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## **Bringing historical contexts and language use together, or how to do historical sociopragmatics**

Jonathan Culpeper (ed.). 2011. *Historical Sociopragmatics*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

*Historical sociopragmatics*, edited by Jonathan Culpeper, is a collection of five articles, preceded by the editor's introduction which sets out the research agenda for the book. The papers were published in *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 10(2) (2009) as a thematic volume. Two years later this collection appeared as a monograph in the Benjamins Current Topics series, whose aim is to broaden the audience for especially topical research themes which have so far been presented only to the readers of a specific journal. The decision to republish this material already suggests a fresh perspective on language use in historical contexts and a ground-breaking character of the methodologies involved. The contributions to the book skilfully combine qualitative and quantitative methods and strive for a systematic approach to language use as seen from macro- and micro-perspectives in specific social, historical and pragmatic contexts.

The introduction is a crucial reading before one delves into subsequent chapters. Jonathan Culpeper sets the scene for historical sociopragmatics, a newly emerging sub-discipline of historical pragmatics, within a larger context of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, by carefully assessing the overlaps, affinities and differences between various frameworks proposed for the analysis of language in a social context. He goes back to the definitions proposed for the scope of pragmatics and its subfields by Leech (1983) and to the scope of historical pragmatics and its subdisciplines outlined by Jacobs and Jucker (1995). A scrutiny of these fields and their (frequently fuzzy) boundaries opens up another path of inquiry: starting with the context and correlating its features with linguistic choices and communicative effects. In other words, historical sociopragmatics "concerns itself with any interaction between specific aspects of social context and particular historical language use that leads to pragmatic meanings" (p. 4). The chapters in the volume demonstrate that through the reconstruction of contextual factors on the basis of historical material and relating them to linguistic choices, one can discover regularities and patterns which characterize historical communicative events synchronically and also diachronically. The authors' engagement with the data varies from more qualitative to more quantitative, but it is one of the characteristic features of the field that one approach always feeds into and relies on the other.

The first chapter in the collection, "Structures and expectations: A systematic analysis of Margaret Paston's formulaic and expressive language", by Johanna L. Wood, takes a qualitative approach. The author proposes an adaptation of Fairclough's Critical Discourse

Analysis framework (1993) for the study of historical letter writing, placing the text in a discursive practice context, which, in turn, is embedded in social practice conditions (p.14). On each of these plains, certain "structures of expectations" emerge (Tannen 1993), which find a reflection in the linguistic choices employed in the construction of a particular text, in this case - a personal letter. Medieval letter-writing is typically perceived as a highly conventional genre where the scribe follows a prescribed model. Wood manages to trace Margaret Paston's own linguistic choices through a careful examination of the mismatches between the expected usage and the actual text of the letter penned down by a scribe. Susan M. Fitzmaurice in her chapter "The sociopragmatics of a lover's spat: The case of the eighteenth-century courtship letters of Mary Pierrepont and Edward Wortley", aims to reconstruct pragmatic meanings on the basis of implicature and inference embedded in an exchange of letters between clandestine correspondents. Similarly to the previous chapter, three contextual layers are recovered here to reconstruct and understand the context: co-text, situational context and historical context. It is assumed, according to the Communicative Principle of Relevance (Sperber and Wilson 2004), that the participants in an exchange share key reference points and contextual assumptions, which allow them to dynamically reconstruct the intended reading in spite of ambiguities and implicit meanings. In a close analysis of four consecutive letters exchanged by the couple, Fitzmaurice interrogates the intended meanings in a systematic manner, employing a series of subroutines: from disambiguating the expressions, through resolution of reference and bringing in context (*saturation*, Huang 2007), to concept construction on the part of the recipient. The author of the chapter is careful not to let her knowledge of subsequent events skew the synchronic reading. Her interpretation of the three letters by Edward gains merit in view of the addressee's response: Mary answers the explicit and also the implicit questions revealed by the study.

