

## GLOBAL INTERCONNECTEDNESS AND PRAGMATICS OF POLITENESS IN ENGLISH-SPEAKING SERVICE DISCOURSE

*В статті розглядається ступінь відображення глобалізації у прагматиці ввічливості на основі аналізу дискурсивних змін, до яких вона призводить. Основна увага приділяється змінам у засобах вираження категорії ввічливості у сфері обслуговування.*

**Ключові слова:** прагматика, позитивна ввічливість, негативна ввічливість, глобалізація.

The growing global interconnectedness of every aspect of life is the result of globalization, which is regarded as one of the principal forces influencing the way the world is today. The term 'globalization' is often used synonymously with 'Westernization' or 'Americanization' [13, 6] as evidenced by such cultural symbols as McDonald's, I-phone and Coca-Cola [13] as well as various discursive practices. In this context, language is viewed as a commodity and, like other commodities, is seen as falling under the influence of American culture and norms.

Along with the positively viewed acceleration and increase of intercultural contacts in the "global village", the mostly negatively regarded homogenization of the world under the influence of American culture and the spread of English at the expense of lesser-used languages are often named as most common outcomes of globalization [13, 147]. According to Blommaert, globalization generates a reorganization of norms in which transferred codes "become local resources, embedded in local patterns of value-attributions" [2, 139].

Linguistic research on globalization [4; 6], which is rather scarce compared to such areas as sociology and political science, has primarily focused on the spread of English and its power to displace established local ways of interacting without displacing local languages as such. Cameron, for instance, notes that a McDonald's restaurant in Budapest will serve its customers in Hungarian, but the use of Hungarian will follow the norms of interaction which prevail in the company's headquarters in Chicago [4, 33]. Service contexts like this are token examples of globalization, commonly regarded as the driving force underlying the commodification of language and discourse practices.

In the era of globalization, service industries dominate economies, and the "service" inevitably involves interaction with customers [4, 16]. Previously, the way language was used in service contexts depended on various contextual factors, such as the degree of familiarity between interlocutors and culture-specific preferences. Nowadays, however, it is claimed that the power of globalization does not allow for such considerations. Large international corporations set the norms, which spread, given the intensification of competition, so that one can talk of the "McDonaldization of society". The new philosophy has become known as friendly "customer care" [4, 133], which extends elements of interaction between close people to strangers in service contexts.

The new kind of customer care in the age of globalization involves the use of informal language. In many cases, employees are specifically trained to be able to communicate along the line of the new trend. Some employers attempt to regulate even minute details of the way their employees talk by scripting and routinizing interactions [4, 124]. When such companies move their business abroad, they transfer their linguistic norms along, which is one of the ways these norms spread. According to Cameron, "the scripted salutations", "the simulated friendliness" and "the relentless positive politeness" coming from the English-speaking world is gradually displacing established local norms in service contexts [4, 27].

Politeness has traditionally been defined in terms of good manners, etiquette or more generally social norms, which prescribe how people should behave in certain contexts. On this view, if one's behavior is congruous with these norms or 'unmarked', it is evaluated as polite and if those norms are not followed, it is considered impolite or rude. This everyday notion of politeness, however, according to Terkourafi, turns out to be ambiguous and imprecise and cannot serve as the basis for a theoretical definition with reference to which politeness phenomenon may be identified and described [12].

According to the pre-theoretical "social-norm" views, politeness is often understood to involve the use of relatively formal and deferential language. Informalization is rapidly becoming a pervasive feature of various public discourse genres in Britain. Mass media discourse, for instance, aims at simulating some kind of personal relationship with their audiences creating the impression of mutual acquaintance.

This increase in informality in public context both in the US (Lakoff [10]) and in the UK (Cameron [4]) has been associated with the general tendency towards "the casualization of everyday speech" [1, 1099] and the increase in egalitarianism in Western cultures but also with impoliteness to some extent. Lakoff links this increase in the use of informality at the expense of the traditional formal

distance politeness in contemporary US with another trend, which she calls the “erosion of the line between public and private life” [10]. Lakoff illustrates this on the example of telemarketers invading the privacy of the home and addressing the answerer by their first name [10, 35] (see also Cameron [4, 134]). Other examples include addressing US Presidents by their first names or even nicknames, e.g. Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter.

