Beyond the micro-level in politeness research

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Abstract

Politeness research to date has generally adopted one of two views: the “traditional” view based on the dual premises of Grice’s Co-operative Principle and speech act theory (Lakoff 1973, Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978], Leech 1983), or the “post-modern” view, which rejects these premises and substitutes them by an emphasis on participants’ own perceptions of politeness (politeness1) and on the discursive struggle over politeness (Eelen 2001, Mills 2003, Watts 2003). Contrasting these two views, this article considers not only their points of disagreement, but, crucially, points where the two views coincide, bringing to light their common underlying assumptions. It then goes on to show how, departing from these common assumptions, a third direction for politeness studies, the “frame-based” view, is possible. Following an outline of the frame-based view, it is suggested that this fits in with the traditional and the post-modern views in a three-layered schema addressing politeness phenomena at different levels of granularity.

Keywords: norms, quantitative analysis, frames, generalized implicatures, societal rationality

1. Introduction

Surveying the field of politeness studies as a topic of linguistic, and in particular pragmatic, investigation, one may distinguish two broad directions followed by theoretical approaches to date. The first, what may be termed the “traditional” view — if for no other reason than because theories in this vein have achieved the status of “classics” in the field — starts from a clearly Gricean and speech-act theoretic perspective (Lakoff 1973, Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978], Leech 1983). Within this perspective, it has seemed justified to move away from actual speakers
to abstract Model Persons endowed with (individual) rationality and face. One tacit assumption of the traditional view is that different cultures are (at least internally) homogeneous and agree on what politeness is (hence, they also agree on assessments thereof). Politeness then becomes a matter of using particular linguistic devices/strategies according to universalizing rules/principles. Numerous empirical studies subsequently sought to account for politeness phenomena in different cultures adopting this standpoint. Although these studies did not always confirm the theories’ claims, proposed revisions remained firmly within the original maxim/rule-based paradigm.

The challenge posed by mounting empirical evidence for the traditional view is tackled head-on by a second view, which, for lack of a better term, may be referred to as “post-modern” (Eelen 2001, Mills 2003, Watts 2003). Informed by social theory, the post-modern view stresses the contested nature of politeness norms across cultures, and, crucially, within cultures. Given this heterogeneity in judgments about politeness, the role of the addressee becomes of paramount importance: politeness is negotiated at the micro-level and jointly by the speaker and the addressee. Thus, only study of situated exchanges — where active ratification of the politeness potential of any particular utterance can be observed — is warranted, and neither prediction nor generalization can, or should, be aimed at.

Contrasting these two views, this article considers not only their points of disagreement, but, more crucially, points where the two views coincide, thus bringing to light their common underlying assumptions. It then goes on to show how, departing from these common assumptions, a third direction for politeness studies, what I refer to as the “frame-based” view, is possible. Consonant with the recent onset of usage-based linguistic analyses at all levels, the frame-based view breaks from the two previous ones by adopting a quantitative methodology that makes minimal a priori assumptions about the interpretation of the data. After presenting the main components of the frame-based view, I show how this fits in with the traditional and the post-modern views in a three-layered schema addressing politeness phenomena at different levels of granularity.

2. The traditional view

The theoretical beginnings of the study of politeness phenomena within linguistic pragmatics lie with the ordinary-language philosophy of H. P. Grice and John Searle, both of whom made fleeting reference to politeness in their work. Having introduced the four maxims of the Co-operative Principle in “Logic and Conversation” (1989a [1967]), Grice winks
at us: “There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as “Be polite,” that are also normally observed by participants in talk exchanges and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures” (1989a [1967]: 28). Similarly, in “Indirect Speech Acts” (1996 [1975]), Searle matter-of-factly asserts “The chief motivation — though not the only motivation — for using these indirect forms is politeness” (1996 [1975]: 177).

Of course, there is hardly anything matter-of-fact about politeness, so the above remarks were quickly capitalized upon by a generation of scholars who sought to clarify the nature of politeness phenomena and to give them their rightful place in pragmatic theorizing. Taking their lead from the above remarks, “traditional” theories of politeness — by this term, I shall be referring, in what follows, to the classic triad: Lakoff 1973, Leech 1983, and Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978] — find politeness in departures from the Gricean Co-operative Principle’s rational efficiency (Lakoff 1973: 296; Leech 1983: 7, 80; Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]: 5). They then go on to capture the type/degree of departure involved each time by means of rules/maxims/principles.

According to Lakoff (1973), three rules of politeness (“Don't impose”, “Give options”, “Be friendly”) spell out the content of “Be polite”, the second rule of pragmatic competence, which, depending on circumstances, can override the first rule of pragmatic competence, “Be clear” (= speak in accordance with the Co-operative Principle). Leech (1983), on the other hand, suggests a more elaborate scheme, placing alongside the Co-operative Principle and the Politeness Principle, two additional first-order principles, the Interest Principle and the Pollyanna Principle. No less than seven maxims now spell out the content of the Politeness Principle (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, Sympathy, Phatic), each having a speaker-oriented directive accompanied by an addressee-directed corollary. Two further principles, Irony and Banter, are introduced as second-order principles functioning parasitically on the Politeness Principle.

The awareness that politeness phenomena are crucially extra-linguistic, in the sense of going beyond language such that they cannot be dealt with by analyzing how linguistic items relate to each other alone, or even how they relate to a model of the world, has been with these early scholars from the start. This awareness becomes fully explicit in Brown and Levinson’s formula \( W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x^2 \), linking language use to sociological variables (1987 [1978]: 76). Assuming a hierarchy of five super-strategies — bald on record (= speaking in accordance with Grice’s Co-operative Principle), positive, negative, off-record, silence — ranked according to the degree of face-redress that they can afford, from less (regard for positive face) to more (regard for negative face), the formula
describes the relationship between sociological variables (D, P and R) and rational agents’ selection of a linguistic strategy out of this hierarchy.

The main features of these traditional theories, are, first, their Gricean focus, and, second, their speech-act focus. Their Gricean focus is seen in their definition of politeness as a greater or lesser degree of departure from the Co-operative Principle (which is thereby presupposed), and in their speaker orientation, whereby politeness is part of speaker meaning, a particularized implicature m-intended by the speaker (cf. Arundale 1999: 144). Their speech act focus, on the other hand, is seen in their act-by-act analysis, seeking politeness at the level of individual utterances. Many shortcomings of traditional theories in the face of empirical data have been put down to this dual Gricean and speech-act focus. Moreover, traditional theories have been criticized for their anglocentrism. The range of cultures observed, their definition of imposition and the emphasis placed on avoiding imposition, and, in Brown and Levinson’s case, their definition of face and the priority accorded to its negative aspect have come under scrutiny in this respect.