In the next contribution, "Altering distance and defining authority: Person reference in Late Modern English", Minna Nevala uses data from eighteenth-century letters (the *Corpus of Early English Correspondence Extension*, CEECE) to investigate the construction of social identities through personal reference. The author recognizes two levels of historical sociopragmatics: the macro-level (social, socio-cultural, sociological factors) and micro-level (personal, situational, stylistic factors) and looks at how deictic elements, such as terms of address and personal pronouns, construct the social space and its users. Nevala works with the assumption that deictic elements simultaneously situate not only the hearer (addressee) but also the speaker (writer) in social hierarchy and in relation to each other. She discovers that *friend* is a term reserved for the closest circle of correspondents but it is also employed strategically for status-formation in asymmetrical power relations. She also explores third-

person self- and addressee-reference as an indicator of in- and out-group membership or as a face-saving device. A juxtaposition of public and private correspondence reveals similarities: in both cases the selection of deictic tools creates the stance of the writer as well as that of the addressee.

Self-reference comes to the fore again in the next chapter, "Variation and change in patterns of self-reference in early English correspondence" by Minna Palander-Collin. This study uses corpus-driven and corpus-based methods to extract the uses of the first person pronoun from sixteenth- and eighteenth-century gentlemen's letters in CEECE. Self-reference as a stance-creating device should be on the rise in correspondence, according to findings based on ARCHER (Biber and Finegan 1989, Biber 2004). This study confirms the expected trend but also provides a wider contextualization for the employment of the first-person pronoun. *I* is a special indexical which works to construct multiple meanings and set the writer in various roles (p. 86-87) and to situate him physically and morally by pertaining to his duties, obligations and rights. Repetitive appearance of *I* in the same co-text and context is revealed by the lexical bundle, or cluster method. To tame rather diverse material rendered by automatic extraction of repetitive clusters with *I*, Palander-Collin designs six functional categories to reflect the degree of formulaicity of a given cluster. In a comparison of two synchronic states it turns out, for instance, that later letters contain more attitude clusters and fewer request markers with the pronoun *I* than earlier correspondence. Overall, the pronoun combines most readily with specific groups of verbs, most notably with auxiliaries (which, unfortunately, does not prompt a more extensive discussion in the chapter) and with mental states. Also, gentlemen's letters to family differ in terms of the frequency and character of self-reference clusters from correspondence in professional contexts where *I*-clusters are used to maintain formulaic humility discourse and deference.

The volume closes with a chapter by Dawn Archer and Jonathan Culpeper, "Identifying sociophilological usage in plays and trial proceedings (1640-1760): An empirical approach via corpus annotation". The authors add a clearly delineated methodological dimension to the tools of historical pragmatics: the "context-to-form/function" mapping, or sociophilology. The chapter serves to showcase this novel approach and takes the reader step-by-step through definitions, corpus annotations, applications and methodological decisions. A sociophilological study thus starts with corpus methods to establish what is statistically characteristic of "particular constellations of social categories", or, in other words, what elements make up the context of a communicative event. *Key elements (local contextual norms)* are established with reference to "more *general norms*" (p. 111, italics original), similarly to keywords in a corpus linguistic study. This stage requires sociopragmatic and semantic annotation in the corpus, which is labour-intensive, as the authors concede. Still,

with the use of part-of-speech tagging and semantic tagging (CLAWS and USAS respectively; both tools developed at Lancaster University) it becomes possible to identify key communicative elements on the level of word, part of speech and semantic domain. To illustrate this method in practice, Archer and Culpeper explore the following asymmetrical dyads: female and male examinees vs examiners in trial proceedings, and mistresses and masters vs female and male servants in play-texts in the *Sociopragmatic Corpus*, a subsection of the *Corpus of English Dialogues* (1560-1760). The authors are able to highlight specific salient features of communication in each of these exchanges, e.g. the striking salience of first-person reference in the language of witnesses, which then differs contextually between females and males. It thus becomes possible to study contextual identity creation in a systematic and replicable manner.

