

# EL4252: Honours Year

## Lay politeness and rapport management

### WATTS

#### 1. Watts bemoans existing 'theories'

- Robin Lakoff's conversational-maxim approach
- Leech's grand scheme of incorporating politeness into general pragmatics
- The project by Shoshana Blum-Kulka, Juliane House and Gabriele Kasper – the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Patterns (CCSARP) in the 1980s: politeness<sub>2</sub> as a culturally constructed concept
- Arndt and Janney's distinction between social politeness, interpersonal politeness and tact – into social psychology
- Fraser and Nolen's conversational contract theory of politeness
- Matsumoto's and Ide's work on discernment v volition: the Japanese notion of *wakimae*
- There are many criticisms of Brown & Levinson's work – some question the universality enterprise; some criticise their dualistic and individualistic notion of 'face'; some think they have distorted Goffman's notion of face
- Werkhofner (1992) suggests that politeness is like money: both are socially constituted mediums; both are symbolic mediums (association with values); both are historically constituted; both can become ends rather than means; the chances of mastering both mediums are diminished.

#### 2. Suggests a reversion to the original Goffman

He suggests that facework is not the same as politeness. Face is a shared property granted by the community for each particular situation, whereas the 'line' is the approach taken by the individual.

#### 3. Lay politeness (politeness<sub>1</sub>) v. theoretical politeness (politeness<sub>2</sub>)

#### 4. Not universal but culturally situated

To use a lay concept in one language as a universal concept for all languages and cultures is particularly inappropriate. (p. 13)

... politeness<sub>1</sub>, whatever terms are used in whatever language to refer to mutually cooperative behaviour, considerateness for others, polished behaviour, etc., is a locus of social struggle over discursive practices. (p. 17)

... there can be no idealised, universal scientific concept of (im)politeness (i.e. (im)politeness<sub>2</sub>) which can be applied to instances of social interaction across cultures, subcultures and languages. (p. 23)

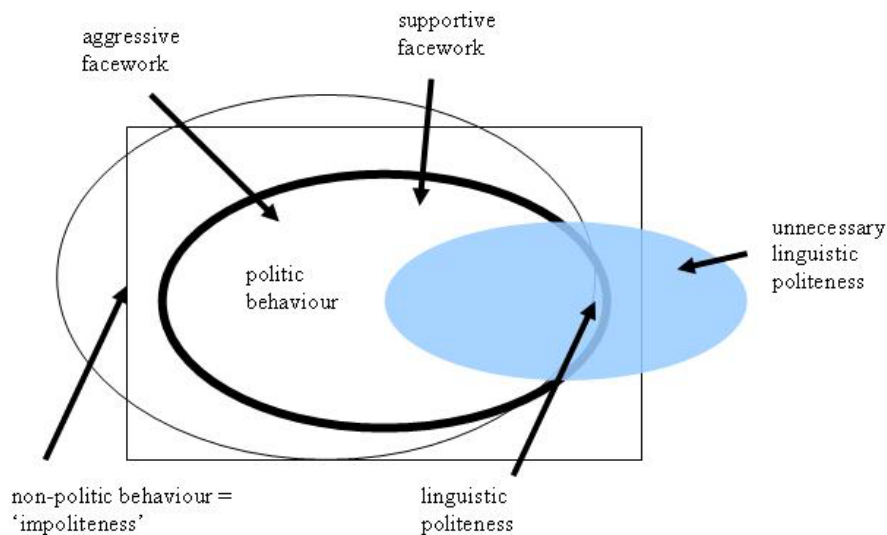
#### 5. The notion of politic behaviour

Linguistic behaviour should be evaluated from the point of view of expected behaviour.

... linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the on-going interaction, i.e. as non-salient, should be called *politic behaviour*. ... Linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be beyond what is expectable, i.e. salient behaviour, should be called *polite* or *impolite* depending on whether the behaviour itself tends towards the negative or positive end of the spectrum of politeness. (p. 19)

#### 6. Link to Bourdieu

[Politic behaviour] is related to the habitus in Bourdieu's theory of practice in that it accounts for the knowledge of which linguistic structures are expectable in a specific type of interaction in a specific social field... Behaviour which is not part of the politic behaviour of an interaction type is 'inappropriate' and open to classification as 'impolite'. (Watts 2003: 161)



He summarises his theory in the diagram (taken from Fig 10.1, p. 260).

The oval with the thick border = totality of forms of social practice.

Aggressive facework lies on the boundaries of the expected politic behaviour.

Supportive facework usually lies closer to the area associated with potentially polite behaviour.

On the left: non-politic behaviour, outside the borders of politic behaviour.

Shaded oval: dispute on whether it represents politic or polite behaviour.

## 7. More on Bourdieu's theory of practice

### (a) habitus

The *habitus*, in Latin 'a state of being', 'a demeanour, manner or bearing', or the 'style of dress or toilet', is the set of dispositions to act in certain ways, which generates cognitive and bodily practice in the individual. (Watts 2003: 149)

### (b) linguistic capital

Linguistic resources can also be seen as a kind of capital (with value, exchange, currency and conversion). Therefore, politeness<sub>i</sub> is payment, but it is payment in excess of what is required by politic behaviour. Therefore:

- (i) Assertives give a value and can therefore expect the payment of some other equivalent value.
- (ii) Interrogatives request a value but cannot automatically expect the payment of that value. If the value is given, however, some form of return payment can be expected by the giver.
- (iii) Imperatives request a value, which may or may not be in the form of a linguistic utterance, and generally do expect the payment of that value. (Watts 2003: 154)

### (c) doxa

The *doxa* of a field is the 'undisputed, pre-reflexive, naïve, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field' (Bourdieu 1990: 68). A challenge to this represents *heterodoxy* whereas an attempt to restore this represents *orthodoxy*.

### (d) symbolic power

*Symbolic power* is 'every power which manages to impose meanings and to impose them as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990: 4).

## 8. Formulaic and semi-formulaic expressions

*Formulaic, ritualised utterances* are: highly conventionalised utterances, containing linguistic expressions that are used in ritualised forms of verbal interaction and have been reduced from fully grammatical structures to the status of extra-sentential markers of politic behaviour. They have little or no internal syntactico-semantic structure. (Watts 2003: 168)

And *semi-formulaic utterances* are: conventionalised utterances containing linguistic expressions that carry out indirect speech acts appropriate to the politic behaviour of a social situation. They may also be used, in certain circumstances, as propositional structures in their own right.

