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Face and the Organization of Intercultural Interaction

1. Introduction

The concepts of face and face-work have been highly influential in the study of discourse in recent years. They have been used to describe and explain a broad range of phenomena which are associated with the social and interpersonal aspects of human communication (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Kasper 1990, 1994, Tracy 1990, Ting-Toomey 1994). In spite of recent criticism in the politeness literature, the theory of face and politeness put forward by Brown and Levinson (1978/ 1987) remains the most comprehensive account of the principles underlying these phenomena and has been successfully used to account for aspects of language use which would otherwise be difficult to describe. While the framework developed by Brown and Levinson is by no means universally accepted and a number of alternative approaches are now available (e.g. Leech 1983, Fraser 1990, Lakoff 1973, 1989, Penman 1990, Watts 1989, 1992), the face-oriented approach captures features of language use which are fundamental to both the linguistic encoding of politeness and its interactional motivations in a convincing way. Because of the universal as well as culture-specific features of communication which politeness theory attempts to describe, it has particular relevance to the study of intercultural communication.

This paper uses Brown and Levinson's politeness framework as a starting point for developing a pragmatically oriented approach for analysing interactionally problematic and potentially face-threatening events. The approach outlined below extends the analysis of facework beyond strategies of speech act production towards patterns of interaction and discourse

organization. A sample of data from a naturally occurring discourse event will be analysed to illustrate the analytic framework and show its relevance to the study of interaction, with particular reference to intercultural and non-native contexts.[1] This task involves using relevant concepts and analytic distinctions developed in previous research and weaving them into a framework which is dynamic and flexible enough to be put to use in the analysis of conversational interaction. In this respect the paper is an attempt to answer recent calls for more studies which examine politeness from a discourse perspective taking into account the dynamic, situated character of interaction (see e.g. Brown and Levinson 1987, Held 1992, Kasper 1990, 1994). A central goal of the paper is to consider what aspects of language use and discourse need to be described if we are to uncover how politeness operates in ongoing interaction in intercultural contexts, reflecting and monitoring the participants' rights and obligations, their interpersonal relations and the negotiation of discoursal activities.

In arguing for an analytic approach which is pragmatic in orientation, this paper takes the perspective of language users and the contexts in which they operate. This means paying systematic attention to the communicative needs or goals of speakers and the linguistic resources which are used in pursuing and negotiating these goals[2], and relating these to the activities which are interactively constructed in specific contexts. The challenge for any new approach describing aspects of face-work lies in the ability to take account of and conceptualize notions such as goals, strategies, face-threat or face-work as interactive phenomena. In this paper I outline one way of approaching this task from a pragmatic and interactional perspective.

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[1] The terms intercultural and non-native interaction are used here to refer to encounters involving participants from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including second/ foreign language learners.

[2] I use the term goal in a complex and dynamic sense: goals are not static or predetermined, but context-dependent and negotiable in the interactive process (see Craig 1990, Hopper and Drummond 1990).

An attempt to combine the study of micro-level linguistic/ pragmatic aspects of discourse with the study of more global and interactional patterns of organization requires an interdisciplinary approach. The analytic approach presented below draws from the study of pragmatic aspects of second language use (see e.g. Kasper 1981, Kärkkäinen & Raudaskoski 1987, Nyyssönen 1990, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993) and the study of intercultural or non-native (NNS) interaction in pragmatics and interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Gumperz 1982, 1992, Clyne, Ball & Neil 1991, Shea 1993, 1994). It also builds upon the study of social interaction from two perspectives: the 'face' framework proposed by Goffman (1967) and further developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) and conversation analysis (e.g. Levinson 1983, Atkinson and Heritage 1984, Heritage 1989, Drew and Heritage 1992, Psathas 1995).

2. Politeness in Discourse: Some Basic Assumptions

Goffman (1967:5) defines face as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". In this paper, face is understood as a primarily social and interpersonal concept, "located in the flow of events" (Goffman 1967:7, see also Mao 1994:453-454) rather than belonging to the individual, the 'self'. Mutual orientation to face and the mutually recognized need to preserve face are fundamental to social interaction and they are displayed in language use in regular, recurrent ways.

The linguistic enactment of face-work, generally referred to as linguistic politeness, is thus an interactional phenomenon which is reflected in patterns of linguistic action and conversational organization. Participants regularly choose to formulate and construct problematic, or face-threatening, activities in cautious or indirect ways. In addition to avoiding or mitigating potentially problematic actions, participants pay attention to the social and interpersonal aspect of talk by

engaging in positive, mutually supportive face-work. Theory of face and politeness describes the linguistic means through which participants display their concern for their own and their interlocutor's autonomy (negative face) and need for approval or involvement (positive face).