In sum, *Historical sociopragmatics* contains original research and poses crucial methodological questions for the field of historical pragmatics. A clear construction of individual contributions, with plenty of signposting, makes the book easy to use with students and can showcase this new approach in a coherent and persuasive manner. Even though the research presented here was carried out several years ago for the initial publication in the journal, the methodological tools and software (e.g. semantic annotation for historical texts or VARD used to standardize varied spelling) are still being employed, developed and improved. In this volume, we witness the new subdiscipline of historical pragmatics at its inceptive stages and we are better equipped to observe its further growth. It is true that the chapters here come across as homogenous in terms of their temporal and textual span, typically dealing with the period between the late fifteenth and the eighteenth century and with correspondence (four chapters). This is a reflection of the availability of data and tools which have been developed for working with historical texts so far. Early modern printing and writing are less demanding in terms of their physical form for a researcher who attempts to create a digital repository or a corpus. They are relatively closer to the English of the present, which makes linguistic analyses easier. This is not to say that the projects recounted in the volume, or developing in the field of historical sociopragmatics in general, are easy to carry out. Rather, they work as a testing ground for more difficult applications, for instance to earlier medieval texts or genres other than letters, as the final chapter by Archer and Culpeper already shows.

The strength of the volume lies in its methodological rigour. The editor and all contributors pay utmost attention to the theoretical ramifications of the historical sociopragmatic approach, bringing the notion of context to the fore of their studies. At the same time they are sensitive to the neighbouring disciplines and approaches, as well as recognize difficulties embedded in reconstructing context for historical texts, be it on the basis of various external

materials, corpus methods or more qualitative means of recovering interconnected layers of meanings. How to define context and what tools to apply to relate it to language use is still open to tests and discussion, which ensures a lively future for historical sociopragmatics.

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**Joanna KOPACZYK**

Research Interests: Historical Discourse Analysis, Historical Pragmatics, Historical Sociolinguistics

Joanna Kopaczyk: Review on *Historical Sociopragmatics*. 2011.  
In PRAGMATICS.REVIEWS 2014.2.2

## Facework in online communities of practice

Jenny Arendholz. 2013. *(In)Appropriate Online Behavior. A pragmatic analysis of message board relations*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

The linguistic analysis of Computer Mediated Communication has been all the rage for the last two decades. And for good reasons: the dialectic way in which the traditional thesis and antithesis of orality and scriptuality are “aufgehoben” in CMC is certainly interesting, and the plethora of new genres that CMC has spawned provide ample new fields for research. Jenny Arendholz’s monograph on the genre of message board communication is positioned within these fields. A few characteristics of the book might seem peculiar to an Anglophone audience, such as the fact that only the last two of seven main chapters of the monograph subtitled “a pragmatic analysis of message board relations” are actually dedicated to such an analysis, while most of the preceding five chapters are theory-heavy, but hardly contain any concrete analyses. The acknowledgments section thankfully clarifies that the monograph was originally submitted as a PhD thesis at a German university, which explains its culturally determined structure.

Not that there is that much wrong with the theory chapters at all. After a short introduction, chapters 2 and 3 give a technical and a social perspective respectively on online network communication. The unclear genre distinction between message boards and fora (pp. 13-17) is instructive, although the author’s decision to define her object of analysis, the UK based online community *The Student Room*, as a message board rather than a forum (simply going by the layout), does not appear as much of a logical necessity for the reader as for the author. Chapter 3 introduces *The Student Room* as a community of practice and has an unfortunately very short and preliminary discussion of implicit and explicit multi-addressing so typical for online message boards and fora (p. 44). “Multi-addressed”, by the way, is certainly not a bad English translation for the German adjectival term “mehrfachadressiert” (p. 43), it definitely beats the perceived internationalism “polylogue” that the author also uses in the book (e.g. p. 185). “Polylogue” is not only an etymological abomination, a wrong derivation of “dialogue” (the etymological equivalent of “monokini” for a bikini without a top), it is also hardly as much of an English internationalism as German academics in linguistics and media studies seem to think.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the concepts of (im)politeness and face. Anyone who knows what sort of terminological snake-pit politeness research has become over the last decades can only congratulate the author for the sovereign way in which she deals with the ideologically sensitive f-word (I mean “face”, of course), coming up with a handy working model of face

and facework which is rather a good tool for her own analysis (pp. 75-77). Arendholz's adapted model of relational work (p. 97), unfortunately does not appear quite as unquestionable, even in the context of her own analysis. Why exactly "mock-impolite" behaviour would be "positively marked" as banter, but "overpolite" or "mock-polite" behaviour, on the other hand, only appears as "negatively marked", is not entirely clear, all the more since some of the examples the author characterises as "mock-impolite" could easily be understood as really impolite by another observer (e.g. p.193), while "mock-polite" utterances might be seen as banter (e.g. p. 199).

