. The term

“polite” according to him refers to the polite language in which a person avoids being too direct by showing ‘consideration for others’. The polite use of language could be viewed in two ways. Some people may consider language usage as kind of hypocritical or dishonest especially if over-polite words are used. However, others which belong to the general level of politeness, considers polite behaviour as a sign of cultivation. Thus, in his distinctions, Watts (2003) aims at proving that politeness is intrinsically evaluative due to the fact that it is a position in which social practice is done. For this reason, (im)politeness₂ over (im)politeness₁ should be the main concern in the discursive approach.

Kasper and Schmidt's (1996) comment on Watt's distinction arguing that the first order politeness imposes itself in the area of socio-psychology. Determining what is polite and non-polite, he claimed that politeness is a norm of etiquette: “etiquette manuals, the do's and don'ts in socializing interaction, metapragmatic comments on what is and what is not polite, and so forth.” He further explains that this difference between first order politeness and second order politeness determines the relationship between politeness discourses on different degrees of analysis. Kasper (ibid.) attempts to reflect that first order politeness can be distinguished as an observable behaviour that needs social rules to accomplish and realize politeness. However, such types of politeness could also be given the option of explaining it with conceptualizing the second-order politeness.

The second order of politeness seems to be arguable to some extent. Watts and Locher (2005) argue that this order has been put in the wrong place in politeness research due to the fact that it has given the analyst the privilege to interpret and evaluate. Whereas, it is theoretically supposed that the focus should be laid on the hearers' perception of what occurs in natural interactions. This, according to Haugh (2007), conflicts the role of the participant with the analyst and makes the role of the analyst limited to presenting the participants' understanding of interaction.

Additionally, Watts and Locher (2005) first-order and second-order distinction is criticised by Haugh (2007). Such distinction is challenged that “has it succeeded in avoiding continuous uncertainty between the way in which politeness is understood as common sense that is usually used in the everyday social interaction and a more technical notion that can have a value within an overall theory of social interaction” (p.20).

Watts (2003) also describes politeness as a politic behaviour which is necessary for understanding politeness norms. However, it is defined as “*linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the on-going interaction*” (Watts 2003: 19). This view has been criticized by a number of researchers as being not in the first order, but instead it is a theoretical conceptualization.

Through his distinction, Watts (2003) aimed to theorise new descriptive and normative politeness theories in terms of establishing how politeness can be perceived. Also, perceptions are different and they at least varies according to the context of the situation.

Regarding the theoretical framework of the discursive approach, Watts (2003) supports this view by aligning with Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory (1995). This theory is based on the view of recognition of speakers' intentions by the addressees. It means, according to Watts (2003), discursive approach is greatly encoding and decoding the communicative message. However, Arundale (2006) stresses that the view of intentionality is unreliable in a social interaction since the coding and decoding model cannot account for the social interaction activity which is relevant to communication in general and politeness in particular. Thus, this simply clarifies the theoretical inconsistency due to the discursive approach as well as deals with politeness within a social epistemology.

However, I would argue that the significance of politeness¹ and politeness² has been the results of different views. One of these views is that of Watts (2003) which is that politeness is 'developing social theory' rather than a pragmatic view in which understanding communicative behaviour is the starting point of pragmatics. This distinction is quite helpful. Also, researchers can keep their feet firmly on the ground so that they would be able to have a better understanding of concepts such as 'culture' and 'face'. In order to understand these abstractions, there has been an extensive emphasis on the speakers' intended meaning and the hearer's perception, i.e. what does the speaker mean by uttering X? How do the hearers perceives it under the scope of the politeness theory? Therefore, it has become a demanding issue to claim the politeness principle (PP). I would argue that the politeness principle (PP) does not explain the speaker's intention nor the hearer's perception. This is because 'politeness' as a tern does not quite equal comparable expressions in other cultures, but instead politeness functions as a pragmatic behaviour. (Leech, 2003:105). Nonetheless, in spite of these different views, there is a general analogy between them. It is a pragmatic choice which cannot emerge in an emptiness, but in the course of social situations which may make others to expect, hypothesise others' expectations, and how to react towards them. When the social interaction happens, we can note the participants' behaviour, their attitudes, and how they are oriented to politeness. Accordingly, we can adjust our pragmatic choices.