In pragmatics politeness is associated with the selection of socially appropriate means for expressing speaker intentions and achieving communicative goals (Leech 1983, Brown and Levinson 1987, Kasper 1990, Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992, Thomas 1995). Politeness is generally seen as revealed in utterance-level realizations of different speech acts: the assumption is that impolite or face-threatening speech acts must be mitigated by means of various linguistic strategies. Politeness strategies, then, have the combined function of facilitating the communication of impolite or face-threatening messages, and communicating the speaker's polite intention, i.e. his/her awareness of the fragility of face and desire to protect it.

As empirical findings of politeness research have accumulated, Brown and Levinson's theory has been increasingly criticized. Some (see e.g. Kasper 1990, Ide 1989, 1993, Held 1992, 1993) have argued that its focus on goal-oriented, rational and intentional behaviour and its reported overemphasis on potential conflict have been claimed to represent a misguided view of the fundamental organization of social interaction. Others have criticized it for ethnocentric assumptions about the complex forces underlying social behaviour (see Janney and Arndt 1993 for a discussion of the universality debate). Recent research has shown that the most basic assumptions on which the theory is built should be re-examined in the light of evidence from cross-cultural research. It has been argued that the concept of face, for example, may be interpreted in different ways in different cultures and social groups (Matsumoto 1988, 1989, Mao 1994). Similarly, the notion of politeness itself appears to invoke different assumptions about social action in different cultures (see e.g. Hill et al. 1986).

While the extensive findings of cross-cultural research have been highly significant in showing the limitations of the early models of politeness and increasing our understanding of the ways in which politeness operates in the context of broad cultural frameworks, they do not mean that the study of politeness as a global interactional strategy which transcends cultural boundaries should be abandoned. Rather, as Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992:3) point out, we need to distinguish between the study of politeness as it is understood in the normative framework of specific sociocultural groups (first-order politeness) from the study of politeness within a theory of social behaviour and language usage (second order politeness). Only when this distinction is acknowledged can we begin to make sense of the role of politeness in interaction.

The distinction is of particular importance in the study of intercultural communication. While ethnographic information concerning the cultural norms of particular groups may give insight into the participants' communicative style, even detailed mappings of 'first-order', culture-specific views of politeness do not account for what goes on interaction across cultural borders. Although culturally informed expectations may underlie some aspects of behaviour, actual contact encounters are constrained by numerous other contextual features which cannot be explained by reference to the participants' cultural background. The participants (as well as the analyst) are faced with the task of coping with an 'intercultural' situation where resources may not be shared. They have to manage interaction and accomplish various communicative activities in contexts where their own cultural presuppositions may not be valid and where interpersonal relations may be more vulnerable than in interaction between cultural members. To account for the ways in which orientation to face and politeness is manifested in these kinds of situation, it is necessary to examine politeness as a 'second-order' phenomenon, i.e. as a global interactional strategy and resource. This paper will argue that such an approach can ultimately be developed by using the face-oriented

theory of politeness as a starting point and extending it with concepts which describe the endogenous organization of talk and aspects of social activities or events.

In order to overcome the shortcomings of the politeness model, the approach below departs from it in several respects. First, instead of focusing on utterance-level speech act strategies, a dynamic, emergent view of conversational interaction is adopted in which linguistic action is viewed in terms of the negotiation of complex goals and seen as manifest in interactively constructed activities. Secondly, the theory is not viewed as an account of universals in social language use, but rather taken to present "a set of base-line hypotheses" for exploring politeness in different sociocultural contexts (Janney and Arndt 1993:38). Thirdly, the concept of face-work is adopted to cover all linguistic and interactional displays of orientation to one's own and/or the interlocutor's face, and the concept of politeness restricted to other-directed face-work which is geared towards protecting or maintaining face.

In this paper Brown and Levinson's framework is adapted and extended for examining interaction in intercultural contexts, where participants may have different expectations about appropriate situated use of language and where their linguistic and sociocultural resources are not shared. In its attempt to adapt the framework for the analysis of such interaction, the present study builds on the following central assumptions based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) work: (i) politeness is best viewed as a global strategy of interaction which is manifest at various levels of language use; (ii) politeness is context-dependent and negotiable; (iii) politeness is reflected in the dimension of directness/ indirectness (or illocutionary opacity/ transparency) in language use; and (iv) through indirectness, politeness is linked to basic processes of interaction, such as cooperation and the negotiation of intersubjective meaning (Held 1993).