3. The post-modern view

Although extensively criticized (in these and further respects; e.g., Werkhofer 1992; Glick 1996), traditional theories have retained their appeal for the last twenty-five years. They have provided the terminology for talking and even thinking about politeness phenomena — consider the currency of the terms “face,” “positive” and “negative” politeness — and their shortcomings have been dealt with by proposing additional rules/maxims/principles (e.g., Ide 1982; Gu 1990; Blum-Kulka 1987), or by redefining their basic terms (e.g., Mao 1994), but hardly ever by moving away from their basic premises altogether.

Recently, however, a new, “post-modern” generation of politeness theories have emerged that question the basic premises of traditional theories, and seek to provide an alternative paradigm for politeness theorizing (Eelen 2001, Mills 2003, Watts 2003). These post-modern theories share two new premises. The first is a distinction (first drawn by Watts et al. 1992) between first-order and second-order politeness (or, for convenience, politeness1 and politeness2). This distinguishes people’s everyday definitions of, and meta-linguistic judgments about, politeness (roughly, how politeness is defined in dictionaries; politeness1), from politeness as a technical term which covers face-saving/constituting behavior irrespective of whether this would be so classified by the non-initiated (roughly, how politeness is talked about in pragmatics textbooks; politeness2). The second premise which post-modern theories share is the incorporation of social-theoretical insights, in particular Bourdieu’s
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This double orientation differentiates post-modern theories from traditional theories in a number of respects. The first one is their rejection of the classical Gricean framework, with its double emphasis on informativity over rapport management, and on the speaker’s intentions over and above what is recovered by the addressee. Post-modern theories point out that rapport management is at the heart of politeness practices, hence a framework avowedly shying away from this (Grice 1989a [1967]: 28) cannot be expected to account for them (Mills 2003: 38). Moreover, the Gricean framework has been standardly interpreted as relying on interlocutors’ genuine wish to co-operate, hence it is inappropriate to account for conflictual/antagonistic exchanges, such as are common in real life (Eelen 2001:174–177). Post-modern theories are also hearer-oriented, in that they locate politeness in hearers’ evaluations rather than speakers’ intentions.

The second respect in which post-modern theories differ from traditional theories is their rejection of speech-act theory (Mills 2003: 38), which leads them to adopt a discourse focus, seen most aptly in Mills’s and Watts’s analyses of longer stretches of discourse: politeness cannot in principle reside in single utterances, but is negotiated in longer courses, or, one might add, over several encounters. In this respect, post-modern theories emphasize the need for a “process-oriented view of conversation” (Mills 2003: 38): politeness is a dynamic concept, and particular utterances are merely “open to interpretation [and one might add, post facto re-interpretation; MT] as polite” (Watts 2003: 222–246).

It is post-modern theories’ focus on politeness as the only legitimate object of study that leads them both to reject the Gricean and speech-act frameworks (Eelen 2001: 252; Mills 2003: 12–14; Watts 2003: 12), as well as to emphasize the importance of situated evaluation for politeness. Emphasis on politeness as a matter of situated evaluation is in turn indicative of their conceptualization of politeness, in pragmatic terms, as a particularized implicature: evaluations of politeness presuppose specific addressees in specific encounters, hence no prediction is (or can be) made about the impact of linguistic expressions until one knows the specific context in which they were used. Another consequence of post-modern theories’ focus on politeness is their highlighting that participants do not always think of politeness as a “good” thing (what Watts 2003: 8–9 calls “the discursive dispute over politeness”). That is, politeness itself is now evaluated, and it can be awarded either a positive or a negative value, as for instance when it is perceived as an attempt to manipulate a situation for one’s own benefit.
The possibility that politeness1 may be negatively evaluated ties in with viewing politeness as a means for claiming power (Watts 2003: 156). Post-modern theories’ widening the scope of the discussion to include insights such as the Bourdieuan habitus quickly brings them to the realization that politeness1 is not an innocent notion after all. Indeed, it is by questioning notions such as “norm” and “culture” (most explicitly done by Eelen 2001: 121–187) that post-modern theories are led to attribute many of the traditional theories’ shortcomings to the latter’s assumptions of cultural homogeneity and shared norms, and to propose the study of politeness1 as the only viable alternative. In this sense, post-modern theories’ focus on politeness1 results from their focus on social struggle. The study of politeness is now placed firmly within social theory, and accounting for aspects of politeness as a social phenomenon takes priority over accounting for its pragmatic aspects. In addition to the authors’ own programmatic statements12, this shift of emphasis is evident in the range of topics covered13, as well as in the fact that no new tools with which to analyze examples at a linguistic pragmatic level are developed14. Without denying the importance of social aspects, it may nevertheless be pointed out that social explanations do not straightforwardly reduce to pragmatic ones. With this in mind, this article explores the possibilities for reclaiming politeness as a viable object of study within linguistic pragmatics.

4. Assessing the post-modern view

Admittedly, post-modern theories are still very new, and have not had the time to be theoretically elaborated in all their respects, much less empirically tested in the same way as traditional theories. Nevertheless – indeed, as a first attempt to provide food for thought in this direction – one may note some points to ponder about them.

The first point concerns their focus on politeness1. Granting that the distinction between politeness1 and politeness2 is possible, and indeed, a useful one, to draw (but see Xie et al., forthcoming, for an opposing view), one may ask, how are politeness1 phenomena circumscribed? Lacking a speaker-independent definition of politeness (i.e., a politeness definition), eliciting participants’ meta-linguistic comments about politeness – a methodological strategy proposed both by Eelen (2001: 255) and by Mills (2003: 14, 45) – runs the danger of becoming an exercise in the lexical semantics of the lexeme “politeness,” rather than in any way enhancing our knowledge about the phenomena we wish to study. If somewhat muted when dealing with English and other European languages apparently having single-word translational equivalents for the English term, the problem becomes clearly visible when one
moves to the study of politeness in another culture. It is well-known that the word “politeness” as such does not exist in all languages (Ehlich 1992: 94; Nwoye 1992: 315). How, then, would one go about investigating those speakers’ perceptions, and indeed their definitions, of politeness1, if their native languages do not offer a single-word translational equivalent? If terms related to politeness are sought in those languages, their relatedness can only be defined with recourse to an implicit “tertium comparationis”. This will at best be an independent definition, essentially a politeness2 definition, or the investigator’s own politeness1 definition, now promoted — what is worse, unwittingly — to a politeness2 one. In both cases, politeness2 is brought back in — this time, through the back door.