Chapter 6, "Prelude to the analysis: gathering contextual factors" is also a bit of an anticlimax. Not only is the factor of the board moderators as arbiters of "appropriateness" and their power to block contributors (and possibly delete contributions they consider inappropriate) not clearly taken account of – deleted contributions would certainly give a biased impression of the average appropriateness of contributions to the board. The courage that the author has proven in her dealing with the f-word *face* seems to have deserted her when it comes to the c-word *culture*. That "cultural background" is only seen as a personal factor, while "social norms shared between interlocutors" as an interpersonal factor are not seen as equally "cultural" (p. 126) and the relation between "communities of practice" and "subcultures" is not discussed are probably not faults that would have to be pointed out in a PhD thesis. However, the monograph presents itself in the grown-up context of John Benjamins' *Pragmatics and Beyond* series, and here slightly different criteria must be applied.

The analyses of thread starts (chapter 7) and thread interaction (chapter 8) are good, within the limits of the author's theoretical framework as discussed above. One aspect sorely missed is any in-depth discussion of addressivity in CMC – not in the wide Bakhtinian sense of the term, but more in – although not entirely restricted to – the narrower sense of Christopher Werry's seminal article of 1996 "Linguistic and interactional features of Internet Relay Chat" (a text that actually appears in the bibliography of the Arendholz's book). A lot of questions of cultural and subcultural appropriateness of individual thread contributions analysed by the author could have arguably been answered better if she had taken the often subtle changes of addressivity within such contributions into account, such as addressivity to a single online interlocutor, multi-addressed utterances and generic use of address (such as generic "you").

As far as the paratexts of the monographs are concerned, it is absolutely commendable that the author made the effort of compiling name and subject indices, although it is not immediately clear why the latter has an entry for "postmodernism" but lacks one for "address[ivity]". The list of references is extensive, although not overly so, and it seems to

indicate little editing of the original PhD thesis for the monograph published in 2013 that, in a fast-moving field such as CMC research, the most recent works cited are four texts from 2011. All in all, the text is well readable, and typos (such as the renaming of Werner Kallmeyer as “Kallenmeyer”, p. 276) as well as mistakes that are possibly based on L1 German interference (such as “a bad record” for “a bad reputation”, p. 263) are few and far between.

Within its limits and with its limitations, the monograph is a valuable contribution to CMC pragmatics research that successfully tackles a number of important problems (such as the definition of online genres, communities of practice and facework).

**Heinz KRETZENBACHER**

His research interests include: pragmatics, terms of address

Heinz Leonhard Kretzenbacher: Review on *(In)Appropriate Online Behavior. A pragmatic analysis of message board relations*. 2013. In PRAGMATICS.REVIEWS 2014.2.2

## **Conflating Studies of Political Humour Discourse and Popular Entertainment Culture**

Villy Tsakona, Diana Elena Popa (eds.). 2011. *Studies in Political Humour*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

The premise laid out in the introduction of *Studies in Political Humour* describes humour as a set of antagonistic forces: one force seeks to destabilise the political status quo by pointing to alternatives; the other force counters with a reinforcement of dominant views and puts value on social stability. Overarching questions are about what happens when these two forces clash; for example, whether they point researchers toward a need to discuss the basic nature of political systems rather than contemporary particularities, and if political humour is an effective means to achieve and rate sociocultural change in society. As a result, political humour remains a problematic instrument of critique in political discourse.