3. The Context of Intercultural/ NNS-interaction

In conversations between people from different ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds the participants cannot rely on the same type of shared knowledge as speakers with shared membership in a culture or group. *Asymmetries* at various levels of language use (Linell and Luckman 1991) shape the way in which the participants construct and organize interaction. The participants may not only have unequal access to the language used, but also different expectations and assumptions of relevant situational and sociocultural patterns of communicative behaviour. For this reason the interpretive resources which they rely on may be fundamentally different (Gumperz 1982, 1992). Further, lack of shared knowledge and resources may restrict the interactants' ability to participate in conversation and make it difficult for them to get their goals or topics accepted as relevant in the context. Lack of control over appropriate linguistic and interactional routines, for example, may make it more difficult for non-native speakers to negotiate a satisfactory relationship with their interlocutors (Kasper 1981, 1989a, 1989b, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990). Similarly, unfamiliarity with situational and sociocultural features relevant in the communicative event may cause pragmatic failure and lead to misunderstanding, embarrassment or offense (Gumperz 1982, Thomas 1983).

Studies of interaction between native and non-native speakers have long noted an increased need to negotiate unshared meaning in such contexts (Long 1983, Varonis and Gass 1985, Gass and Varonis 1991). The efforts to make meanings more explicit by both native and non-native speakers have given rise to a hypothesis that a principle of 'clarity' (Kasper 1989a, Garcia 1993) or 'mutual intelligibility' (Clyne et al. 1991) operates in NNS discourse and explains many of its characteristic features. However, some recent studies point to very different kinds of principles in operation in NNS contexts. It has been noted, for example, that errors, misunderstandings

and partial understandings frequently go unattended and the participants simply carry on without acknowledging any trouble (Firth 1994, Kalin 1995). There are several possible explanations for this phenomenon. First, it has been suggested (Anderson 1988, Aston 1993) that participants in intercultural and second language interaction operate under specific sets of expectation which are typical of these contexts, some form of NNS-specific frame in which 'errors' and problems of understanding are a normal feature of interaction.

Secondly, it has been argued (e.g. Weizman 1993) that there is an increased element of risk in this type of interaction: the interpersonal relationship between the participants may be more vulnerable in NNS and intercultural contexts due to the asymmetries arising from unshared linguistic and sociocultural resources. The interpersonal needs of protecting face may thus be in conflict with the need to establish mutual understanding through explicitness and clarity of communication. For example, while explicit correction of errors or negotiation and repair of misunderstanding may be useful in increasing mutual intelligibility, it may also increase the asymmetry of the context and may, in some contexts, amount to face-threat. Thus, mutual attention to the interpersonal dimension of interaction is often of vital importance and may have an important role in explaining some of the peculiarities of intercultural and NNS discourse.

The interpersonal dimension of language use has been explored in a number of fields. Studies in contrastive and intercultural pragmatics, contrastive discourse analysis and interlanguage pragmatics (see e.g. Kasper 1981, 1989a, 1989b, Thomas 1983, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989, Clyne, Ball & Neil 1991, Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993) have identified differences and similarities in the linguistic action patterns and discourse strategies between different cultures and languages and between native and non-native speakers. Studies in interactional sociolinguistics (e.g. Gumperz 1982, 1992, Erickson and Schulz 1982, Fiksdal 1990), on the other hand, have shown how culture-dependent features of interactive style

may lead to miscommunication and communicative breakdown. Finally, research on discourse organization and negotiation of meaning in contexts involving non-native speakers (e.g. Faerch and Kasper 1982, Day et al. 1984, Kalin 1995) have demonstrated how interpersonal features play a role in the ways in which problems of communication are dealt with and meanings are negotiated in such contexts

While it is clear that different background and resources add to the asymmetry of intercultural and non-native interaction, it is also important to recognize that differences do not always lead to problems nor do they always explain problems which do occur. Recent research has shown that diverging patterns of interaction and language use may be treated as a normal feature of communication and may even be an additional resource which the participants can draw upon in their attempt to negotiate meanings and support or maintain their interpersonal relationship (Anderson 1988, Aston 1993, Piirainen-Marsh 1995, 1996).

In order to deal with the specific constraints and conditions of intercultural and second language interaction it is necessary to employ an analytic approach which is sensitive to asymmetries in the participants' background and their linguistic and interactional resources. It is not enough, however, to treat these as external situational features which constrain and/or explain language use. Rather, they should be seen as emergent and evolving in the interactive context as they are oriented to and made relevant by the participants themselves (see Linell and Luckman 1991, Drew 1991).