These expressions emphasise **procedural** rather than **propositional** meaning. (Roughly: Halliday's interpersonal meaning v. ideational meaning.) These expressions might have undergone **pragmaticalisation** (rather than **grammaticalisation**). An example of grammaticalisation is *going to*, which might have the semantic content (of movement or of intention) bleached, to become like a modal verb. Examples of pragmaticalisation include *you know* (loss of referential meaning to become a solidarity marker), *good-bye* (from invocation 'God be with you' to a leave-taking formula), *please* (from 'if it please you' to a request marker). These expressions are therefore **expressions of procedural meaning** or EPs.

The direction of the process of grammaticalisation is from *lexical item* to *syntactic structure* to *morphological unit* (Hopper and Traugott 1993: chapter 5). Pragmaticalisation works in the opposite direction showing a development from fully morphosyntactic structures to reduced structures with procedural rather than propositional meaning ... (Watts 2003: 179)

*Politeness structures according to House and Kasper (1981)*

- **Politeness markers** (to 'show deference to the addressee and to bid for cooperative behaviour'), eg *please, if you wouldn't mind*
- **Play-downs** (to 'tone down the perlocutionary effect of an utterance is likely to have on the addressee'), eg *I wondered/thought if ..., I was wondering/thinking ..., would it be a good idea ..., wouldn't it be a good idea ...*
- **Consultative devices** (to involve the addressee and bid for his/her cooperation), eg *would you mind ..., could you ...*
- **Hedges** (avoidance of giving a precise propositional content), eg *kind of, sort of, somehow, more or less, rather, and what have you*
- **Understaters** (under-representing the propositional content), eg *a bit, a little bit, a second, a moment, briefly*
- **Downtoners** (to 'modulate the impact' of the speaker's utterance), eg *just, simply, possibly, perhaps, really*
- **Committers** (to lower the degree of committal to the content of the utterance), eg *I think, I believe, I guess, in my opinion*
- **Forewarning** (making a metastatement on an FTA), eg *far be it from me to criticise, but ..., you may find this a bit boring, but ...*
- **Hesitators** (pauses filled with non-lexical phonetic material), eg *er, uhh, ah*
- **Scope-staters** (expressing subjective opinion about the state of affairs), eg *I'm afraid you're in my seat, I disappointed that you couldn't ...*
- **Agent avoiders** (agent suppressed or impersonalised), eg *people don't do X*

## 9. Relevance theory

Watts sees Sperber and Wilson's relevance theory as a way of coping with the inadequacies of Grice. It allows for

- a theory of communication that goes beyond the code theory
- the role played by cognition (not just intention)
- degrees of success in communication rather than a binary distinction between success and failure

The key axiom is that relevance is assessed in terms of the assumptions which can be accessed by inferential processing. An utterance that allows for more contextual effects and requires less processing effort is more relevant.

## 10. More on relevance theory

Sperber and Wilson (1995) develop a cognitive theory (ie based on how hearers or readers understand or interpret, rather than the speakers' or writers' intentions). They hold that only the maxim of relation (relevance) is necessary, defined

- \* the **ostensive stimulus** is relevant enough for it to be worth the addressee's **effort** to process it.
- \* The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one compatible with the communicator's abilities and preferences. (p. 270)

Stronger implicatures are more relevant than weaker implicatures.

Implicatures that require less processing effort are more relevant than those that require more processing effort.

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### A. Text for discussion (from Watts)

This extract is taken from an open-line phone-in programme on BBC Radio Cornwall. The moderator is conversing with a blind man, by the name of Bill Bell, who has phoned in to talk about guide-dogs and his own guide-dog in particular. At the stage in the conversation the moderator changes the topic of the interaction.

<sup>1</sup> Mod: and :er: what about your occupation\	long retired\
BB:	oh :er: very long retired\ I used to be in
<sup>2</sup> Mod:	in journalism\ right Bill\ very many thanks sir\
BB:	journalism\ :er: on :er:/ I know how fastidious or
<sup>3</sup> Mod:	
BB:	meticulous you are about :er: the use of words\ a couple of days ago\ you talked about
<sup>4</sup> Mod:	yes\ no\
BB:	'twopence halfpenny stampage'\ can I then understand it's from the dictionary\
<sup>5</sup> Mod: sheer self-indulgence\ guilty\	pure self-indulgence\
BB:	after perhaps :er: Ted Wragg's talk\
<sup>6</sup> Mod:	childlike faith\ Bill,
BB:	you talked about childish faith\ and I think you meant childlike faith\
<sup>7</sup> Mod: thank you for being such a good listener\ and I plead guilty to the use of 'stampage'\	
BB:	<@I love to hear you David@>
<sup>8</sup> Mod: there was euphony in the word\ indulgence\ guilty\	thank you Bill\ bye bye\ that was
BB:	bye\
<sup>9</sup> Mod: Mr Bill Bell of Carbis Bay\	
BB:	

Look at the text carefully, and consider the relationship between the moderator and Bill Bell. What is the *line* (in Goffman's terms) taken by each of the interlocutors, and therefore the face attributed to each of them? Consider which parts of the dialogue might be considered *politic* behaviour and which parts *polite* or *impolite* behaviour. Take note of terms of address, discourse markers.