According to Tsakona and Popa, the inherent ambiguity of political humour also explains why researchers in the field tend to focus on either the subversive or reinforcing side rather than putting both in dialogue with each other. The editors attempt to bridge this gap. Their examples are case studies from specific national contexts across Europe, which rely on tools from discourse analysis and performance studies and input from media such as television and theatre. The conclusion is that in political humour seriousness usually wins out over absurdity, leading ultimately to an equilibrium or “stabilisation of conflict”.

The book is divided into three parts. Each part contributes to a shared understanding of political humour. Chapters two, three, four, and five focus on the ways in which politicians use humour to engage their opponents outside the rules of “serious” discourse. Ralph Müller describes in chapter two how German parliamentarians laugh at and not with each other to draw boundaries between factions. Argiris Archakis and Villy Tsakona, and Marianthi Georgalidou respectively, discuss the role of humour in Greek politics as a strategy of conflict management in chapters three and four. In chapter five, Marta Dynel presents a study on superiority humour. She analyses verbal attacks in political debates airing on Polish broadcast television.

In part two, chapters six, seven, and eight deal with political humour produced by the media and individual artists for public entertainment. Engaging society in politics via political satire is the main point. Diana Elena Popa, for instance, elaborates in chapter six on the benefit of an animated television series for the budding democracy of post-Communist Romania. In chapter seven, Clare Watters investigates Silvio Berlusconi’s satirical impersonation by comedian Sabina Guzzanti. Efharis Mascha traces the tradition of European anti-fascist

humour in chapter eight. All three find that political humour can serve to undo constraints on public amusement, which were put in place by the political establishment.

Part three includes chapters nine, ten, and eleven. Here, discussions seek to gauge the usefulness of political humour in measuring change in society and the political climate. In chapter nine, Liisi Laineste argues that Estonian ethnic jokes and their adoption into the country's political rhetoric point to a shift in the national demographic. Vicky Manteli follows with an insightful analysis of the containment of radical voices via humorous theatre in chapter ten. Chapter eleven serves the editors as a final note in lieu of a separate conclusion. Tsakona and Popa end the book by stressing the varieties of political humour, which researchers have yet to explore.

On the whole, *Studies in Political Humour* is well rounded. The book guides both expert and general readers through a range of discussions about political humour. The applications, functions, and limitations of political humour and the difficulty of using it to communicate values and positions between parts of society become especially apparent in the concluding remarks of Tsakona and Popa. Extending the editors' reflections would come in handy here as a starting point for further study in national environments. Those interested in the political dimension of humour and European politics will find the book a very helpful resource.

**Benjamin NICKL**

Research interests: cultural studies, European migration, interdisciplinary approaches to humour.

Benjamin Nickl: Review on *Studies in Political Humour*. 2011.  
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## **Politeness calls – re-exploring the use of English thanking formulae in radio phone-ins from New Zealand and Britain**

Sabine Jautz. 2013. *Thanking Formulae in English. Explorations across varieties and genres*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

1. Thanking formulae in English from a new angle: aims and methods in exploring them “across varieties and genres”

This monograph presents itself as an aspiring corpus-based approach to forms and functions of thanking formulae (henceforth TF) as occurring within two variational linguistic frames, i.e. British and New Zealand English.

In six meticulously divided chapters containing 44 descriptive tables and four figures, the author gives intriguing interpretive insights into how, where and why TF are applied in spoken discourse, using data from two acknowledged corpora, i.e. *The British National Corpus* (BNC, URL 1) and *The Wellington Corpus of Spoken New Zealand English* (WSC, URL 2). Adopting a form-to-function approach, she draws her pragmatic deductions from the analysis of occurring forms, options of syntactic positioning and the semantically bleached and routine nature often displayed by TF, before stepping on to the functional level of analysis (Chapter 4).

One further chapter is dedicated to what the author refers to as the genre of radio texts (Chapter 5). Excerpting all relevant phone-in dialogues, she arrives at a specified subcorpus covering almost 20% (i.e. about 180,000 words) of the complete data. By means of 43 select examples, Jautz primarily shows that, particularly in radio phone-ins, TF take on the main function of discourse organization, frequently being used by the host with the goal of concluding the conversation (p. 231).