Watts is aware of this when he writes: “[i]t would of course be possible to go on listing the rough lexical equivalents to polite and politeness in other languages, but there is little point in doing so. By now, it should have become clear that politeness1, whatever terms are used in whatever language to refer to mutually cooperative behavior, considerateness for others, polished behavior, etc., is a locus of social struggle over discursive practices” (2003: 17). However, what Watts actually does in this excerpt is to provide a politeness2 definition of politeness1 as “mutually cooperative behavior, considerateness for others, polished behavior”, which he then uses to circumscribe related terms in other languages. Apparently, without such an independent yardstick, a language-relative (and speaker-relative) concept such as politeness1 cannot be pinned down for study.

The second point to ponder about post-modern theories concerns their emphasis on contested, as opposed to shared, norms. Post-modern theories are critical of the notion of norms, yet they do not altogether deny their existence. Rather, dissatisfaction with current definitions — or indeed, the lack of definition — of “norms” is accompanied by a call for a more flexible understanding of norms as “purposive entities” and as “highly versatile argumentative tools” (Eelen 2001: 232–233), i.e., for a move away from viewing norms as static, pre-existing entities toward their more dynamic construal. Although this is a valid point, argued for at length by Eelen (2001: chapter 4, 5.3.5, et passim), it does mean that post-modern theories offer no analytical tools for capturing norms, assuming such norms may in fact be in operation. Eelen’s conclusion in this respect is worth citing in full: “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”. (2001: 233; emphasis added).
Two types of norms are at issue here: norms about what one should do, and norms about what one is likely to do (Haugh 2003: 399–400), or, what might be termed prescriptive/theoretical versus descriptive/empirical norms. While traditional theories’ rules (in particular, Lakoff and Leech) have been interpreted as reiterating conceptualizations of the former (Eelen 2001: 129–131), more recent approaches (Terkourafi 2001, forthcoming a; Usami 2002) reject this prescriptivist stance and seek to establish empirical regularities in a bottom-up fashion by adopting quantitative methodologies. The problem that post-modern theorists see with quantitative analyses is that, to discover empirical regularities, one necessarily substitutes the participants’ interpretation of what is going on by the interpretation of the analyst. In this way one simultaneously cancels the validity of the interpretation as capturing participants’ own perceptions, and introduces an element of normativity — namely, the analyst’s interpretation — unwarranted by the facts (Eelen 2001: 141–146; Mills 2003: 43).

Admittedly, no method has yet been devised that grants direct access to participants’ own perceptions of the situation — and this particularly applies to interviews and direct elicitation of participants’ metalinguistic comments (two of post-modern theories’ proposed methodologies), as the vagaries of self-reporting have shown time and again (e.g., Trudgill 1983: 89–92)\textsuperscript{15}. However, distortion of participants’ perceptions through post hoc interpretation by the analyst is not inescapable. The key is to take participants’ own reactions to what is going on at face value (Terkourafi 2001: 5–6). Austin’s (1962) notion of the “uptake” is central to methodologically implementing this “positivist” stance, similar to those defended within sociology by Goffman (cf. his injunction to avoid “wish[ing social life] further into unreality”; 1974: 2), and within the philosophy of language by Wittgenstein (cf. his conception of “meaning as use” and the part that observable action plays in that; 1953 §1d1–9 and §§ 503–504). To the extent that, through their own reactions (including prosodic and kinetic clues), participants appear to concur with what is going on and do not seek to challenge and redefine it, it would indeed be unwarranted for the analyst to challenge it, and to project onto participants his/her own reservations, or even prejudices, as to the level of agreement reached during a conversation.

It should be emphasized that, while starting from the same premise as Watts (2003) and Eelen (2001), i.e., the possibility of observing participants’ responses to previous turns, the stance taken here is diametrically opposed to that adopted by those scholars (Watts 2003: 8–9; Eelen 2001: 234): while they assume underlying disagreement, until evidence of agreement is provided\textsuperscript{16}, I assume underlying agreement — until evidence of disagreement is provided (see below, and Terkourafi 2001: 23–24).
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Eelen, for example, argues that “markedly frontstage settings such as scientific experiments ... tend to provide a more consensual picture of social reality than actual social practice”. In this quotation, the contested nature of “actual social practice” is posited in advance: disagreement is what one expects to find therein. The view taken here, however, is that, unless such disagreement is somehow externalized, it cannot be assumed in the first place. It is by concurring with each other’s actions that participants act out norms in practice; and, unless they somehow make manifest that they do not concur, they have concurred and thus acted out the norm once again. If, using the addressee’s uptake as a guide to defining the meaning, the force, and indeed, the perceived politeness of the previous speaker’s turn, empirical regularities do indeed turn up, then post-modern theories’ a priori rejection of empirical norms as a useful analytical tool will appear to have been short-sighted: they are able to see the trees, but not the forest that the trees form.

A third point to ponder about post-modern theories concerns their declaration of the impossibility of a predictive theory of (im)politeness (Watts 2003: 25). With respect to this, one may note that prediction would seem to be constitutive of any theory (and that includes folk theories as well as scientific ones): in either case, the aim is to draw on situations experienced to make predictions about situations not (yet) experienced. Predictions (and so the theories that engender them) are by nature probabilistic and temporary, and are only useful to the extent that they are ratified by the data. But an a priori denial of the possibility of prediction is to deny the possibility of theorizing about politeness at any level (even at the level of participants’ folk theories about politeness). What we are then left with are minute descriptions of individual encounters, but these do not in any way add up to an explanatory theory of the phenomena under study. Moreover, since we are not meant to make any predictions on the basis of these descriptions — although participants commonly do, since they do have folk theories about politeness, else how could they answer our metalinguistic questions about it? — we fail to capture any of participants’ own knowledge with respect to politeness.

But even granting that analysis of politeness phenomena is only possible at the descriptive level, one cannot help but to be slightly disappointed at post-modern theories not having anything new to offer at this level. Reading their analyses of naturally-occurring data, one finds that the descriptive tools used are those of the traditional theories, namely, conversation-analytic terms (Mills 2003, Watts 2003), and face-related terms (Watts 2003). Given their attack on the inadequacies of traditional theories, one feels justified to wonder whether, by resorting to the same descriptive tools as their predecessors, post-modern theories will fare any
better (see note 18 on the limitations posed by the analytical tools used on the outcome of the analysis). Their emphasis on politeness as a social phenomenon would seem to impact directly on their interest to develop alternative ways to think and talk about politeness within linguistic pragmatics. Thus, although advancing a very interesting and challenging critique, post-modern theories would, at least in the way they deal with the data, seem unable to bring the paradigm change within politeness studies to which they aspire.