In sum, the negotiation of shared meaning and construction of discourse in intercultural contexts is shaped by various asymmetries which arise from the context. The process of negotiation, like all human interaction, may be extremely complex and reflect efforts to seek mutual understanding and shared perspective on the basis of which it is possible to participate in social activities and develop interpersonal relationships. The description of such negotiation requires a

multifaceted approach, in which attention is paid to aspects of language use and patterns of interaction through which conversations proceed and develop. The analytic approach proposed below is an attempt to approach the politeness dimension of communication from a dynamic perspective which takes into account the constraints and resources of intercultural contexts.

4. Beyond Speech Acts in the Analysis of Politeness

Since the early speech act oriented studies, the focus of analysis in politeness research has shifted from utterance-level linguistic realization patterns for different speech act functions to larger units of linguistic action. Held (1993:182) argues that utterances should be analysed (i) *formally* (i.e. in terms of the linguistic forms which signal a particular strategy), (ii) *structurally* (i.e. in terms of structural phases where strategies occur), (iii) *functionally* (i.e. the face-supportive or protective function of an utterance within a pragmatic framework) and (iv) *interactively* (i.e. the place of a strategy in relation to the sequence and organization of turns). While this approach extends the scope of analysis to interactive aspects of speech acts, it is not clear how a structural analysis can be combined with a sequential one in actual interaction. Evidence from conversation analytic studies has shown, however, that functions or purposes of utterances are not the property of any utterance complex, but are interactively defined and open to negotiation by the participants.

Some attempts have also been made to approach speech acts as parts of verbal exchanges or speech events. In studies using ethnographic methods of data collection (e.g. Wolfson 1989, Herbert 1989, 1991, Boxer 1993) samples of naturally occurring speech acts have been collected and analysed with respect to their contexts of occurrence. However, these studies present a limited view of extended linguistic action. Rather than taking a truly ethnographic perspective and examining situated

speech activities, they seem to concentrate on a small number of speech acts which are easy to identify and isolate from their context for detailed analysis.[3] Consequently, problems such as possible ambiguity or indeterminacy of utterances and negotiability of meaning and force in the sequential context of interaction are overlooked.

However, speech acts in politeness work have also been studied in detail by conversation analysts as interactional actions in sequential contexts. Work on invitation sequences (Davidson 1984), requests (Wootton 1981), compliments (Pomerantz 1978, 1984), questions and the seeking of information (Schegloff 1984), offers (Drew 1984) and proposals (Houtkoop 1987), for example, has explicated the intricate ways in which actions are handled cooperatively by the participants in the interactive process. While speech act studies have examined the relationship between the function, form and structure of similar actions, conversation analysts have sought to identify the recurrent sequential patterns (e.g. adjacency pairs or triplets and action chains, see Pomerantz 1978, Houtkoop 1987) in which they become manifest in conversation.

In contrast to the utterance level analysis of speech act studies, the focus of attention in conversation analysis is on the coordination of conversational turns in the management of these actions. The focus also differs from the speech act approach in its orientation: while the speech act approach is primarily concerned with the speaker's choice of strategies in displaying concern for the hearer's face, conversation analysts focus on the ways that actions derive their interpretations primarily from the joint turn-by-turn management of discourse.

On the basis of insights gained mainly in conversation analysis (see e.g. Atkinson & Heritage 1984, Levinson 1983, Heritage 1989), Brown and Levinson (1987:38-42) draw attention to some areas of conversational organization in which politeness may play a central part. They identify close

[3] This may in part explain why some speech acts have received little attention in research.

similarities between various patterns of conversational organization and findings in politeness research. They further propose that not only may patterns of interaction be motivated by politeness, but also deviations from recurrent patterns can be seen in terms of face-threat. Thus, violations of turn-taking rules and sequencing patterns can be related to politeness and face. This observation has special significance in the study of talk in intercultural and NNS contexts: it is in these types of encounter that different norms of interaction come into contact, and, as studies in interactional sociolinguistics have shown, it is when the participants, from their own sociocultural perspective, perceive some aspect of each other's behaviour as deviant or inappropriate that problems and misunderstandings are most likely to occur.

In addition to the locally constructed interactional order, also more global aspects of conversational organization have been related to politeness. The most obvious connections can be seen in conversations in which some interactionally problematic topics are dealt with, as in 'troubles' talk (Jefferson and Lee 1981, Jefferson 1988), remedial interchanges (Owen 1983) and arguments or conflict talk (Grimshaw 1990). Consideration for one's conversational partner and the mutual orientation to face can be seen to motivate the ways in which problematic topics are introduced and closed and the ways in which the participants' relationship is negotiated in the course of talk. Jefferson (1988), for example, discusses the deference shown by conversational partners to the 'troubles' topic, and to each other, in a delicate pattern through which the topic is developed and interpersonal relations dynamically adjusted in line with the organizational developments of the sequence.