## BI. A further text for consideration from Watts

<sup>1</sup> H: Mrs Sack\ hello Mrs Sack\ S: hello \ erm: I'm ringing / :erm: a- a talk by a health inspector \ on your
<sup>2</sup> H: S: programme \ a couple of days ago\ .. he was talking about infected / meat being sold for humans \
<sup>3</sup> H: S: instead of being processed for pet food \ :erm: he described- he described the case wh- where
<sup>4</sup> H: S: the meat / it was from a factory \ and then it had:er: / covered in dirt \ sawdust \ transported in
<sup>5</sup> H: S: unrefrigerated vans \ etcetera etcetera \ and I – yeah
<sup>6</sup> H: the guys have got sent to prison \ haven't they \ or something \ S: mm y- yes \ that was in this morning's paper \
<sup>7</sup> H: yeah S: but what I'm ringing about is this \ what goes into pet food \
<sup>8</sup> H: food \ I don't know \ I- I would imagine – S: <@no@>:er: I mean \ if this is the kind of stuff that goes into pet
<sup>9</sup> H: S: food \ I.2 it shouldn't even go into pet food \
<sup>10</sup> H: that if it's unfit for human consumption \ it is therefore assumed to be fit for pets' consumption \ S: . yes I /
<sup>11</sup> H: if it's unfit \ it's unfit is what you're saying \ S: unfit :erm: if it's unfit \ it's unfit \ I'm not talking about scraps and things like that \
<sup>12</sup> H: S: I'm taking about 'hhh' that b / that's infected by drugs / had drugs injected into the animal \ :erm:
<sup>13</sup> H: S: sawdust \ all that kind of stuff \ I'm not saying that :er: other stuff shouldn't go into pet food \ meat by-
<sup>14</sup> H: S: products and things like that \ providing it's clean \ I'm not saying that \ .hhh. it's just the- the fact that
<sup>15</sup> H: S: it was taken for granted \ that because this was so horrible \ it was . in inverted commas \ 'only fit
<sup>16</sup> H: yes \ I'm not :er: veteran<GARBLED SYLLABLES> or whatever it is qualified \ but is it not S: for pet food' \
<sup>17</sup> H: true \ that :er: animals of various types can tolerate certain kinds \ of what we would regard as S:
<sup>18</sup> H: dangerous :er: substances for us \ S: yes I know \ but I don't see why they should :er: tolerate sawdust \
<sup>19</sup> H: S: and nails \ :er: or whatever it was \ 'hhh' but there was also the other point \ that wha / that- that the fact
<sup>20</sup> H: mm oh yes \ that's very frightening S: that the food factory even had stuff of that quality on their premises \
<sup>21</sup> H: indeed \ and- and somehow the- these villains got hold of it \ and- and were able to put into tins for S:
<sup>22</sup> H: pets \ is there any evidence that they actually did that \ I mean \ surely \ I- I've S: I.4 'hhh' er: .. no \
<sup>23</sup> H: opened tins of pet food for our cat – and it looks fine \ I'm sure there's no nails and- S: and it looks all right \ yeah\ yes \
<sup>24</sup> H: and sawdust and whatever in it \ S: I don't know whether this is the kind of stuff that- that's sold \ sort of
<sup>25</sup> H: yeah \ I quite agree \ S: loose mince stuff or not \ but anyway \ if it's so bad I.3 it- it shouldn't be sold at all \
<sup>26</sup> H: I quite agree with you \ I quite agree with you \ particularly / I mean \ I would have thought that- that S:
<sup>27</sup> H: the / there must be a- a- an institutional standards organisation \ that makes sure that really noxious S:
<sup>28</sup> H: things don't get into tins for pet food \ and how would they sell it to- to pet owners anyway \ they S:
<sup>29</sup> H: would surely defeat themselves \ they'd get a horrible reputation \ as soon as you open the tin \ it would S:
<sup>30</sup> H: be a most terrible pong \ wouldn't it \ S: I know \ but the- there're so many additives \ I mean- I mean for

<sup>31</sup> H:	I.4 in order to persuade the cat /
S:	instance \ why do they have to put colouring into tins of pet food \
<sup>32</sup> H:	the animal to eat it \ I suppose \ isn't it \
S:	ah but / well if the animal is anything like mine \ then / well \ it would eat
<sup>33</sup> H:	yeah \
S:	anything \ and i- it- it- it's / I think it's for the owner \ to make it look better for- :er: for the owners to
<sup>34</sup> H:	yeah \ Mrs Sack \ can I ask you very gently \ you're not sort of :er: one of those people who's
S:	see \
<sup>35</sup> H:	totally over the top on the subject of animals \ are you \
S:	mm not at all \ not at all \ not at all \ our dog always goes into
<sup>36</sup> H:	f- forgive me for asking the question \ but you m / you recognise <@ that
S:	kennels when we go away \ not at all \
<sup>37</sup> H:	there are such people \ don't you \ @> the – ... I mean \ the thing that sometimes / the /
S:	oh ye \ <@ I recognise that \ @> no no \ no no \
<sup>38</sup> H:	bothers me \ and I'm deliberately trying to provoke you a little bit \ is that- that sometimes people
S:	< @ @ @ @ >
<sup>39</sup> H:	feed to:: pets \ and sometimes to animals \ food that is in fact perfectly good \ and could be used for
S:	
<sup>40</sup> H:	starving human beings \
S:	but what not at all \ I don- I don't .hhh. I don't do anything like that \ I'm / I :er: –
<sup>41</sup> H:	do you think of people who do that \ I mean an awful amount of s- solid protein \ which could be used /
S:	
<sup>42</sup> H:	I mean \ let's think of Ethiopia \ there are thousands and thousands of people starving in Ethiopia \ and
S:	yes \
<sup>43</sup> H:	they badly need protein \ meanwhile people in the western half of the world are feeding it to animals \
S:	
<sup>44</sup> H:	
S:	I think it's very bad \ I think it's v- I think it's very bad \ but at the same time \ :erm: I do read of / I f: /
<sup>45</sup> H:	
S:	I think that I often read of people sort of leaving lots of money to animals \ and all the rest of it \ :erm:
<sup>46</sup> H:	
S:	sometimes one hears (0.6) people say \ 'oh why don't we do this \ why don't they go and / out and look
<sup>47</sup> H:	
S:	after humans \ why don't they do this that and the other' \ but the / this is apart from pet food \ I reckon
<sup>48</sup> H:	
S:	that people \ especially if they live alone \ are entitled to have something of / some creature of their own
<sup>49</sup> H:	I could- I couldn't agree with you more Mrs Sack \ I wouldn't agree with you
S:	to give their love to \ of their own \
<sup>50</sup> H:	more \ I think it just depe / it's a matter of balance \ isn't it \ it- it depends on what you use to feed them
S:	
<sup>51</sup> H:	on \ and how much money you- you actually u- use for them \ because in the end of the day it's a- it's a
S:	
<sup>52</sup> H:	question of balance \ as so many questions are \ Mrs Sack \ thank you very much for joining in \
S:	

## B2 Another text from Watts

<sup>1</sup> D:	Mr Blair \ in this election \ you're asking the electorate to put their trust in you \ the new Blair \ isn't
B:	
<sup>2</sup> D:	there a problem that there's an old Blair who believed in quite different things \ which makes it rather
B:	
<sup>3</sup> D:	difficult for people to trust the new one \
B:	no \ I don't agree at all \ I mean \ we have been through a big
<sup>4</sup> D:	
B:	process of change and modernisation of the Labour Party \ that is absolutely true \ but it has been a
<sup>5</sup> D:	
B:	process of change that I think has been well worth undertaking \ and .. as you probably know \
<sup>6</sup> D:	
B:	. throughout my time in the Labour Party \ I've wanted to move the Labour Party on from positions \ in
<sup>7</sup> D:	
B:	order to get the proper modernised Labour Party that we have today \ New Labour is very much what I