5. Beyond the micro-level: The frame-based view

Post-modern theories of politeness have arisen out of a deep-seated dissatisfaction with traditional theories, which they seek to remedy by importing insights from social theory into pragmatics, or rather, exporting politeness into the realm of social theory. Despite departing from traditional theories in this respect, post-modern theories share with them two premises, which may after all prove crucial. The first premise is that both types of theory are theory-driven. Their respective points of departure are concrete theoretical preoccupations – the Co-operative Principle and speech-act theory on the one hand, the notions of politeness1 and discursive struggle over politeness on the other. These theoretical preoccupations then provide the lens through which they approach the data, invariably coloring their analyses. This theoretical focus is seen most clearly in the attitude the two types of theory adopt toward the notion of norms. On the one hand, traditional theories assume the existence of norms a priori, hence they do not bother engaging in quantitative analyses of the data. On the other hand, post-modern theories challenge current understandings of norms, pre-empting the value, or indeed the possibility, of quantitative analyses. The second premise shared by both traditional and post-modern views is their analysis of politeness on the pragmatic level as a particularized implicature.

Departing from these two premises, it is actually possible to formulate an alternative, or rather, a complement to both the traditional and the post-modern views. Contrary to traditional and post-modern views, which are theory-driven, the frame-based view (Terkourafi 2001, forthcoming a) is data-driven in two important ways. First, it is grounded in the analysis of a large corpus (approx. 60,000 words) of Cypriot Greek data. These originate in 115 hours of spontaneous conversational exchanges between native speakers of Cypriot Greek representing both sexes, three age-groups and various socio-economic backgrounds. Group recordings took place in the four major towns of the Republic of Cyprus during autumn-winter 1998. 672 subjects participated in a total of 91 sessions taking place in three types of settings: at home/informal
social gatherings, at work (mainly offices and shops), and at formal discussions/on radio/TV. Subjects were approached informally and in person by myself, along the lines of Milroy’s (1980) ‘friend of a friend’ sampling procedure. To break down the asymmetrical subject-researcher relationship, I consistently participated in ongoing group activities and was willing to answer questions, including providing information about the project as requested. All this helped ensure that subjects interacted as naturally as possible without interfering with their usual routines. Combining speech-act theoretic and conversation-analytic criteria, utterance-sequences realizing offers or requests were subsequently identified, and classified according to the desirability of the predicated act (i.e., whether this was presented as desirable to the addressee or to the speaker respectively). Finally, a process of semi-phonological transcription yielded a database of 2,189 observations, each of which was further characterized for a number of linguistic and extra-linguistic variables (see also Terkourafi 2001: 30–37, forthcoming a).

The second way in which the frame-based view is data-driven is that it acknowledges norms to the extent that these can be empirically observed. To observe norms empirically in the collected data, these were analyzed quantitatively seeking to establish regularities of co-occurrence between linguistic expressions and their extra-linguistic contexts of use. It must be noted from the outset that such regularities amount to a preference for an expression over semantically equivalent ones in a certain type of context, rather than to a categorical difference marked by presence vs. absence of the expression in different types of contexts.

To uncover these regularities one must first categorize nonce, real-life contexts into types of contexts. This can be done by appealing to the notion of a frame — adapted from related notions in AI (Minsky 1975), psychology (Schank and Abelson 1977), and linguistics (Fillmore 1982) — which provides an opportune way of representing situations holistically as structures of co-occurring components. The co-occurring components in this case are, on the one hand, linguistic expressions, and on the other hand, social categories such as the sex, age, and social class of the participants, the relationship between them, the setting of the exchange, and whether an act is occurring for the first time or is repeated. It is a fundamental assumption of the frame-based view that such social categories are fixed early on in an exchange based on participants’ expectations and on visual or other sense data. In this sense, they may be “taken for granted” (Bach 1984), though they remain open to renegotiation throughout the exchange. What is claimed, then, is not that these social categories are static, but rather that, because they are so important in interaction, people make default assumptions about them as soon as possible, in order to even initiate interaction. It goes
without saying that the availability of recorded/videotaped data is of paramount importance in this respect.

Real-life contexts are then stripped of their particulars and classified into types of contexts encompassing a certain type of speaker (i.e., a speaker of a certain sex, age and social class), interacting with a certain type of addressee (i.e., an addressee of a certain sex, age and social class) with whom the speaker is in a certain type of relationship and while the interaction takes place in a certain type of setting. An actually-occurring linguistic expression is then classified as a certain type of act (i.e., as to its illocutionary force, or context-changing potential) depending on the addressee’s uptake. For instance, if the expression has been responded to as a request (by, e.g., complying with it) in real-life, then it is classified as a request. And, if the performance of this request has gone unchallenged (verbally, prosodically, or kinetically), then it counts as a polite request in this context. In this way, post-modern theories’ concern about the pitfalls of projecting the analyst’s own interpretation onto the data is addressed, since it is the participants’ own observable responses that guide the classification of any particular utterance as realizing a particular type of act, and moreover as a polite realization of that act.

Assuming that this procedure indeed uncovers regularities of co-occurrence between expressions realizing particular acts and types of contexts, why should such regularities be defined as polite behavior? The answer of the frame-based view is simple: they are polite because they are regular. It is the regular co-occurrence of particular types of contexts and particular linguistic expressions as unchallenged realizations of particular acts that creates the perception of politeness. Politeness resides, not in linguistic expressions themselves, but in the regularity of this co-occurrence. The child growing up does not stop to wonder about the politeness of particular expressions uttered in particular contexts around him/her. To the extent that these expressions go by unchallenged by participants, they are polite.

This is because, on grounds of rationality (i.e., if one is to strike a balance between cost and effect), the normal, most frequent mode of interaction must also be the least costly one. Interaction under conditions of hostility and distrust is costly, because it requires continuous alertness and second-guessing on the part of both interlocutors. Rational interlocutors should then prefer to interact under conditions that do not call for hostility or distrust, i.e., assume that the least costly option is the case (i.e., that a situation does not call for hostility and distrust), until provided with a reason to give up this initial assumption. In other words, interlocutors will not attribute a face-threatening intention to each other a priori. To do so would be quite irrational, since it would
amount to assuming that the most costly alternative is always the case, i.e., that interaction always calls for hostility and distrust.

Assuming that face-threatening is not the case, nevertheless, does not mean assuming that face-enhancing in the case either. Rather, interlocutors’ face-needs are a necessary concomitant of interaction since they arise at the same time as the possibility for interaction itself. This follows from defining face as wants of the Self (Terkourafi forthcoming b). And since awareness of the Self emerges in opposition to Other, face-needs arise at the same time as interaction with an Other is possible (i.e., as soon as an Other enters Self’s perceptual field). At this stage, interlocutors spontaneously have a dual objective: to fulfill their face-needs, and to do so at least cost.