3.3 Mill (2003)

Criticising other approaches for being concerned with the model person rather than taking that person into account with relation to others,

Mill (2003) proposes a community practice framework for examining people's social behaviour. She argues that *"...communities of practice, rather than individuals, negotiate and arbitrate over whether speech acts are considered polite or impolite. Stereotypes of gender may play a role in the decisions that such communities make about politeness, but, nevertheless, individuals within these communities may use such stereotypes strategically to their own advantage. To illustrate these ideas, in an analysis of an incident at a departmental party, I argue that politeness needs to be analysed at a discourse level rather than at the sentence or phrase level"* (2002:1).

Mill's view of community practice is crucially based on the social view of Wenger (1998) who argues that: *A community of practice consists of a loosely defined group of people who are mutually engaged on a particular task and who have a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time* (Wenger 1998: 76, cited in Mills 2003: 30).

Mills (2003) claims that "politeness cannot be understood simply as a property of utterances, or even as a set of choices made only by individuals, but rather as a set of practices or strategies which communities of practice develop, affirm, and contest" (2003: 9). We can therefore, infer from her note that understanding polite behaviour should be analyzed within a social community practice

4.Assessing Discursive Approach

Undeniably, the discursive approach is still a fresh area of research and has not been theoretically expounded in all their aspects. Moreover, what has been tested within the discursive approach has been aligned less directly to the traditional views (*the researcher's own idea*). Nonetheless, in order to have better a understanding of these approaches, there are some issues that need to be considered.

4.1-The focus on politeness1 and politeness2 distinction

Assuming that such distinction is reliable, a question may be posed here, such as what is the nature of the politeness phenomena as a whole? Or how can it be regulated? The problem is that there is no independent definition for politeness2 by the speaker. Both Eelen (2001) and Mills (2003) set methodological strategy for examining politeness from the discursive perspective to take politeness away from semantic area. If we suppose that politeness as a term is not found in all cultures, then a researcher would go examining the speakers' perception and would give their own definitions of politeness in case there is no equivalence for the word politeness in their native language. If there are terms related to politeness in other languages, this relatedness can be interpreted in terms of implicit comparison. As we referred to in the beginning of this paper, Watts (2003) set a definition for

politeness² as “mutually cooperative behavior, considerateness for others, and polished behavior”. By this definition, Watts attempts to generalize this definition to include other languages.

4.2 The general use of norms

The general use of norms in the discursive approach has been controversial among scholars. They criticize such use of norms without denying their existence. Yet, there is a lack of definition for the notion of norms. Eelen (2001:2032-233) calls for flexible definitions for norms, noting that the notion of norms should be better used for purposive issues and used as “versatile argumentative tools”, considering them, norms, as a dynamic understanding entities rather than static. Although this point seems to be valid, it has been argued that the discursive approach does not provide analytical tools for dealing with norms since the post-modern scholars assume that norms are dynamic or in operation. Thus, Eelen (2001:233) stresses that “norms are not straightforward entities, but rather highly versatile argumentative tools, and their nature and operational aspects need to be examined more closely before they can be posited as explanatory concepts and before they can be allocated any scientific role whatsoever”. It is argued that the norms which are the main concerns of the discursive approach are what norms should be done and what is likely to be done (Haugh, 2003). The politeness norms in the discursive approach have been addressed at the social level. It has been found that such norms have been resourced not only from interactional activities such as personal conversations or other online exchanges, but also from ethnographic observations and historical data and native speaker reflection (Haugh, 2011).

It is argued that discursive approach theorists find difficulty with quantitative analysis when the participants’ data (interpretations) are substituted by the researcher’s (analyst) interpretation. Such an issue could result in cancelling the validity of participants’ interpretation and providing one’s own perceptions (Eelen, 2001; Mill, 2003).

Undeniably, there is another difficulty for accessing the participants’ own understanding and perception of certain situations which involves politeness realization. Even interviews and direct elicitation have some limitations to capturing the real perceptions. The analyst, on the other hand, resorts to distort (change) the participants’ interpretations which is unavoidable (Trudgill, 1984). The main concern for post-modern theorists is to consider the participants’ reaction when having their own perception investigated. For this positivist view, we can find that Austin’s “uptake” is significant for the same view of positivism, relevant in the post-modern approach. To that extent, participants, throughout their reactions, can coincide and harmonize with what is going on naturally without seeking to

change or redefine their social behavior. At the same time, the analyst would be without doubt gratuitously challenged, unable to impose over the participants own perceptions.