<sup>8</sup> D:	but did you believe in Old Labour\
B:	believe in\ it's very much my own creation\ I believed in the values
<sup>9</sup> D:	no\ did you believe in what they stood for\ did you believe in CND\ did you
B:	of the Labour Party\ yes\
<sup>10</sup> D:	believe in union power not being curtailed\ did you believe in nationalisation\ no privatisation\
B:	there are
<sup>11</sup> D:	
B:	a whole series of policy decision that I adopted# along with the rest of the Labour Party\ but the very
<sup>12</sup> D:	I know
B:	process of modernisation\ has been the very process that I have undertaken in the Labour Party\
<sup>13</sup> D:	that\ but have you abandoned/ did you believe what you said you believed in the eighties\
B:	look\ of
<sup>14</sup> D:	
B:	course we always believed in the idea of a more just and a more fair society\ and the Labour Party
<sup>15</sup> D:	
B:	believed for a long period of time\ that the way to do that was\ for example\ greater nationalisation\
<sup>16</sup> D:	
B:	was for example\ simply more increased state spending\ the whole process of modernisation David\
<sup>17</sup> D:	
B:	has been to take the Labour Party away from that\ to keep true to its principle\ but put those
<sup>18</sup> D:	so all that was wrong\
B:	principles properly in a modern setting\ no\ I don't say all that was wrong\ I
<sup>19</sup> D:	
B:	simply say what is important is to apply those principles to the modern world\ look\ .. John Major
<sup>20</sup> D:	
B:	stood in the 1970s on a platform of Scottish devolution\ Margaret Thatcher was the person that closed
<sup>21</sup> D:	
B:	more grammar schools than anyone else\ she was a member of Ted Heath's government you know\
<sup>22</sup> D:	it pales into insignificance compared with what you stood for in '83 and '87\
B:	times move on\ no\ I don't
<sup>23</sup> D:	
B:	think it does\ actually\ but in any event\ let me say to you\ that my whole time within the Labour
<sup>24</sup> D:	
B:	Party/ let us just be realistic about this\ from the moment that I came into the Labour Party\ I've
<sup>25</sup> D:	
B:	argued that it had to change and modernise and update itself\ I was the person who\ when I was the
<sup>26</sup> D:	
B:	Treasury spokesman for the Labour Party\ was arguing that we had to stand up for the rights of small
<sup>27</sup> D:	
B:	investors\ I was the person who\ when I got into the Shadow Cabinet\ that withdrew our support for
<sup>28</sup> D:	
B:	the closed shop it's held in the past\ I was the Shadow Home Secretary that was the person\ that said
<sup>29</sup> D:	
B:	Labour had to tighten up its stance on law and order\ that we had to stand up for the rights of the
<sup>30</sup> D:	
B:	citizen against the criminal\ I was the person that argued the case for the changes in the union
<sup>31</sup> D:	and you were the person\ as a barrister\ who dealt with trade union affairs\ who sat on a
B:	relationship\ -
<sup>32</sup> D:	select committee\ and who opposed every root and branch\ every detail of the Conservative
B:	
<sup>33</sup> D:	government's attempts to reform/ to even make the most modest reforms\ in trade union law\
B:	David\
<sup>34</sup> D:	
B:	those were in the days when people thought\ that the best way to look at a collective bargaining
<sup>35</sup> D:	
B:	arrangements\ between employer and employee\ was not to have a legal framework\ we changed that\
<sup>36</sup> D:	no\ but hang
B:	and let me say something to you\ I'm proud of the changes that the Labour Party has made\
<sup>37</sup> D:	on\ I'm asking you about what happened before\ you may be proud of what you've done now\ that
B:	
<sup>38</sup> D:	implies you're ashamed of what happened before\ but was your instinct right
B:	I'm not ashamed of it at all\

<sup>98</sup> D: when\ . for instance\ . you talked about the Tories as people with hobnail boots\ ready to trample over
B:
<sup>40</sup> D: the rights of trade unionists\ I mean\ is that something you'd defend saying now\
B:
<sup>41</sup> D: did you mean to say it\
B: look\ at that time people thought\ that the best way to have an industrial
<sup>42</sup> D:
B: relations framework\ was to get the law out of it\ that changed\ I was one of those people that changed
<sup>43</sup> D: the Conservative Party were in the van on this\ they decided it was
B: that position of the Labour Party\ -
<sup>44</sup> D: right to have a framework\ -
B: if I could just finish this ...

## Rapport management theory

Spencer-Oatey suggests that we should not just be concerned about 'face work', but about rapport management. In addition to *face*, she is also concerned about *sociality rights*.

The term 'face' seems to focus on concerns for self, whereas rapport-management suggests more of a balance between self and other. The concern of rapport-management is also broader; it examines the way that language is used to construct, maintain and/or threaten social relationships and ... includes the management of sociality rights as well as of face' (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 12).

### FACE

Face is 'associated with personal/social value, and is concerned with people's sense of worth, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on' (p. 14). Face can be said to have two aspects: **quality face**, which is closely related to self-esteem and the value we place on our own worth; and **identity face**, which refers to our social identity.

### SOCIALITY RIGHTS

Rapport Management Theory also deals with issues regarding social relations, particularly **equity rights** ('fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others so that we are treated fairly' p. 14), and **association rights** ('fundamental belief that we are entitled to an association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship we have with them').

The four types of rapport orientation are:

- Rapport-**enhancement** orientation: a desire to strengthen or enhance harmonious relations between the interlocutors;
- Rapport-**maintenance** orientation: a desire to maintain or protect harmonious relations between the interlocutors;
- Rapport-**neglect** orientation: a lack of concern or interest in the quality of relations between the interlocutors (perhaps because of a focus on self);
- Rapport-**challenge** orientation: a desire to challenge or impair harmonious relations between the interlocutors. (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 29–30)

#### I. Focus on identity

Spencer-Oatey argues for a multidisciplinary approach to face, from the point of view of identity. She quotes Simon's (2004) 'Self-aspect model of identity', which includes these elements:

- personality traits (eg shy)
- abilities (eg poor dancer)
- physical features (eg curly hair, slim)
- behavioural characteristics (eg usually gets up early)



- ideologies (eg Christian, democrat)
- social roles (eg project manager)
- language affiliation(s) (eg English, Chinese)
- group memberships (eg female, academic, Christian)

All of these can be evaluated in terms of **valence** (negative ⇔ positive), **centrality** (core ⇔ peripheral), **currency** (past ⇔ present ⇔ future), **actuality** (actual ⇔ ideal).