After this brief introductory summary of Jautz’s dissertation, the following sections shall further outline and discuss the qualitative and quantitative relevance of her corpus data, also going into variational differences revealed (Section 2), the author’s approach to interlocking TF and the politeness models by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Leech (1983) and Watts (2003: Section 3), and her carving out the functions assumed by TF in radio texts (Section 4). Concluding remarks are given in Section 5.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whilst discussing various functions and forms of verbally expressing gratitude in this review, my own personal thanks is due to Rüdiger Hahn (*Pragmatics Reviews*) and Piotr Jagodziński (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań) for content- and style-related feedback.

## 2. Thanking formulae in the BNC and the WSC: A discussion of the corpus data, its elaboration and significance<sup>2</sup>

Jautz's corpus-browse for eight different (phrasings of) TF reveals 887 matching expressions of gratitude,<sup>3</sup> which she first analyses with regard to their syntactic realizations, their collocation with benefactors and their positions in the conversational threads displayed in general, before she turns to their evaluation on a functional level. Jautz assesses the data by context-dependently interpreting the role of TF in organizing the ongoing discourse, in fulfilling a phatic function, and in responding to material goods and services on the one hand or to immaterial goods and psychological support on the other hand.<sup>4</sup>

While expressive observations are made in the course of the author's extensive analysis of the data, which is gathered in a number of descriptive tables facilitating for the reader to keep track of the numerous figures and quantitative findings,<sup>5</sup> some inferences drawn from the data lack argumentative depth and tend to be redundant as well as overgeneralizing at times. Jautz, e.g., argues that the function of discourse organization conducted by TF appears to be of "paramount importance in British English, while New Zealanders care more for interpersonal relations" (p. 207).<sup>6</sup> Such remarks, which occur at several places in the book, give the impression of Jautz arguing along rather stereotypical lines.<sup>7</sup>

Jautz's assessment of the data must also be re-evaluated with regard to the corpus's size and composure, which have clearly led to discrepancies in her line of argumentation. For example, the BNC reveals many more instances of TF in response to the receiving of material goods than the WSC does, which, however, is simply due to the fact that British

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<sup>2</sup> Jautz's introduction into corpora and corpus linguistics covering 5 pages (51-56) seems too basic for a linguistically experienced readership, whom she claims to address.

<sup>3</sup> She chose the items on the basis of earlier works by Aijmer 1996, Eisenstein and Bodman 1986, Okamoto and Robinson 1997, as well as Schauer and Adolphs 2006 (also cf. her Table 3.2).

<sup>4</sup> Only the sequence of functions Jautz looks into is not entirely stringent, since, as a reader, I would have expected her to discuss the contents of chapters 4.3.3 and 4.3.4 prior to those in 4.3.1 and 4.3.2. After all, the former two represent what Jautz regards as their conventionally prototypical use (cf. 132).

<sup>5</sup> Her investigation of TF being used "jokingly or ironically" (Chapters 4.3.5 and 4.3.7.5) is unsatisfyingly short and superficial.

<sup>6</sup> In 2.5 Jautz provides a very perfunctory and dispensable overview of the phonetics, morphology, vocabulary and orthography of New Zealand English, after introducing the chapter with a poorly chosen quote from *Asterix in Britain* (*Asterix comic book series*, 8 (1971), which anachronistically situates the variety of British English into Caesar's time.

<sup>7</sup> Also see, e.g., her chapter heading for 4.4, i.e. "The politeness of thanking formulae in BrE and NZE".

radio phone-ins award prizes for featured quizzes, which is apparently not done in New Zealand (133-134; also cf. 5.3.3).

While these conceptual and cultural differences in radio phone-in formats may raise the question of the actual applicability of the two corpora chosen for this study, they nevertheless make clear that TF take on partly divergent functions in both variational frames.

### 3. Thanking formulae as “prime examples of linguistic politeness” (p. 72)? Revisiting the data against the background of politeness theories

It has to be criticized that Jautz’s use of *politeness* and *polite*, despite her dealing with the linguistic aspects of politeness theory, is rather ambiguous, as she applies them interchangeably referring to both the linguistic or pragmatic concept, as well as the non-linguistic but conventional everyday concept of etiquette (e.g., “Calling someone a witch is not considered nice and polite” (p. 263)).