An even broader discourse perspective to analysing the politeness dimension is seen in studies which relate politeness behaviour to discourse domain. Studies of institutional interaction, such as courtroom, therapeutic, academic or media discourse (e.g. Labov and Fanshell 1977, Lakoff 1989, Fiksdal 1990, Penman 1990, see also Drew and Heritage 1992) have

drawn attention to the ways in which situational and institutional contexts may constrain and restrict the options and strategies available to the participants. They have also shown how interpersonal concerns play a role in the organization of interactional activities. The ways in which the global situation frame and the organization of discourse shape politeness behaviour remain a primary focus of current work in politeness research.

In brief, recent attempts to extend the study of the politeness dimension of language use towards aspects of interaction, features of speech events and discourse domains, have highlighted the need to adopt a dynamic, multidimensional approach to analysis. In addition to describing the speakers' choices at utterance-level, such an approach must be able to identify the ways in which these choices are produced, interpreted and negotiated in an interactive context. It must also pay attention to more global aspects of discourse, the topics and activities which are dealt with and the ways in which these are managed, and the contextual constraints which affect the process.

5. Towards an Analytical Framework

5.1. A Pragmatic Approach

The speech-act orientation of previous research raises the question of how to combine description of utterance-level linguistic politeness strategies with an analysis of the turn-by-turn interactive organization of conversation. The framework presented below draws from the results of research in intercultural pragmatics, interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis in an attempt to focus on those aspects of interaction which are foregrounded in the process of constructing discourse while managing potentially problematic activities.

The approach is pragmatic in that it focuses on the language users and their situated choices of language use from the resources available. It is thus acknowledged that speakers have various goals in interaction, which they pursue through language, and that some of the language used in the negotiation of goals can be described with reference to strategies of face-work. In this respect the work builds on Brown and Levinson's (1978/ 1987) theory of politeness. A dynamic view of goals is adopted: while the speakers' goals may be shared, overlapping or unshared in the context of interaction, they are complex, context-dependent and negotiable (Craig 1990, Penman 1990). In other words, any one utterance may reflect multiple goals, relating to both the illocutionary point which is intended and considerations of face. Goals are also emergent, that is, they are adjusted and renegotiated in the course of the interaction and may evolve as a result of the negotiation process (Hopper & Drummond 1990).

Some of the goals relevant to the participants in an encounter are made recognizable to other participants and are thus observable in the interaction through linguistic and conversational action. Goals are observable both at the level of *conversational content*, in other words the topics which are talked about (e.g. talking about a party) and the activities engaged in (e.g. inviting interlocutor to the party) and *form*, in other words the language used in utterances at the level of individual turns, and the sequencing of turns in negotiating actions and responses. Content and form in conversation are inseparable, however: the language and structuring of turns cannot be studied without paying attention to the topic and activity in progress. Thus, the meaning and significance of any utterance cannot be determined without the study of its circumstances of use, i.e. its context.

Linguistic action is described in three dimensions. At the most local level the focus is on the (i) *pragmatic acts* which utterances can be said to perform in context, in other words the meaning and force they can be seen to derive in the process of

interaction. Beyond the local level, (ii) the *sequences* or *chains* of action which a particular utterance can be seen to belong to are identified and described. At the global level the description seeks to identify (iii) the *activities* which the interactants engage in through organizing and sequencing actions in particular ways in a conversational encounter.

Pragmatic acts are distinct from speech acts in that they are not utterances with a single identifiable force, but may be conveyed in pieces of discourse ranging from individual utterances to longer stretches of interaction, or may be performed nonverbally (Thomas 1991, Mey 1993). Pragmatic acts thus derive their meaning and force from complex contextual sources which include the speaker's goals or intentions and the hearer's interpretations, the immediately preceding and subsequent discourse and situational constraints. Pragmatic acts and their interpretations are constructed and negotiated in the process of discourse. An act has interactional consequences and affects the organization of the conversational sequence in which it is embedded: it generally projects some form of a response, and often restricts the type of response to some extent. In this way utterances are placed in the interactive context of conversational sequences or action chains. Finally, discourse or speech activities (see Levinson 1979, Gumperz 1982) can be seen to unfold in longer stretches of discourse which manifest particular patterns of action, have a particular (topical) focus and are typically framed by identifiable linguistic and interactional practices. Politeness considerations can be seen to enter into the organization of the conversational event both locally and globally, through all three dimensions. They motivate the ways in which utterances and their responses are formulated and woven into specific types of action patterns or chains and hence shape the activity which emerges over sequences of discourse.