Identity can also be seen in three perspectives: **individual** (eg I dislike jazz), **relational** (eg I am a husband) and **collective** (eg I am a member of Singapore Symphony Chorus).

Most claim that face is different from identity. 'A person's identity attributes include *negatively and neutrally evaluated* characteristics, as well as positive ones, whilst the attributes associated with face are only *positive* ones' (S-O 2007: 643).

The face claim is also sensitive to context (eg secondary school children might not show themselves hardworking as it is not 'cool', but claim that they are diligent to teachers).

3. B&L's positive and negative face distinction is not always helpful. S-O's examples.

### Example 1: Face relating to individual identity

Helen, British academic in her early 50s, helped a young Hungarian student with weak English to find his way across London to catch the right train to Luton Airport.

*Student: Thank you very much. You are a very kind old lady.*

*Helen: No problem. I was catching this train anyway.*

Helen had a mixed reaction: pleased for being evaluated 'kind', displeased for being called 'old lady' (she considered herself middle aged).

### Example 2: Why is 'uncle' or 'auntie' displeasing?

## ST Forum

14th September, 2010

### Drop the 'uncle' and 'auntie' habit

IN LINE with the current Speak Good English campaign, I suggest that the organisers look into educating the masses on the proper terms of address for people as well.

Very often, at places like wet markets, hawker centres and heartland shops, one can hear the shop or stall owners addressing men and women who appear to be in their 40s as 'uncle' and 'auntie'. It is ridiculous to see even middle-aged and elderly people address these men and women that way.

It is not right, nor respectful, to use these terms so loosely - by those who are about the same age as the ones addressed.

It is high time we replaced 'uncle' and 'auntie' with 'Mr' or 'Sir', and 'Miss' or 'Madam'. These are more respectful forms of address and will tie in well with the Speak Good English campaign.

Kho Puay Hong (Ms)

### WEAR THE BADGE PROUDLY (*Sunday Times*, 18/3/2018, p C2)

John Lui

It is time to make uncle-hood, and auntie-hood, great again.

We are talking about men and women of a certain age, strangers or people we know, who at one time were talked about as icons of generosity and kindness.

These days, if you call someone an auntie or uncle, you risk a punch in the face. Because in Singapore, the uncle or auntie is the ah beng and the ah lian, projected into the future.

Starting in the 1990s, film-maker and actor Jack Neo and actor Mark Lee made it okay to be ah beng. And with the newly released movie, *Wonderful! Liang Xi Mei*, still showing in cinemas, he is making it okay to be an auntie.

Since the 1970s, in popular culture, the qualities of nosiness, stinginess, prickliness and a ridiculous sense of entitlement have been attached to men and women of a certain age. It is time to change all that.

Imagine a world without aunties (not to be confused with aunts, the actual blood relatives).

Sure, as the quiz below says, there would be fewer trolleys to trip over. And in a world with no uncles, there would not be two guys two rows behind you in the cinema, talking loudly.

But aunties and uncles have been unfairly maligned. This is because they pierce our sensory bubble only when they do things that annoy us.

When someone violates a social norm – being slow at the MRT turnstile, jumping the queue into the train – we notice their age and demeanour and think: “Uncles being uncles.”

But everywhere, aunties and uncles are quietly going about their business, following every social norm. They are invisible, as so many middle-aged and older people are in our youth-obsessed world. They are noticed only when they break the rules.

So all sorts of people penny-pinch or ask nosy questions, but when a man or woman of a certain age does it, we immediately attribute it to their auntie- and uncle-ness. It is as if they were zombies or werewolves: Once you turn, you turn and there is nothing you can do about it.

We have all caught ourselves in the middle of doing something and stopping to wonder if we are becoming the A- or the U-word. Will using umbrellas as a shield against the sun raise sniggers from friends?

It is absurd to think that we choose skin damage over being mocked. We would rather put up with bad service and say nothing, than speak up and be accused of having an “uncle moment”.

Now it is time to reclaim the label because, one day, we will wake up and have our day ruined by a cheery salesperson or hairdresser who, out of respect calls us “auntie” or “uncle”.

This is one dismal milestone that will surely come and we don't want to go to jail for acting out violently. Besides, it will only reinforce the stereotype.

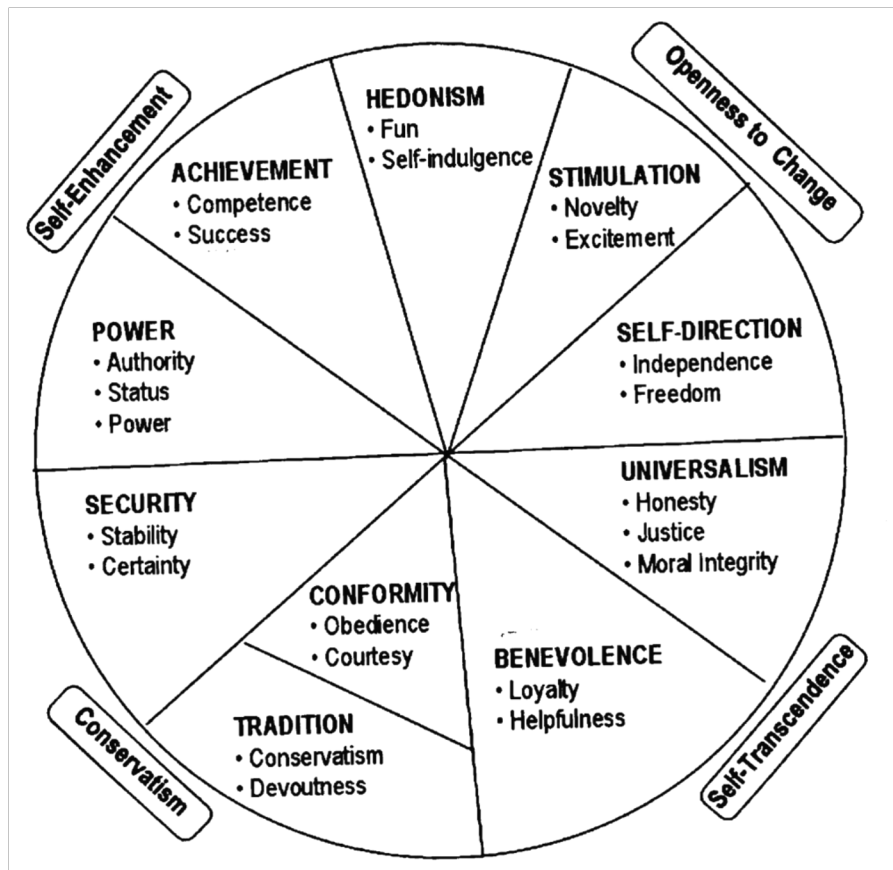
When that day comes, we will have to hold our heads up high. Even worse, there will also come a day when someone clearly older than us addresses us by those words. That is when we have become Ultra-Uncle or Super-Auntie.