Lakoff attributes such a shift to informality to various sources, including increasing diversity, the Internet as a new communication channel, media competition for ratings and audience etc. [10]. For many British and American speakers informality is assumed to easy interaction with strangers so that a quick move towards first name terms of address is frequently used to this end. The assumed strong relationship between formality of language and the degree of politeness is not entirely straightforward. Neither politeness and impoliteness nor formality and informality are direct opposites but rather are rather situated along a continuum. Informality is most likely to be perceived as impolite when it is found to be contextually inappropriate, such as the use of informal language in public contexts where formal language has traditionally been the norm, thereby creating a mismatch in pragmatic expectations of the audience.

The expectations regarding what is considered polite and impolite by a specific social group at a certain period of time inevitably vary. Thus, Lakoff observes that just as the rules of grammar change over time, so there is some evidence that out present-day rules of rapport have shifted from focusing on camaraderie in the Middle Ages to distance in the Renaissance, and back to camaraderie again: “<...> during the thirteenth century various stylistic modalities were in flux in Europe. People were beginning to develop a notion of privacy: they began building houses with separate rooms, wearing more constraining and concealing clothing. About this time too, I believe, last names were being devised and used... So we can infer from this sort of evidence that European society during this era was shifting from a target of Camaraderie to one of Distance” [10, 32].

Cameron offers an interesting observation when arguing that the similarity in orientation in Britain and the US is not so much a matter of American cultural influence but rather a result of the spread of the same social conditions which enabled such practices to thrive in the US [4, 135]. This suggests that rather than looking at American influence on British or any other culture, one should also look at the socio-historical development of cultures themselves. As Mills contends, “there is a range of different politeness norms in play across a society and language group” [11, 1056]. So it is not unreasonable to suggest that some such norms have come to the surface. It appears as though the familiar stereotype of the British upper or middle-class person as being reserved has been taken over in favor of more working-class, solidarity behavior (cf. Cameron [4, 131]).

Wheeler provides a comprehensive and theoretically-grounded analysis of this issue by combining Brown and Levinson’s classic politeness theory with tenets of change in sociolinguistics to affirm that changes in the norms of prestige diachronically originate in casual style varieties, only contingently associated with low-status social groups, features of which can be associated with positive politeness devices. Following Brown and Levinson [3], he advocates that this is possible because positive politeness (addressing the wants of the hearer for his/her self-image) is inherently unstable, being associated with the natural escalation of intimacy and casualness in interaction, this involving renewal. In contrast, negative politeness (addressing right to territory and self-determination of the hearer) is more stable because it lacks this “escalating feedback loop” [15, 162]. Negative politeness includes more conventionalized, formal forms and archaisms, and renewal is fed by formerly casual variants. Moreover, negative politeness is associated with distance and hierarchy whereas positive politeness is associated with an egalitarian ethos.

Such changed strike everybody with their novelty. Some accept them for what they are whereas others condemn them as wrong, inappropriate and impolite. While globalization is capable of enriching the available cultural resources [11], in situations where the new model is entirely alien, it can be rejected. Strong local practices may resist change altogether, while weak practices may be easier to change or may work together with the new global practice that enters their cultural linguistic system.

The English language is undeniably exceptional and unprecedented in its present role of an international lingua franca. The borrowing of English vocabulary into other languages is frequently discussed as an example of English, and more specifically US, influence. The popular beliefs that other languages are threatened by English borrowings are not justified, since such loans have low statistical frequency and do not affect the structure of the language. They will not replace that “native” words of a language, but will be borrowed for use with some different functions. Consequently, the homogenizing force of globalization may not be as threatening as some present it to be. The expansion in the use of English is not only seen as threatening other languages but also as threatening the “quality” of the English language itself [13, 151], which means that English influences but it is also influenced by other languages.

Recent discursive or postmodern approaches to politeness share the conviction that it is situated, an evaluation rather than a stable given. An increasingly common assumption among politeness

researchers is that “politeness and impoliteness themselves are *situated* evaluations arising in and through interaction” in complex ways [8, 8-9]. If this is the case, then what is polite or impolite cannot be determined or predicted globally, even within the same community or genre (e.g. service context) but must be considered at the specific local level bearing in mind the possibility of differing assumptions even by the interlocutors themselves. For instance, as Coupland et al. note, the “How are you” enquiry is required as a first turn by the shop-assistant on the west coast of the US [6, 228] whereas in Britain, service encounters do not open in such a way and its use can be perceived as strange and even as impolite [4, 134]. However, attributing impoliteness to such formulas is a good example of evaluation based on intuition, since they are not normally followed by metalinguistic comments, follow up behavior or challenges, which would indicate that they have been indeed perceived as impolite. Explanations attributing inquisitiveness or undue friendliness to such well-being enquiries reflect personal, subjective evaluations, as these may be perceived as formulaic and may receive no response. Utterances are multifunctional and structures, whether direct or indirect, formal or informal, are not inherently polite or impolite. They are ascribed such evaluations on the basis of assumed speakers’ intentions and addressees’ expectations as well as various other contextual factors [4, 130].