In acting to achieve this dual objective, the speaker’s options are constrained by what s/he takes the addressee to be able to recognize, and thereby ratify. Put differently, the speaker’s individual rationality is constrained on this occasion by a societal rationality which has pre-cast, so to speak, for him/her the universe of possibilities into a range of concrete choices (cf. Mey 1993: 263). Societal rationality, in the case of politeness, enters the picture in two ways. The first one is by bridging speakers’ individual intentions and the recognition of these intentions by addressees. Individual intentions are in their essence socially constituted. Put at its most basic, this means that it will not occur to me to perform a particular type of act, say, a promise, unless I assume that you can interpret my behavior as a promise; and whether you are able to do this or not depends on whether a promise is something that is done in our society. Rosaldo’s (1982) analysis regarding the impossibility of promising among the Ilongot illustrates this point. The requirement to be recognizable applies not only to individual intentions, but also to ways of threatening/enhancing face, which are also socially constituted. To choose to be rude to you by using an offensive gesture, I must think that you are familiar with this gesture, and that you attribute to it the same negative value. In other words, I can only be rude to you in a way that you recognize as being rude. Otherwise, no matter how rude I think I am being, unless you concur with this evaluation, I have not been rude to you. This is the second way in which societal rationality enters the picture of politeness. When the addressee recognizes and ratifies the speaker’s behavior, both as to its intention, and as to its face-constituting potential, as manifested by his/her uptake, this behavior enters their common stock of collective experiences. It can then serve as the model for future interactions, and through repeated ratification it can take on a life of its own (cf. Werkhofer 1992). This is how norms of polite behavior are born.
Face-constituting and rationality, then, are the two premises placed at the basis of the frame-based view. They are responsible for gearing behavior toward the generation and re-enactment of norms (or, if you prefer, habits) of polite behavior. From this point on, politeness is a matter not of rational calculation, but of habit, and frames (which aim to capture polite “habits”) may be thought of as implementing the Bourdieuan habitus.

But what if there is no pre-established habit? On such occasions, attaining the goal of face-constituting is necessarily more effortful. However, the process will still be essentially the same. The speaker will make assumptions about the type of intentions the hearer might recognize, and about the face-constituting potential that s/he is likely to attribute to particular ways of realizing these intentions. Only, having no precedent to fall back on, these assumptions will necessarily be more tentative, and the speaker will need to rely more extensively on trial and error.

In making these assumptions, the speaker does not reason in a vacuum. S/he is again constrained by the societal rationality with which s/he is familiar. Societal rationality is a necessary pre-condition of individual rationality, not an optional add-on. Societal rationality lays out before us the options, and individual rationality chooses among them. So, where does societal rationality come from? Much like Bourdieu’s emphasis on the “objective conditions of existence”, the frame-based view seeks the origin of societal rationality (hence of habit) in the particular socio-historical conditions shared by a group (Terkourafi 2002). It is these socio-historical conditions that shape the multitude of possibilities offered by the world into a range of concrete, and through this link with the socio-historical conventional, and hence changeable, choices. Notions such as identity (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Terkourafi 2005a), network structure (Milroy 1980; Terkourafi 2002), and salience (Auer et al. 1998; Terkourafi 2002) spell out how this is done. Thus, the frame-based view avoids the trap of circularity. Socio-historical conditions determine what is regular. What is regular then gets interpreted as polite.

Pragmatically speaking, the two premises of the frame-based view, face-constituting and rationality, allow us to revise the Gricean Co-operative Principle, so that this now accounts for all communication, including conflictual exchanges (Terkourafi forthcoming b). This is done by acknowledging interlocutors’ mutual and omnipresent concern for face as Grice’s “accepted purpose of the exchange” (1989a [1967]: 26). All exchanges (even conflictual ones) are co-operative in that interlocutors always share this purpose. In all interaction, interlocutors can’t help seeking to constitute their own face (since no-one has face in isolation), which may lead them to enhance or to threaten the addressee’s face.
Following this revision, the Gricean framework does not have to be abandoned, but may be drawn on to account for how politeness is achieved in particular encounters (Terkourafi 2003). Politeness is achieved on the basis of a generalized implicature when an expression $x$ is uttered in a context with which — based on the addressee’s previous experience of similar contexts — expression $x$ regularly co-occurs. In this case, rather than engaging in full-blown inferencing about the speaker’s intention, the addressee draws on that previous experience (represented holistically as a frame) to derive the proposition that “in uttering expression $x$ the speaker is being polite” as a generalized implicature of the speaker’s utterance. On the basis of this generalized implicature, the addressee may then come to hold the further belief that the speaker is polite. This is a perlocutionary effect of the speaker’s utterance on the addressee, an effect over which the speaker has no direct control. For instance, the addressee may well recover the generalized implicature that the speaker is being polite, but nevertheless discard it on the grounds that the speaker is stand-offish or hypocritical. This time, the further perlocutionary effect has not materialised, and since politeness consists in this further perlocutionary effect, politeness has not been achieved. Politeness as a perlocutionary effect which relies on a generalized implicature as described above is frame-based politeness. Face-constituting has occurred, but no online inferencing has taken place. Frame-based politeness occurs when an expression is used in a context with which it regularly co-occurs, i.e., when a frame is instantiated. Politeness that passes unnoticed (Kasper 1990: 193) is achieved in this way.

However, not all politeness passes unnoticed. When the situation is novel, or an expression is novel, or matched with a context other than the one with which it regularly co-occurs, such that no frame is available (since the co-occurrence of the expression with the context at hand is not frequent enough in the hearer’s experience to be represented as a frame in memory), it is still possible for politeness (i.e., the perlocutionary effect) to be achieved. Only, this time, having no frame to draw on, addressees need to reason explicitly about the situation, engaging in a full-blown inferential process in which face concerns explicitly take part (Terkourafi 2003, forthcoming b). Given that the specific contents of the two aspects of face, positive and negative, as well as their relative priority are determined by interlocutors’ prior experience, this inferential process may well yield different results for different participants, depending on the degree of overlap of their prior experience. Politeness in this second case is not frame-based: it is still a perlocutionary effect, but this time it relies on a particularized implicature drawn in a nonce context.