Give your inner uncle or auntie a hug, take him and her outside.

Be out and proud, and use the hashtag #ProudAuntie and #ProudUncle, and wear the badge with pride.

If we are all Irish on St Patrick's Day (goes the saying) then, today, we are all aunties and uncles.

(a) B&L's *negative face* has been criticised as a Western concept, which values individual freedom and autonomy. Perhaps it is better to consider cognitive constructs, eg this one by Schwartz.



- There are more scales in this model, compared to the bi-polar Brown and Levinson one of *negative* and *positive face*
- People's evaluative judgements of their own attributes (in terms of valence, centrality and actuality) are influenced by the relative importance of their various personal value constructs, so some of them might be more face-sensitive.

In Example 1, kindness is associated positively with Benevolence, an important value to Helen. She associated elderliness with failing faculties, and therefore associated negatively with Achievement: so this was face threatening. Perhaps the student associated elderliness with status within the Power construct.

(b) We need to be able to discuss the dynamic unfolding of face issues. 'People's claims to face with regard to individual attributes, relational associations and collective affiliations, as well as their anticipations of the face claims that other may make in these regards, can all vary dynamically in an ongoing interaction' (p. 647).

### Example 3A

A group of Chinese businessmen is on a visit to a British company. Jack, the Chairman gives a speech about the importance of the relationship and expresses good wishes to the visitors. He then asked the British staff and Chinese visitors to introduce themselves in turn. The British did so, but when he asked the Chinese to introduce themselves, they consulted among themselves, they decided that the leader should introduce each of them.

Jack: could could I now ask if if the members (.) could each introduce themselves so that we can learn (.) um (.) who they are and what their interests are.

Int: [interprets into Chinese]

Sun: [turns to colleagues and discusses with them and the interpreter in Chinese]

Sun: *we each introduce ourselves*

Shen: *it's best if you do it on our behalf*

Sun: [reading from script] *first of all, to [X] Company=*

Int: *=no no, he said first introduce yourselves (.) I am [surname] from [name] Company*

Sun: *I am [surname] from Company [name]*

Int: [interprets into English]

Chen: *say what you do*

Sun: *I'm involved in design*

Xu: *give your full name (.) full name (.) full name (.) say you're a design engineer*

Sun: *design engineer*

Int: [interprets into English]

Ma: *I am the director of the [product] Department of Company [name]*

(Note: Italics for English translation of Chinese.)

### Example 3B: face relating to relational and group identity

Sun comments after the incident in 3A.

Sun: *According to our home customs and protocol, speech is delivered on the basis of reciprocity. He has made his speech and I am expected to say something ... In fact, I was reluctant to speak, and I had nothing to say. But I had to, to say a few words. Right for the occasion, right? But he had finished his speech, and he didn't give me the opportunity, and they each introduced themselves, wasn't this clearly implied that they do look down upon us Chinese?*

### Example 3C: Face relating to group identity

A group of Chinese businessmen on a visit to a British company got into an argument with their hosts over money.

*One businessman: One thing is that we should not let people say we are stingy; secondly, we should not give the impression of being too weak; thirdly, we should negotiate in a friendly manner.*

The face threat is the possible mismatch between the positively valued attributes claimed by the speaker (not stingy, not weak, friendly), and the negatively valued attributes that the hosts might ascribe to them (stingy, weak, unfriendly). Friendliness and generosity are associated with Benevolence; strength is associated with Power. They need to decide which construct they hold more highly.

(c) The notion of sociality rights or obligations needs to be considered.

### Example 3D: Face relating to sociality rights (obligations)

When the visitors arrived, the Sales Manager for China (Tim) was away on an overseas trip. One of them (Mr Xu) had met him on one previous occasion in China and they thus believed that as a group they had a 'personal' relationship with him. They knew when he was due back in England and expected to see him the following day. When he didn't appear by lunch time, they started asking for his phone number. This follow-up interview occurred that evening.

Xu: *Tim hasn't shown up yet, right? He should have already come back yesterday ...*

Shen: *He should have been back yesterday, yesterday. Today today he didn't show up. This morning he should have taken us out. We mentioned it to him [the interpreter] ...*

Lin: *Does Tim live in London?*

Researcher: *I don't know where he lives.*

Chen: *In London. London is very close to here, isn't it? ... Thirty-odd miles, in fact very close. Your old friends from China are here, and as a matter of fact your major market, right? So on this occasion can't you come and meet them?*

Shen: *And he knew that Mr Xu, senior engineer, was coming.*

From the visitors' point of view, Tim had failed in his relational obligation. From Tim's point of view, they were not his 'friends', and his first relational responsibility as towards his wife and children.

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#### EXERCISES

We have considered:

- Politeness working with other constraints in terms of maxims (Leech)
- Politeness in terms of face, seen in terms of a rational choice of strategies (B&L)
- Impoliteness as another dimension to be considered (Bousfield, Culpeper) in consideration with the notions of attack, intentionality and effect on hearer
- Mock impoliteness as another dimension which might include elements of camaraderie, attack and humour/entertainment (Bousfield, Haugh)
- Politeness and impoliteness as a lay concept to be measured against cultural norms (Watts)
- A fuller notion of identity and rights helps to extend the discussion of face (Spencer-Oatey)

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In each of these, identify the genre and context as far as possible, and the expected levels of (im)politeness. Now analyse the interaction from the point of view of face and (im)politeness, in the light of the identities and rights of the interlocutors.

#### A. PAXMAN-HOWARD INTERVIEW

This is the transcript of an interview between BBC presenter Jeremy Paxman and former UK Home Secretary Michael Howard. The conversation refers to a meeting between Howard and the head of the Prison Service, Derek Lewis, about the dismissal of the governor of Parkhurst Prison due to repeated security failures. The interview was first aired on 13 May 1997.