What concerns the disputed nature of social practice? Eelen theorizes the actual social practice where disagreement about the social practice is given implicitly. Although this disagreement is seen indirectly, one cannot assume it in the first place. She writes that “*markedly front stage settings such as scientific experiments ... tend to provide a more consensual picture of social reality than actual social practice*”. Such disagreement can be found in the act of participants when acting out of norms. If resorting to Austin’s ‘uptake’ to define the force and the meaning and the perceived politeness of the last speaker’s turn, then empirical accounts can also turn up. This leads us to the conclusion that the discursive approach challenge to the empirical norms as an analytical tool will be deemed as practically empty.

4.3 The difficulty of prediction

The post-modern theorists declare the difficulty, if not impossibility, of a prediction in politeness research (Watt: 2003:25). It is argued that prediction may set up a theory including a folk theory, a theory according to Malle (2001) states that “*the human ability to represent, conceptualize, and reason about mind and behaviour is one of the greatest achievements of human evolution and is made possible by a “folk theory of mind”*”. The main concern of the prediction theory is to arrive at satisfactory understanding and interpretation of the situations experienced and which has not so far been experienced. Accordingly, the theories that produce predictions are potentially adapted to a theory of probability. In addition, they are also temporary and their usefulness depends on the nature of data. They are practical to the extent that they are approved by those data.

We are left with the assumption that rejecting the concept of prediction means refuting the opportunity of theorizing politeness in all its levels. In this case, we can say that the analyst’s task is only describing the participants’ role within an interaction. Thus, by this description, nothing is added to or changed in the theory of politeness. Similarly, the aim of the analyst is not for predicting what is going on in the participants’ encounters. Even sometimes the analyst predicts based on his/her folks depending on the folk theory. This can be validated when they are aware about metalinguistic questions concerning politeness. Therefore, the analyst will be incapable of reclaiming the participants’ real or possible knowledge regarding politeness.

5. Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated two approaches of the politeness theory. First, traditional approach, which focuses on speakers’ utterances and the

role of those utterances in the analysis of politeness, depends on the cooperative principle and speech act theory. Second, post-modern or discursive view has been devoted to examining how to conceptualize politeness. This is done by emphasizing the role of hearers in evaluating and also focusing on a large number of discourse data depending on social views like Bourdieuan habitus. In spite of the difference between the two approaches, they still both depend on theoretical views due to the fact that they always strive to support the data they analyse, a fact which makes politeness implied as a social phenomenon.

Reviewing these two approaches does not aim to choose which one is more appropriate or useful than the other. However, it is possible to suggest that both approaches are complementary. Each approach provides views for examining politeness at different levels. Traditional theories of politeness represent the coarsest level of other theories. Traditional theories, in spite of being criticised a lot, focus on formal face forming potential of certain expressions as a part of the socio-linguistic system with regards to the relation of that expression in that system.

Through the course of discussing the two approaches, an outstanding shift in politeness research emerges, i.e. politeness should be examined within discursal level rather than utterance. But studying (im)politeness in this way might arise in the actual discourse of some ontologies that could be taken e.g. the role of the analyst towards the participants. Therefore, (im)politeness theory should consider the role of the participants, and the analyst should be considered to avoid personal understanding in interpreting a spoken discourse.

Moreover, we captured a big similarity between Watts's and Eelen's theory of politeness. Both divide politeness into two senses: politeness1, which refers to what we expect about polite and impolite performances; Politeness2, which refers to universal views about the concept of politeness. Politeness has been categorised by Watts as a social construct, which differs from one culture to another. According to Watts and Eelen, politeness is not completely universal, but it is affected and constituted by socio-cultural values. Therefore, a social behaviour is ranging on a continuum of politeness.

Finally, by addressing the criticism directed against discursive approach, we argue that this approach is of utmost significance to the research in politeness. It should be seen as more than merely a critical approach, but an analytical approach as well.

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