Individual implicatures, including generalized ones, can of course be overridden by features of the nonce context, including the immediately
prior discourse, background assumptions about individual participants, and kinetic and prosodic clues. That is why politeness can never be part of the conventional, indefeasible meaning of the words uttered (Haugh's 2003: 401 phrasing is rather unfortunate in this respect). However, the actual perlocutionary effects motivated by these implicatures are not equally defeasible. If the implicature of an utterance has further motivated the belief that the speaker is polite, this belief cannot be cancelled retrospectively with respect to that particular utterance. However, it can interact with beliefs arising from subsequent utterances, creating the impression that politeness is “always in the making”. In the end, politeness is the cumulative effect of the perlocutionary effects of individual utterances drawn as the discourse unfolds.

6. Assessing the frame-based view

Following this brief outline of the frame-based view, this section spells out the main features that distinguish it from both the traditional and the post-modern views. The frame-based view of politeness is firstly characterized by a focus on politeness. Politeness is defined as all face-constituting linguistic behavior, and since all linguistic behavior is face-constituting (see the revision of the Gricean framework above), the frame-based view attempts to account for all linguistic behavior seen through the lens of its face-constituting potential, in much the same way as speech act theory attempts to account for all linguistic behavior seen through the lens of its context-changing, illocutionary-force-expressing potential.

Since politeness always arises out of face-concerns and impacts directly on them, no distinction is drawn between “politic” and “polite” behavior (Watts 2003). Emphasizing the difference between the two – “polite” is defined as what is perceived to be “in excess of what is politic in the situation at hand” (Watts 2003: 19, 223) – Watts is compelled to draw an arbitrary line between the two (on the basis of the analyst’s own intuitions about what is politic). In this way, he downplays their similarities, i.e., the fact that both politic and polite behavior achieve face-constituting (a fact which thus remains somewhat of a mystery). The intuition that beliefs about the speaker’s politeness may sometimes be achieved inadvertently and on other occasions require more effort is now accounted for by distinguishing between frame-based/achieved-via-generalized-implicature politeness and non frame-based/achieved-via-particularized-implicature politeness respectively. In this way, both the similarity in content between the two types of beliefs, as well as the difference in the routes via which they are reached, are accounted for.

Frame-based politeness, in this sense, corresponds to Watts's politic be-
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behavior, since both aim to capture what is appropriate relative to a certain situation. However, the difference between the two is more than merely terminological. There is a difference in essence between, on the one hand, how what is politic is defined by an appeal to common knowledge of cultural practices, i.e., essentially by an appeal to intuition\textsuperscript{28}; and how, on the other hand, the linguistic expressions and extra-linguistic features co-constituting a frame are discovered in a bottom-up fashion by establishing regularities of co-occurrence in a corpus of spontaneous data.

Secondly, the frame-based view is data-driven. Its empirical orientation is manifest in the attention paid to the hearer's uptake, and in the quantitative analysis of the data. While neither assuming nor rejecting norms in a top-down fashion, it does not take them for granted either, but rather strives to discover them in a bottom-up fashion by painstaking analysis of recorded spontaneous data. Norms are present (allowing interlocutors and the analyst alike to reason pre-emptively, i.e., predictively, about politeness) only to the extent that regularities of co-occurrence can be empirically observed between linguistic expressions and their contexts of use in these data. Such regularities can be described in terms of frames. That is, frames are first and foremost an analyst's tool for describing the observed regularities. However, the fact that observable regularities can be detected in a large corpus of data by the analyst who takes an emic standpoint raises the possibility that these regularities are also available to be detected by interlocutors, and that interlocutors are sensitive to them when producing and interpreting discourse. And this possibility must be taken seriously in the light of a growing body of evidence suggesting that humans are sensitive to statistical properties of language, and that such properties play an important role in language learning (Zacks and Tversky 2001: 12). For this reason, frames may be thought of as psychologically real implementations of the habitus. The empirical grounding of frames in recurring experience contains an implicit claim as to their transient nature, i.e., the fact that they remain subject to revision given sufficient conflicting evidence. Moreover, as in the case of homologous habitus reflecting similarities in the objective conditions of existence (Bourdieu 1990: 55), so interlocutors' repertoires of frames will only overlap to the extent that their past experience overlaps.

In its quantitative orientation, the frame-based view is closely affined with Usami's (2002) discourse politeness, which also seeks defaults for different elements of conversation based on the frequency of their occurrence across contexts in naturally-occurring speech. However, in discourse politeness, the origin of these defaults beyond their quantitative instantiation is not probed. No explicit link is made to interlocutors' past experience, and as such the difference between anticipated and inferred
politeness is described, but not accounted for. In the frame-based view, on the other hand, the origin of the observed regularities is sought in socio-historical considerations encompassing notions of identity, network belonging, and structural salience, which operate at the level of a supra-individual, societal rationality (Terkourafi 2002). Elements of this rationality are internalized by speakers as frames, giving rise to the homogeneity of their choices resembling a “conductorless orchestration” (Bourdieu 1990: 59) — to the extent, of course, that such homogeneity is empirically attested.

7. Concluding remarks

Two generations of politeness theories were surveyed: a traditional view, built on the premises of Grice’s Co-operative Principle and speech act theory, and characterized by an emphasis on the speaker and on the analysis of individual utterances; and a post-modern view, which sets out to study conceptualizations of politeness by paying attention to the hearer’s evaluation and to longer stretches of discourse, and by adopting social-theoretical insights such as the Bourdieuan habitus. Despite being opposed in several respects, these two generations of politeness theories share the fact that they are driven by theoretical considerations for which they seek support in the data, and the fact that they conceive of politeness as a particularized implicature. A frame-based view to politeness was then outlined, which departs from these commonalities of previous approaches, in that it is empirically driven, seeking to account theoretically for observed regularities in the data, and in that it acknowledges generalized implicatures of politeness alongside particularized ones.

One may have expected that, having presented these three views, I would then go on to choose between them. However, that is not my intention. Rather, I would like to suggest that these three views are mutually complementary. This is because each offers insights useful for addressing politeness phenomena at a different level of granularity. At the coarsest level are traditional theories. By paying attention to structural aspects of language use, traditional theories do not focus on individual speakers. Instead, they are concerned with the “formal” face-constituting potential of an expression $x$ as part of a system and in virtue of $x$’s relation to other expressions in that system. It is at this level that one can predict, for example, that in a verbal system that has distinct second person singular and plural forms, such as the Greek verbal system, a second person plural form has a politeness potential, because it impersonalizes the addressee (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]: 198–203).