Challenging three prominent politeness models, i.e. by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), Leech (1983, 2007) and Watts (2003), Jautz’s main goal is to tackle the question, “whether the predictions which can be made in three different frameworks of politeness regarding thanking routines can be empirically verified” (p. 33). She lists five predictions to be checked and retains this sequence throughout her work: On the basis of Brown and Levinson, Jautz firstly investigates whether TF threaten the speaker’s negative face by acknowledging a debt of gratitude and, secondly, whether TF are mostly used as positive politeness strategies. Based on Leech’s model (1983), Jautz then asks whether TF typically are realizations of the maxim of approbation, and whether they have indeed a convivial function with regard to their coincidence of illocutionary and social goals. Finally, the model by Watts (2003) is the springboard for the author to investigate whether TF more often than not show politic rather than polite verbal behaviour.<sup>8</sup>

Jautz correctly emphasizes the fact that the three “chosen frameworks”<sup>9</sup> taken into account “are not complementary” (p. 191f.). They are thus not supposed to paint a “complete picture of all politeness-related aspects” (p. 192), but do draw attention to the fact that politeness must not be seen as an absolute concept, but only as a pragmatic phenomenon always to be

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<sup>8</sup> The models by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) and Leech (1983, 2007) take up much more space in Jautz’s study than Watts’ (cf. her Table 3.5). In 4.4.4 she does, however, partly explain this by the fact that Watts’ (2003) model is the least applicable to the TF-material, as the observer simply lacks contextual background information enabling them to adequately evaluate specific factors of politeness (p. 191).

<sup>9</sup> One may discuss, whether the term *framework* should be considered inappropriate with reference to Watts (2003) in particular, who principally takes a discursive – and thus *per definitionem* anti-theoretical – approach to (im-)politeness research.

looked at in relation to and dependence from the subjective perception of the situational context it occurs in (cf. Leech 2007: 174).

In Chapter 4.5, Jautz digresses into a discussion of the correlation between the interlocutors' status and the degree of politeness being thus applied (cf. 4.5). Only preliminary findings are presented here, which is mostly due to the fact that the corpora provide rather sketchy background information about the speakers (cf. 77), not allowing for any deep insights into the usage of TF dependent from speaker status. She thus only scratches the surface of potential interpretation, distinguishing between the status categories superior, inferior and equal, which – if these observations are to be deepened in further studies – have to be differentiated much more explicitly.

In Chapter 5.4 Jautz draws again on all three politeness concepts and the five major check points (see above) set up for the use of TF in radio texts,<sup>10</sup> aiming for any differences compared to the analysis of the complete corpus material in 4.4. As one of the major revelations she finds that positive politeness strategies are implemented by 91.11% of all TF in the radio data, which is even a higher percentage than for the complete corpus (p. 255-256). This, according to Jautz, "is not surprising [...as t]hey represent the default case when expressing gratitude". She hypothesizes "that it is very much according to both hosts' and callers' wishes in the given situations to establish or stress common ground" (p. 260).

#### 4. "[G]enre does make a difference" (p. 283): thanking formulae in radio texts<sup>11</sup>

Jautz grounds her choice of genre, i.e. radio phone-ins, in Chapter 5 on the perception that these are samples of "institutional talk", employing specific functions of TF – an assumption based on studies by Aijmer 1996, Clark and French 1981, and Schneider 2007, who also discerned that TF are frequently used as (pre-)closing signals in telephone conversations. What also sustains her choice of 'genre' is Jautz's observation that the nature of participant roles in radio talk context is necessarily shaped by the fact that there is an asymmetrical relation of status and power between host and caller. This standard precondition "result[s] in unequal possibilities in conversational management" (p. 44).