<https://youtu.be/Uwlsd8RAoql>

- (01) Paxman: Right, uh ...can you help us with this then? You stated in your statement that the Leader of the Opposition had said that I (that is, you) personally told Mr Lewis that the governor of Parkhurst should be suspended immediately, and that when Mr Lewis objected as it was an operational matter, "I threatened to instruct him to do it". Derek Lewis says, "Howard had certainly told me that the Governor of Parkhurst should be suspended, and had threatened to overrule me". Are you saying Mr Lewis is lying?
- (02) Howard: I have given a full account of this, and the position is what I told the House of Commons, and let me tell you what the position is-
- (03) Paxman: (Interrupting) So you are saying that Mr Lewis lied-
- (04) Howard: Let me tell you exactly what the position is. I was entitled to be consulted and I was consulted, I was entitled to express an opinion and I did express an opinion. I was not entitled to instruct Derek Lewis what to do, and I did not instruct him what to do-
- (05) Paxman: (Overlapping) Well, his version-
- (06) Howard: -and you will understand and recall that Mr Marriot was not suspended, he was moved, and Derek Lewis told the select committee of the House of Commons that it was his opinion, Derek Lewis's opinion, that he should be moved immediately. That is what happened.

- (07) Paxman: Mr Lewis says "I (that is, Mr Lewis), told him what we had decided about Marriot, and why. He, (that is, you), exploded. Simply moving the governor was politically unpalatable, it sounded indecisive, it would be seen as a fudge. If I did not change my mind and suspend Marriot he would have to consider overruling me."
- (08) Howard: Mr Marriot-
- (09) Paxman: (Interrupting) You can't both be right.
- (10) Howard: Mr Marriot was not suspended. I was entitled to express my views, I was entitled to be consulted-
- (11) Paxman: (Interrupting) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (12) Howard: I was not entitled to instruct Derek Lewis and I did not instruct him.
- (13) Paxman: Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (14) Howard: The truth of the matter is that Mr. Marriot was not suspended-
- (15) Paxman: (Interrupting) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (16) Howard: I did not overrule Derek Lewis-
- (17) Paxman: (Interrupting) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (18) Howard: I took advice on what I could or could not do-
- (19) Paxman: (Overlapping) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (20) Howard: (Overlapping) -and acted scrupulously in accordance with that advice. I did not overrule Derek Lewis-
- (21) Paxman: (Overlapping) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (22) Howard: -Mr. Marriot was not suspended.
- (23) Paxman: Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (24) Howard: I have accounted for my decision to dismiss Derek Lewis-
- (25) Paxman: (Overlapping) Did you threaten to overrule him?
- (26) Howard: (Overlapping) -in great detail before the House of Commons-
- (27) Paxman: I note that you're not answering the question whether you threatened to overrule him.
- (28) Howard: Well, the important aspect of this which it's very clear to bear in mind-
- (29) Paxman: (Interrupting) I'm sorry, I'm going to be frightfully rude but -
- (30) Howard: (Interrupting) Yes, you can -
- (31) Paxman: (Interrupting) I'm sorry-
- (32) Howard: (Overlapping) - you can put the question and I will give you - I will give you an answer.
- (33) Paxman: (Overlapping) -it's a straight yes-or-no question and a straight yes-or-no answer: did you threaten to overrule him?
- (34) Howard: I discussed the matter with Derek Lewis. I gave him the benefit of my opinion. I gave him the benefit of my opinion in strong language, but I did not instruct him because I was not, er, entitled to instruct him. I was entitled to express my opinion and that is what I did.
- (35) Paxman: With respect, that is not answering the question of whether you threatened to overrule him.
- (36) Howard: It's dealing with the relevant point which was what I was entitled to do and what I was not entitled to do, and I have dealt with this in detail before the House of Commons and before the select committee.
- (37) Paxman: But with respect, you haven't answered the question of whether you threatened to overrule him.
- (38) Howard: Well, you see, the question is what was I entitled to do and what was I not entitled to do. I was not entitled to instruct him, and I did not do that.
- (39) Paxman: We'll leave that aspect there.

Source: <http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/brianpluss/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/9478-pilotstudyreport.pdf>

## B. INCIDENT AT A SHOP (Owndays, Tiong Bahru, April 2017)

<https://mothership.sg/2017/04/heres-the-transcript-of-the-tiong-bahru-incident-which-led-to-the-arrest-of-the-bracelet-lady/>

Dear all friends of OWNDAYS,

Last evening, an incident took place at our shop in Tiong Bahru Plaza. A female shopper came into our shop to hide from another lady who had become aggressive. Two of our team members attempted to assist the shopper and were assaulted by the aggressive lady. Our colleagues had been brave and maintained their professionalism despite repeated assaults by the angry lady. The police is currently investigating the matter and we are seeking legal advice.

1	Bracelet Lady (BL): What take video. Watch it, you better ask the Chinese girl to stop hitting me. You understand
2	that. Enough, I had enough already. I enough. [Proceeds to walk away, but walks right back]
3	BL: Call, call the police, go and call the police. You think what, I scared? I enough, I enough already... of hitting. [Hits
4	staff, Bracelet flies off into store room]
5	BL: Eh, go and find for me my bracelet, go, eh, go and find, eh go and find for me my bracelet, go, go and find
6	Helpful bystander I (HBI): Everything ok?
7	BL: I'm done with these Chinese girls, they keep hitting me everywhere in this neighbourhood. Go and find for me,
8	my bracelet, go. Bloody idiot, you Chinese girls. Quick, my bracelet. You bloody fucking Chinese girls in my
9	neighbourhood.
10	Staff: I already call the police.
11	BL: Go, go and call police. Go and call the ( ) go and call the MP.