5.2. The Framework

The analytic framework outlined here seeks to capture the dynamics of face-work by adopting a multilevel pragmatic approach in which the management of face-threat is described in relation to conversational content and form at different levels of organization. It seeks to describe what the participants say and do when they are negotiating a potentially face-threatening activity (e.g. dealing with a request or a complaint) and how they orient to and participate in the activity by making use of different conversational and linguistic resources. In this context the term conversational *activity* (Levinson 1979, Gumperz 1982, Goodwin and Goodwin 1992) is adopted to refer to the conversational events and acts that the participants engage in when making, for example, an invitation, request or complaint. Activities are defined as goal-defined, socially constructed, bounded events with constraints on the participants' contributions and typical organizational patterns.

The description focuses on both local and global aspects of discourse. At the local level conversational contributions (utterances, turns) are considered in relation to immediately preceding and (anticipated and actual) subsequent contributions. Description at the global level covers phenomena which are realized in longer stretches of talk, such as sequences, activities and topics. The negotiation of a face-threatening activity is described at three levels of organization: the levels of individual actions and turns, conversational sequences and the potentially problematic encounter. At the microlevel of conversational turns and utterances, the focus is on the goals associated with a particular activity (e.g. making a request), the linguistic choices which can be seen to realize these goals and the ways in which the linguistic strategies interact with turn-taking. The second level consists of the sequences in which the face-threatening activity is negotiated, for instance a stretch of talk where a request is made and responded to. The third level of overall organization involves the study of the patterns of action and

development of topics in the course of the whole encounter. At this level attention is paid to the ways in which different organizational patterns reflect the negotiation of contextual assumptions, e.g. the purpose and goals of the conversation and the participants' relationship.

These three levels, although by no means distinct or independent, provide a useful starting point in the analysis: they enable a systematic focus on a range of conversational phenomena which have different scope in the interactive context and they make it possible to link the description of linguistic patterns with other patterns of organization. However, many interactional phenomena clearly extend beyond any one of the three levels of organization, or may operate and be displayed simultaneously at all three levels. Possible interactional asymmetries arising from the participants' different access to linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, for example, constrain patterns of conversational participation and may lead to difficulties and problems of communication at any level. There may be asymmetries in the ways that individual utterances are produced and interpreted, or in the ways that conversational activities or topics are developed. Thus the three levels of analysis necessarily merge in actual description of data and an important aspect of analysis is to relate the observations on the local level to those which emerge at higher levels of organization.

Below a sample of data is presented for closer examination. The data come from a set of interactions recorded during consultation sessions for foreign students at a Finnish University.[4] The data excerpt will be discussed and commented on in the following sections in order to show how the analytic concepts and distinctions in the present framework can be applied to data from actual interactions.

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[4] I gratefully acknowledge the help of the following students with obtaining the data: Leena Hakamäki, Jessica Münzt and Veera Koskinen.

Excerpt 1

A= Advisor
S= Student

S: ask you on behalf of my friend
A: yes
S: because she is not able to come right now
A: yeah
S: and (.) eeh [we're]
A: [is she] studying here [at]
S: [ye]:s [she's]
A: [okay]
S: studies ( ) (.) one girl from Bangladesh
A: Bangladesh? [yes eeh]
S: [yeah ( )] (.)
A: El Ella Rulalaila (.) [yes]
S: [yes]
A: yes
S: eeh eeh and we are taking with some man- courses (.) management
a trip a trip to Helsinki=
A: = yes
S: and eeh we are taking the train so eeh I would like to ask you eeh
now that we have our students card do we need to go to the eeh=
A: =railway station (.) o:h
S: yes with eeh an extra photograph for?
A: no no if you have the student card it's enough (.) you'll get the
discount with the card (.)
S: a:h mm
A: you just go to the person (.) there and (.) they give you the discount
S: yes
A: so it's only if you don't have the student card you must eeh take a
certificate from us [and]
S: [yeah]
A: (.) one photo (.) [bec]ause
S: [ehm]
A: they'll give you (.) a card of their own (.)
S: hmm
A: but in this case it's not needed
S: yeah (.) thank you so ve [ry much]
A: [so:] does R. have the student card already?