One level down is the frame-based view, which seeks to account for the socio-historically constrained “preferred” interpretation of expression $x$
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by introducing the notion of generalized implicatures of politeness. At this level, one would find that, in Standard Greek, for example, the second person plural forms are used to express politeness in a much larger range of situations than in Cypriot Greek, a finding which can be explained with recourse to the notion of acts of identity (Terkourafi 2005a). This difference in distribution gives rise to more frames supporting the presumption of politeness based on the use of a second person plural form in Standard Greek than in Cypriot Greek. For Standard Greek, such frames would cover approximately the whole range of identifiable cultural ‘scenes’ (in the sense of Fillmore 1977), whereas for Cypriot Greek only two such frames are currently available (on radio/TV and when addressing standard speakers)29. However, this does not mean that an implicature of politeness is excluded in all other situations in Cypriot Greek. Conversely, not every utterance of a second person plural form in Standard Greek is necessarily polite, or else, contrary to the earlier definition of politeness as a perlocutionary effect (see section 5), politeness would now be semanticized. In other words, a socio-historically constrained preferred interpretation is merely predictive: given a minimal context (a frame), it biases interpretation toward a certain outcome — in this case, politeness — but it remains to be ratified on actual occasions of use.

At the finest level of granularity, the micro-level level of particular speakers and nonce, fully instantiated contexts in all their complexity, one finds post-modern theories which account for the “actual” meaning of expression x on an occasion of use. It is at this level that preferred interpretations are ratified and that particularized implicatures of (im)politeness also arise. Thus, for example, Bakakou-Orfanou (1989: 205) cites the following utterance of a second person plural form by a daughter to her mother in Standard Greek (Bakakou-Orfanou’s example (90)):

(1) θα μας επιτρέψετε να πάμε σινεμά;  
Will us allow-2pl to go-1pl sinema?  
‘Will you allow us to go to the cinema?’

Bakakou-Orfanou calls this an ironic use, stemming from the daughter’s annoyance at the mother’s preceding remarks. In this case, features of the preceding discourse override the generalized implicature of politeness that arises from using second person plural forms in Standard Greek, giving rise to a particularized implicature of impoliteness instead. Similarly, a second person plural form can draw criticism in Cypriot Greek. Describing an exchange between a niece and her older aunt, Terkourafi (2005a: 297–8) discusses how the second plural form was evaluated differently by the addressee, who evaluated it positively, and by a by-
stander, who evaluated it negatively. This illustrates that the previous experience as well as personal allegiances of specific participants can lead to different evaluations of the same utterance, i.e., to different particularized implicatures, of politeness and of impoliteness respectively. Finally, Terkourafi (2004: 125) discusses the following use of the address term cirie + (First Name), ‘Mr (First Name)’ by a father to his 20-year old son (her example (4)):

\[(2) \quad {\text{katse cirie niko}}\]
\[
\text{Sit-imperative-2sg. Mr Nick} \\
\text{‘Have a seat Mr Nick’}
\]

The absolute age threshold for use of this address term, which regularly plays the part of a second person plural polite form in informal contexts in Cypriot Greek, is around 40 years of age (Terkourafi 2004: 124–125). As such, the father’s use is unusual to say the least, which prompts participants to reason explicitly about it. On this occasion, this use came after loss of face occurred for the son in previous discourse. Taking into account this particularity of the fully actualized context, the father’s use may be interpreted as ritual recompense for the son’s loss of face, and give rise to a particularized implicature of politeness.

On all these occasions, features of the nonce, fully actualized context override the preferred interpretation of second person plural forms in Standard Greek and in Cypriot Greek respectively, yielding particularized implicatures of politeness or impoliteness, as the case may be. In other words, the frame-based view does not deny the heterogeneity in participants’ evaluations of politeness at the micro-level, neither the fact that politeness may also be seen as an instrument for attaining further goals. What the frame-based view claims is that, above and beyond this micro-level analysis, there are socio-historically emergent ways of using particular linguistic tools, and that how one uses these tools at the micro-level cannot be studied independently of how these tools are regularly used in the place and time at hand.

Notes

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1. For example, Leech adopts the dimensions of Power and Solidarity from Brown and Gilman’s (1972 [1960]) seminal analysis of T/V address systems, and introduces three pragmatic scales — cost-benefit, optionality, and indirectness — that regulate the performance of impositives (1983: 123–127). Lakoff, on the other hand, distinguishes situations into R[ule]1, R2 or R3 situations (1973: 302). Moreover, she remarks that cross-cultural differences in politeness assessments are attributed to a different ordering of the three rules in different cultures (1973: 303–304).
2. This formula may be paraphrased as follows: the weightiness of an FTA \( x \) is commensurate with the sum of the social distance between the hearer and the speaker, the power of the hearer over the speaker, and the ranking of the imposition carried by \( x \) in the culture in question.

3. M-intention refers to an intention that is intended to be recognized and is fulfilled by means of this recognition. M-intentions are the special kind of reflective intentions that underlie communication according to Grice (1989b [1969]: 105).

4. Although Brown and Levinson may appear to be faring better in this respect, having collected material from three different languages (Tamil, Tzeltal, and English), and, arguably, four different cultures (Tamil, Tzeltal, British and American English), one may question the naturalness of their data as regards languages of which they were not native speakers. Native Tamil speakers have, in personal communication, commented on the artificiality of requests for cigarettes in their culture (Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]: 143–144), where, thirty years on since Brown and Levinson conducted their fieldwork, smoking is seriously frowned upon, hence there seems to be no “polite”, appropriate way to ask for a cigarette.

5. This priority is not justified with respect to their sources, Goffman and Durkheim, both of whom are careful about such generalizations (cf. Goffman 1971: 184–5; Durkheim 1976 [1915]: 326).

6. This is due no less to how comfortably they fit into the undergraduate curriculum as a complement and an application of the Gricean and speech-act theoretic approaches.

7. Notable exceptions in this direction are the proposals by Fraser (1990, 1999), Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998), and Arundale (1999), but these have not had an impact comparable to that of the traditional theories on the politeness market. Since the number of publications both adopting and opposing the traditional view is much greater than one may cover in a single article, bibliographical references are given purely for illustrative purposes, and no claim to completeness or representativeness with respect to the extensive politeness literature is made. The same applies to the publications chosen as most representative of the traditional and the post-modern views, although in this case the choice is also guided by their reception in others’ work so far.

8. The glosses given necessarily oversimplify the contents of politeness1 and politeness2 (see Eelen 2001: 30–48 for a thorough dissection of these terms). Although it is common for linguistic expressions to express different meanings in everyday, non-technical usage, and when used as technical terms within a particular theoretical framework (think of the meanings of “relativity” within and without physics), in practice, the distinction between politeness1 and politeness2 is seldom maintained consistently (Eelen 2001: 48–75).