12	HB1: Relax relax relax, anything else? Relax.
13	BL: What the fuck
14	[One of the staff appears to say something]
15	Camerawoman (CW): (To staff) Don't say anything.
16	BL: What, what, what now? Come here, come here!
17	CW: Keep quiet, (To staff) I'm sorry I got you into this.
18	Staff: It's ok.
19	HB1: Relax relax.
20	BL: Fucking words, you know? Ask this Chinese, this fucking Chinese girl to stop hitting me in the neighbourhood,
21	you hear me or not. [Makes way to where CW and staff is]
22	CW: Please stop her, please.
23	BL: Watch it, you watch it. I have enough of this nonsense.
24	CW: (To security) Please come here.
25	BL: Ask this Chinese, this fucking Chinese girl to stop hitting me in the neighbourhood.
26	CW: (To security guard) Can you please come here please? We don't know, she just start hitting people for no
27	reason.
28	BL: I'm also telling you the same thing you bloody idiot, stop hitting me for no reason.
29	Helpful bystander 2 (HB2): Eh please ah, assaulting already.
30	BL: Who am I insulting?
31	HB2: You assault, you assault her. You assault her.
32	BL: The fuck do you think you are doing.
33	Helpful bystander 3 (HB3): [Gets in her way] Eh calm down, calm down.
34	BL: Stop interrupting me!!
35	HB3: Eh relax, relax.
36	BL: You fucking bastard. The fuck you think you are doing?
37	HB2: You assault her for what?
38	BL: I ask you the same question, why is she assaulting me for no reason, hitting me all over the place.
39	HB3: Miss, what happen?
40	BL: You ask me what happen. I'm done with this nonsense, you hear me or not?
41	HB3: Sorry ma'am what happen please?
42	BL: What? you never hear what I'm shouting at all ah?
43	HB3: I know, but everything can talk, don't need to shout.
44	BL: Then why you ask me what's happening? Bloody hell.
45	HB3: Cool down, cool down, cool down, cool down, cool down. Sit down first. Cool down, cool down.
46	Security Guard: Do you have a CCTV?
47	CW: I don't know, I'm not a cust... I'm only a passenger [ie passerby].
48	BL: I'm also a passenger, stop fucking hitting me. Eh go and get for me, my bracelet now.
49	HB3: Excuse me, now what is happening, is something missing or what?
50	BL: My bracelet is missing? Go and get it, it's inside!
51	Security guard: Where you missing, ma'am?
52	BL: I'm just telling you, i put it... it just went inside! Go and get my bracelet, it's black in colour.
53	Security Guard: [To staff] Can you follow me?
54	HB3: Can someone follow [To one of the staff] and show... things?
55	BL: [To staff] Watch it ah, I'm telling you, watch it.
56	HB3: Cool down, cool down.
57	BL: Go and find the bracelet, give it to me now. [Turns to camerawoman]
58	BL: You stop checking the video, you hear me, are you checking the video, stop checking the video.
59	HB2: Eh, just take, just take.
60	BL: Fuck you!
61	HB3: Cool down, cool down, ma'am.
62	HB2: What?
63	BL: What the fuck is this? What the fuck? You dare to do that again, I kill you [undecipherable yelling] I will sue you
64	in court. I will sue you in court!
65	HB2: Never mind, never mind, take only, call the police.
66	Bl: Go, go call the police, go.
67	HB2: You don't go anywhere you know, the police coming.
68	BL: I am not going anywhere, ask them to come.
69	HB2: Ah yes, you stay, you stay.
70	HB3: Who's the management here? Who's the management here? Who's the boss here? Ask your boss to come
71	and settle this thing. And then ah, don't let the staff stand here.
72	BL: You see, did you see my bracelet, do you see my bracelet, you see, do you see, where my bracelet is coming
73	from. Where my bracelet is coming from?
74	HB3: Ok, cool down, ok, cool down. You cool down first. You go sit down first. Cool down. [In Chinese] <i>Who's the</i>
75	<i>boss? Ask the boss to come.</i>

76	BL: Take my bracelet, put it inside your shop, you still ask me.
77	HB3: Close the shop, call the boss down.
78	Security Guard: We need to contact our in charge la, our security in charge.
79	[The helpful bystanders make sure the security guard has it covered and leave]
80	BL: Take my bracelet, put it inside your shop, still can ask me? They [ie the staff] must have put it there.

### C. Mr Darcy's proposal (The Colin Firth-Jennifer Ehle version)

<https://youtu.be/JF3ueHjUc3k>

1	Darcy: Forgive me. I hope you are feeling better.
2	Elizabeth: I am, thank you. Will you not sit down?
3	Darcy: In vain I have struggled. It will not do! My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how
4	ardently I admire and love you. In declaring myself thus I'm aware that I will be going expressly against the
5	wishes of my family, my friends, and, I hardly need add, my own better judgement. The relative situation of
6	our families makes any alliance between us a reprehensible connection. As a rational man I cannot but regard
7	it as such myself, but it cannot be helped. Almost from the earliest moments, I have come to feel for you... a
8	passionate admiration and regard, which despite my struggles, has overcome every rational objection. I beg
9	you, most fervently, to relieve my suffering and consent to be my wife.
10	Elizabeth: In such cases as these, I believe the established mode is to express a sense of obligation. But I cannot. I
11	have never desired your good opinion, and you have certainly bestowed it most unwillingly. I'm sorry to cause
12	pain to anyone, but it was unconsciously done, and I hope will be of short duration.
13	Darcy: And this is all the reply I am to expect? I might wonder why, with so little effort at civility, I am rejected.
14	Elizabeth: I might wonder why, with so evident a desire to offend me, you chose to tell me that you like me against
15	your will, your reason, and even against your character! Was this not some excuse for incivility if I was
16	uncivil? I have every reason in the world to think ill of you. What could tempt me to accept the man who has
17	ruined the happiness of a most beloved sister? Can you deny that you have done it?
18	Darcy: I have no wish to deny it. I did everything in my power to separate my friend from your sister and I rejoice in
19	my success. Towards him I have been kinder than towards myself.
20	Elizabeth: It's not merely that on which my dislike of you is founded. Long before, my dislike was decided when I
21	heard Mr Wickham's story of your dealings with him. - How can you defend yourself on that subject? - Such
22	interest in that gentleman's concerns! Who that knows of his misfortunes, can help feeling an interest?
23	Darcy: His misfortunes! Yes, his misfortunes have been great indeed!
24	Elizabeth: And of your infliction! You have reduced him to his present state of poverty, and yet you can treat his
25	misfortunes with contempt and ridicule!
26	Darcy: And this is your opinion of me? My faults by this calculation are heavy indeed. Perhaps these offences might
27	have been overlooked, had not your pride been hurt by the confession of the scruples which long prevented
28	my forming serious design on you. Had I concealed my struggles and flattered you. But disguise of every sort
29	is my abhorrence. Nor am I ashamed of the feelings I related. They were natural. Did you expect me to
30	rejoice in the inferiority of your connections? To congratulate myself on the hope of relations whose
31	condition in life is so below my own?
32	Elizabeth: You are mistaken, Mr Darcy. Your declaration merely spared me any concern for refusing you, had you
33	been more gentleman-like. You could not make me the offer of your hand in any way that would tempt me to
34	accept it. From the beginning, your manners convinced me of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish
35	disdain for the feelings of others. Within a month, I felt you were the last man whom I could ever marry!
36	Darcy: You've said quite enough, madam. I perfectly comprehend your feelings...and now have only to be ashamed of
37	what my own have been. Please forgive me for having taken up your time...and accept my best wishes for
38	your health and happiness.
39	
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