5.2.1. Linguistic and Interactional Realization of Goals

This section describes the microlevel linguistic and interactional resources with which face-threatening action can be expressed and the way these strategies can be seen to operate in the interactive context of conversation. Relevant units of analysis here are the conversational utterances and turns in which the participants recognizably orient to some face-threatening activity at a particular point in discourse. At this level of analysis, attention must be paid to the ways in which the speakers introduce a particular activity into the conversation as a relevant topic and how they make their goals recognizable (or accessible) and acceptable to the interlocutor through various linguistic strategies (Aston 1988). The concepts and analytic distinctions described at the lowest level of analysis are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. The realization and negotiation of goals.

MAKING GOALS ACCESSIBLE
Types of Pragmatic Act (e.g. request, invitation, complaint)
Signals for Identification a. linguistic devices indicating goal (e.g. speech act verb) b. sequential clues (e.g. preceding utterance anticipates a request) c. contextual signals (e.g. gestures, objects or artefacts)
MAKING GOALS ACCEPTABLE
Types of Strategy a. minimizing strategies - weaken (mitigate) force of utterance - typically (but not exclusively) to avoid face-threat (e.g. negative politeness) b. maximizing strategies - strengthen (aggravate) force of utterance - typically (but not exclusively) to enhance face-support (e.g. positive politeness)
Types of Modification a. internal - verbal/ linguistic choices (lexical, syntactic, semantic) - level of directness (e.g. direct, conventionally/non-conventionally indirect) - non-verbal cues b. external - preparatory and/or supportive utterances
Orientation to Face Support, protect or aggravate - hearer's positive face / negative face - speaker's positive face / negative face
NEGOTIATION OF GOALS
Discourse Regulation Other Monitoring Patterns of Turn-taking and Participation

As Table 1 shows, utterances and groups of utterances (utterance complex) can be analysed in relation to three dimensions. First, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the participants make potentially face-threatening goals accessible or transparent to the interlocutor at a particular point in interaction. In pragmatic terms, this level of analysis aims to capture the types of act (e.g. request, invitation) which occur and the linguistic and interactional means with which they are signalled (e.g. linguistic signalling devices such as a speech act verb). An act can be made transparent through specific verbal strategies, in other words linguistic (lexical, syntactic, semantic) choices, and through the use of non-verbal means (tone of voice, prosody, gestures, etc.). In some cases a particular goal is not made linguistically explicit at all, but is implied and inferred through various contextual signals, such as nonverbal resources available in the situational context and sequential aspects of the organization of talk (e.g. through preparatory utterances).

In Excerpt 1 the student is asking the advisor a practical question to do with rail travel and thus seeking advice on a matter relevant to her. She makes her goal explicit to the advisor linguistically by using the verb 'ask' (lines 1 and 18) and using the syntactic formula for a question (*now that we have our student card do we need to go to,* lines 18-19). However, it is not the linguistic signals which define the activity in this context. In order to capture more of what is going on it is necessary to examine other aspects of the interactional context. We can note, for example, that the question in line 19 is anticipated and projected with preparatory utterances. The utterance in line 1 already indicates to the hearer that the speaker has a specific question in mind. The student's turns in lines 15-16 and 18 mark a more explicit move towards the actual question by giving background information on the topic and focus of the question (taking the train, student card) and thus setting the scene for the actual question. The student's utterances here can thus be described as serving a preparatory function.

The second dimension of analysis at this level relates to the ways in which the current goal is made acceptable to the interlocutor. These include strategies for modifying the strength or force of utterances so that they might be received as less face-threatening. The types of strategies available can be described in terms of the ways that they either minimize or maximize the pragmatic force (Held 1993) of the utterance, in other words either mitigate or aggravate the strength with which for example a request or a complaint is expressed. In Excerpt 1 the strategies used in the formulation of the question serve to minimize the force of the utterance: the student expresses her question in a mitigated and extended form rather than stating it bluntly.

In addition to identifying the type of strategy, it is also important to consider the means for modifying the force of the utterance. Following Faerch and Kasper (1989), two types of modification are distinguished: internal and external modification. Internal modification refers to the ways in which the illocutionary force of an utterance may be modified (mitigated or aggravated) through lexical and syntactic devices within an utterance. External modification, on the other hand, refers to modification by means of supportive moves adjacent to the utterance. Here particular attention must be paid to the linguistic choices made by the participants and the level of directness of utterances. Directness is perceived as the degree of illocutionary transparency associated with an utterance, i.e. the relative ease of identifying its illocutionary point or goal (cf. Blum-Kulka 1987: 133, see also Leech 1983: 38). A distinction is made between conventional and non-conventional types of indirectness (see Searle 1975, Blum-Kulka 1987). Both internal and external modification can be identified in the student's turns in Excerpt 1. Internally the student's request for information/ advice is modified with the conventionally indirect form *would like to ask*. The rising intonation used in the question itself may also serve as a mitigating strategy. External modification is

provided in the preparatory utterance immediately preceding the question.