9. Closely related to the Bourdieuan legacy are also the notions of “communities of practice” (adopted by Milis) and “emerging networks” (proposed by Watts). Two further aspects of Watts’s proposal, the distinction between “politic” and “polite” behavior, and the adoption of a Relevance-Theoretic framework, are not shared by all three approaches, and hence currently not discussed (but see Terkourafi, in press).

10. This interpretation is seen in paraphrases of the Co-operative Principle in terms of “helpfulness” and “accommodation” (Cohen and Levesque 1990: 229–30; Thomason 1990: 332). See Terkourafi, forthcoming b, and below for discussion and for an alternative proposal.

11. Despite explicitly questioning the possibility of maintaining a distinction between politeness1 and politeness2 (2003: 8), Mills too ends up adopting it in practice, when she argues for focusing on “whether all of the participants in the conversa-
tion we are analyzing consider particular utterances as indirect and whether they themselves consider indirectness to be indicative of politeness or not” (2003: 14; cf. also her interview methodology on pages 12–14).

12. According to the blurb on the back of Mills 2003, “The book aims to show that politeness and impoliteness are in essence judgments about another’s interventions in an interaction and about that person as a whole, and are not simple classifications of particular types of speech.” Similarly, Watts argues that “the claim that politeness is a universal phenomenon of social interaction, particularly of verbal interaction, necessitates a shift away from a primary focus on linguistic realizations of politeness towards a more detailed look at the complexity of social interaction itself and the role politeness plays in it” (2003: 12). Finally, Eelen sees his approach as “fundamentally different from any of the existing perspectives because it is based on a different sociolinguistic ideology, which allows it to explore theoretical avenues that have up to now been left unexplored … the analysis makes the case for an integrated view of social reality, where aspects of linguistics, social theory and psychology combine into a coherent whole” (2001: vi).

13. A cursory look through their indexes shows one entry for “implicature” in Eelen, none in Mills, and seven in Watts. The entry “intention” is absent from Eelen and Watts, while all three lack entries for “generalized” or “particularized” implicatures. On the other hand, there are twenty-two entries for “habitus” in Watts, six in Mills and two in Eelen, and forty entries for “power” in Watts, seven in Mills, and three in Eelen.

14. As the name also implies, Eelen’s Critique does not contain any linguistic examples (cf. Eelen 2001: vi–vii). Watts and Mills analyze real-life and constructed examples from English adopting the terms of Conversation Analysis and face studies.

15. Mills acknowledges this difficulty with respect to questionnaires and role-play, yet goes on to adopt post facto interviews as her methodology (2003: 44–45). However, her proclamations that “perhaps linguistic analysis needs to be more modest in what it claims to know about what is going on between interactants” (2003: 50) and that “we may have to be content to suggest possible scenarios” (2003: 51) suggest that she nurtures no illusions as to the limitations of the latter methodology either.

16. As one reviewer put it, “What [these] researchers say is that you cannot take for granted that everybody shares the same norms and has the same standards” — in other words, since agreement cannot be taken for granted, it must somehow be demonstrated.

17. However, it is possible that, contrary to their claims, post-modern theories implicitly acknowledge observable, empirical regularities after all, since they espouse the Bourdieuan habitus, which Bourdieu himself defines as “the product of a particular class of objective regularities” (1990: 56; emphasis added).

18. On this view, the difference between the two lies in the latter’s — one would hope — stricter application of the three modes of reasoning — deduction, induction, and abduction — as well as the range of data taken into account each time. In other words, there is no difference in substance between them. Scientific theories may be thought of as “sophisticated folk theories”; the best ones that our methodological and technical tools will afford each time.

19. This is because a theory is a model of the world as understood by human beings; a theory is not the world itself. In this sense no theory can, or should aim to, capture absolute and eternal truth, because no theory can be equated with the world. The aim of theorizing about the world, then, is to help prepare oneself for future eventualities rather than to capture truth. When deriding the possibility for prediction in politeness studies, Xie et al. (forthcoming: 29) would seem to be confounding the two.
20. Recall in this respect the notion of expectation, and its undeniable psychological reality, put to use in AI research (Minsky 1975; Schank and Abelson 1977; Leske 1996).

21. Reference to linguistic expressions in what follows includes their unmarked/default prosodic contour.

22. The move to include what goes by unchallenged under the umbrella of politeness is in accordance with the view that politeness most often passes unnoticed, while what is commented on is impoliteness (Kasper 1990: 193; Jary 1998: 1–2; Escandell-Vidal 1998: 46; Watts 2003: 8).

23. Starting from this last assumption, i.e., assuming an underlying antagonism between interlocutors to start with, theories that take politeness to be a particularized implicature (which includes both traditional and post-modern ones) then go on to define the *causa essendi* of politeness *qua* particularized implicature as providing evidence against this underlying antagonism. References to such notions as “contested norms” (cf. Eelen 2001: 218–9; Watts 2003: 8–9) and “virtual offence” (Brown and Levinson 1987 [1978]: 1) are indicative of this assumption of underlying antagonism. That this is a rather counter-intuitive assumption has already been noted by Schmidt, who dubs this “an overly pessimistic, rather paranoid view of human interaction” (1980: 104). What is now claimed is that this assumption also goes against common definitions of rationality as efficient cost-effect accounting.

24. None of these is of course conscious. Rather, the first is a type of need, while the second is a constraint imposed by rationality on fulfilling any need, viz. that this should be done at least cost.

25. The succinct phrasing of this observation is due to Michiel Leezenberg.

26. The same two premises underlie Brown and Levinson’s approach. However, these authors’ account of rationality is limited to its individual dimension (1987 [1978]: 64–65), not acknowledging its societal dimension.

27. Frames may be thus understood as schematic, minimal (as opposed to fully actualized, nonce) contexts capturing what constitutes the “normal circumstances” (Grice 1989a [1967]: 37) in which generalized implicatures of politeness arise. This proposal extends Levinson’s (2000) three-way distinction between 1) coded (semantic) meaning, 2) utterance-type (implicated in a generalized manner) meaning, and 3) utterance-token (implicated in a particularized manner) meaning, by interposing between the last two a level of generalized implicatures requiring minimal contextual input (Terkourafi 2005b).

28. Cf., e.g., Watts 2003: 22–23, 222–232, and especially page 239: “[t]he political behavior of an argument in the public domain would have enabled him to do this with a statement such as *but surely it’s true that* ... Putting it in the form of a negative question (*but isn’t it true that* ...) is thus in excess of what is required and invites the interpretation of politeness.” This point is further discussed in Terkourafi, in press.

29. According to Terkourafi 2005a, this situation is currently changing.
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