Thus, informality does not necessarily imply impoliteness any more than formality implies politeness. Neither can there be a direct correspondence between politeness and sincerity, since one can be polite both sincerely and insincerely. The addressee can only make an evaluation and even speakers themselves may have difficulty in assessing their own true feelings. Politeness in Brown and Levinson’s framework is viewed as strategic and does not arise from true emotions while it is impoliteness that is more frequently associated with true emotions [3]. Thus, it may be suggested that it is not the assumed sincerity or insincerity which causes resentment of certain formulas, but the lack of conventionalization of a pattern relative to a specific context.

The native speakers of English who resent the “How are you?” in service contexts, seem to be confronted with the kind of situation that non-native speakers of English are faced with, that is, discrepancies between literal meaning and function, such as *Can you/Would you* indirect requests. Routines that are appropriate in specific contexts are conventionalized. This conventionalization facilitates interaction, since it is “a resort to a successful solution of a recurrent problem” [5, 8]. When new norms appear which are not conventionalized, they pose difficulty, especially in fleeting encounters. This is one of the problems with “How are you?” in some British service encounters. It has been conventionally used between acquainted interlocutors and its extension of use to strangers strikes many as inappropriate. But as Lakoff suggests, “the new intimacies are really no more intimate than the old uninvolvements were truly uninvolved” [10, 34]. In other words, it seems to be an example of variation and like many such examples, it is contested by some.

The extension in using this utterance to address strangers may bear some resemblance to the use of kinship terminology to address unrelated others, which provided the basis for the development of “polite” address terms. The tricky nature of encounters with strangers can be minimized by accepting them temporarily into the group by means of such address terms [7, 85]. In service contexts, relationships are fleeting and informality may serve similar ends.

We can conclude that since politeness devices are found in all societies and in all periods of time, ignoring their synchronic and diachronic contingent nature and ascribing inherent politeness or impoliteness to either of them is theoretically unjustified. In addition, available strong local practices may resist change or may contribute to new practices combining features from both global and local resources. What may appear to reflect the influence of a global practice at a first glance, may turn out, on closer scrutiny, to reflect some local tradition. Thus, since globalization is a set of processes, rather than a final state, their development is not only contingent on a multitude of factors, but is also highly unpredictable.

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*Summary.* The article considers the extent to which global interconnectedness is reflected in the pragmatics of politeness by analyzing discursive changes it produces. It focuses on changes in polite devices used in service contexts.

*Key words:* pragmatics, positive politeness, negative politeness, globalization.

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## **A TRANSLATION-THEORETIC APPROACH TO THE POETICS OF TOLKIEN'S MYTHOLOGY**

*У статті робиться спроба встановити зв'язки між творами британського письменника-міфотворця Д.Р.Р. Толкіна та його академічною роботою як професора давньоанглійської мови. Доводиться, що в інтерпретації творів автора, в літературознавчому чи перекладознавчому аспектах, слід керуватися тим, що Толкін був перш за все лінгвістом, а потім письменником, відтак лише знання витоків творчості автора та ретельний лінгвістичний аналіз його текстів може бути основою для можливих інтерпретацій та перекладів.*

*Ключові слова:* джерела, лінгвістичний аналіз, інтерпретація, адекватний переклад.

What should one know before he/she attempts to translate J.R.R. Tolkiens creative works? The first thing to remember is that there were not two Tolkiens, one an academic and the other a writer. They were the same man, and the two sides of him overlapped so that they were indistinguishable. So if one is going to understand anything about his work as a writer he/she should spend some time examining Tolkien's scholarship.

Both Tolkien's academic career and his literary production are inseparable from his love of language and philology. He specialized in English philology at university and in 1915 graduated with Old Norse as special subject. He worked for *the Oxford English Dictionary* from 1918 and is credited with having worked on a number of words starting with the letter *W*, including *walrus*, over which he struggled mightily. In 1920, he became Reader in English Language at the University of Leeds. He gave courses in Old English heroic verse, history of English, various Old English and Middle English texts, Old and Middle English philology, introductory Germanic philology, Gothic, Old Icelandic, and Medieval Welsh. When in 1925, aged thirty-three, Tolkien applied for the Rawlinson and Bosworth Professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Pembroke College, Oxford, he boasted that his students of Germanic philology in Leeds had even formed a "Viking Club". He also had a certain, if imperfect, knowledge of Finnish.