Jautz's approach is again parallel to her analytic steps in Chapter 4, conducting an insightful form-to-function mapping along the same posts, not only sustaining the immediate

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<sup>10</sup> Jautz again displays a redundant style of presentation when bringing up again the basic principles and assumptions of the models (face-threats etc.) included (one and the same quote from Watts (2005: 50) is even given verbatim twice, i.e. on pages 29 and 272. She furthermore re-quotes example (4.66) as (5.41) and also then arrives at the same conclusion as in Chapter 4, which makes the reader wonder about the additional value of this discussion.

<sup>11</sup> It appears that Jautz is using the latter term interchangeably for *radio phone-ins* and *radio talk*.

connection between form and function of TF, but also confirming what earlier studies (e.g., Aijmer 1996; Eisenstein and Bodmann 1986; Leech 2007; Norrick 1978; Okamoto and Robinson 1997) have suggested: Adding a benefactor or intensifiers to a TF – which is particularly often done in the WSC data – contributes to an utterance being understood as more polite (p. 222). Due to the relatively small number of words gathered in her radio talk subcorpus, however,<sup>12</sup> most other findings are not statistically significant (p. 219) or further deliberated.<sup>13</sup> This is, with the exception of the expressive quantitative result, that, formally, “the ratio of the [TF] found in the two varieties of English is much more imbalanced in the radio texts than for all texts taken together” (p. 221).

#### 5. Jautz’s approach to thanking formulae in English: an appreciative conclusion

The title of this book does not live up to the reader’s expectations, as, for one thing, there are no more than two varieties investigated standing behind the phrasing “explorations across varieties and genres”. For another thing, there may certainly be various genres in the two corpora she investigates, but since she does not include any genre-related approach and misses to exhaustively define her own use and understanding of this highly debatable term before applying it to radio texts (except for a citation of Swales 1990), the title should rather have contained a specific reference to radio phone-ins or to politeness theory, the importance of which the author thus undermines herself for her work. After all, one major revelation rooted in the intertwining of politeness theories on the one hand and the contrastive analysis of BNC and WSC corpus data on the other is that politeness theory in general has so far been highly limited due to it being primarily based on British English data. According to Jautz,

[i]t can be generally concluded that British expressions of gratitude conform more to the predictions and expectations based on the relevant literature than the ones from New Zealand. (p. 206)

Thus, despite some argumentative weaknesses<sup>14</sup> and obvious truths stated,<sup>15</sup> Jautz’s study nevertheless is an inspiring read, well-structured and parallel in the arrangement and

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<sup>12</sup> The subcorpus’s size is mentioned multiple times (cf. pp. 211, 212, 221, 242, 280, 290, 291).

<sup>13</sup> For instance, Jautz mentions that all instances of *cheers* in the BNC occur in radio texts, but does not explain what this suggests.

<sup>14</sup> Repetitive wordings and sequential recital of figures somewhat darken what Jautz actually wishes to highlight: The modification *significant(ly)* with regard to the data, for instance, is used excessively (e.g., pp. 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161 etc.) and thus tends to render her evaluations void at times.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., Jautz, based on her variational investigation, comes to the conclusion that “‘English’ is not ‘English’” (p. 287).

presentation of elaborated criteria set up by the author herself. Amongst further noteworthy assets of the book are the detailed quantitative itemization and the many insightful and context-related discussions of the data, pointing out quite a number of formal and functional characteristics of TF that have been overlooked so far.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, this study contributes to linguistic research on TF in spoken English – with radio phone-ins certainly representing an abundance of linguistic research potential.<sup>17</sup> Finally, Jautz's dissertation takes new and ambitious perspectives on the young and promising field of Variational Pragmatics and is able to show that thanking and TF do in fact significantly differ in the two varieties under investigation.

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<sup>16</sup> Jautz had two earlier papers published on the exact same topic her present monograph deals with (i.e. in 2008 and 2009), which she does not refer to, though (but cf. this bibliography).

<sup>17</sup> Jautz refers to a number of highly valuable works dealing with phone-ins, but misses to cite e.g. Norma E. Verwey's monograph on *Radio call-ins and covert politics: a verbal unit and role analysis approach*. (Aldershot [et al.]: Avebury, 1990), dealing with Canadian and British phone-in material.

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**Monika KIRNER**

Research interests: Historical semantics, historical pragmatics

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