In analysing the directness of utterances in their interactive contexts it is not possible to employ the discrete categories set up in some recent models (cf. Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989). When utterances are embedded in the turn-by-turn organization of discourse and derive their meaning and force in this context, directness must be understood as a relative and context-dependent feature of utterances. Thus, it is more important to examine the combined effect of the linguistic and other means used in formulating utterances than to identify the number and distribution of discrete linguistic strategies. In Excerpt 1 it is interesting to consider the advisor's turn in line 20. This turn occurs in the middle of the student's question: in formulating her question the student hesitates (*go to the eeh*, line 19), thus signalling a word-search or some such hitch in her utterance. The advisor responds to this immediately by offering interactional assistance (*railway station*, line 20), thus showing her understanding of the previous turn and cooperation in constructing the question. The question is actually completed by the student's next turn in line 21. Thus, rather than identifying the act of requesting information/ advice here as a conventionally indirect unilateral act, it is necessary to view it as a cooperatively constructed turn with a design arising from and fitting to this context.

Finally, the ways in which utterances reflect orientation to face can be identified in terms of face-work strategies. Utterances may reflect orientation to one's own or the interlocutor's positive or negative face (strategies of positive or negative politeness) and a goal of enhancing or protecting face. Utterances may also be neutral with respect to face, or overtly threaten or aggravate negative or positive face. (Brown & Levinson 1987, Penman 1990). Brown and Levinson's (1987) categories of on-record and off-record politeness provide the basic framework for this description. If the observations presented above on Excerpt 1 are placed in the face-framework,

we can observe that the student is using anticipatory and preparatory strategies which reflect orientation to the interlocutor's negative face. The student does not state her request immediately or directly on the record, but instead gives the interlocutor clues about what is to follow and thus offers options and invites cooperation from the advisor. By doing this the student in fact achieves a cooperative, mutually face-supportive way of managing the request: the advisor's face is protected through presenting the problem in non-coercive terms, the student's own face is enhanced by showing her as acting appropriately and considerately and, finally, both participants are able to display their willingness to cooperate through collaborative construction of discourse.

It is important to emphasize that the strategies for expressing goals and making them recognizable and acceptable are not mutually exclusive. They may operate within one utterance or turn or across turns of speech, as the speaker adjusts his/her language to the reactions of the interlocutor. Thus, the third dimension of utterances relevant at this level of analysis covers the ways in which the participants cooperate in bringing to focus specific goals and deal with them jointly through a reciprocal exchange of turns. In conversation, speakers are required to continually monitor each other's reactions and dynamically adjust their contributions on the basis of their assessment of current requirements. Linguistic expressions can thus be formed interactively and, as illustrated by lines 18-21 in Excerpt 1, they may emerge through cooperative action as the speakers share the means and resources for expressing and interpreting goals.

A detailed study of the distribution of conversational turns is of particular importance from the point of view of more global aspects of organization. It makes it possible to describe when and how particular activities are introduced into the conversation and to examine the participation framework which the interactants establish in the course of the conversation (see Goodwin 1986, Bublitz 1988, Goodwin and Goodwin 1992).

Some further observations can be made here about the organization of action in Excerpt 1. As can be seen in the first lines of the excerpt, the student refers to and anticipates a request for information/ advice at the beginning of the encounter.[5] By doing this the student establishes herself as the person responsible for the first actual topic of the encounter, and the party responsible for defining the main activity or activities to be dealt with. In this way she also orients to the institutional context of the event. The advisor, however, quickly adopts an active role in the negotiation of the activity (note the overlap in lines 6, 8, 10 and 12). She starts asking questions which seem to indicate a particular understanding of the student's first turns. Her questions (lines 3, 6 and 10) show that she has inferred from the student's first utterances that the question projected has something to do with the student's friend, and that the identity of the friend is somehow relevant to the actual question. As the subsequent turns show, this interpretation is not correct and the advisor has to readjust her understanding of the activity in question. Nevertheless, the questions show her orientation to the event as an active participant, who is taking interactional responsibility for the actions and topics negotiated. It could be argued that this type of interactional behaviour is particularly relevant in establishing the participation framework of institutional encounters. In such settings the institutional representative has knowledge and/or expertise through which s/he is expected to take an active, even dominant role in the negotiation of particular topics.

Through an analysis of turn-taking behaviour it is thus possible to observe how participants cooperate and share the responsibility for initiating topics and activities to be discussed. Similarly, patterns of turn-taking can be related to the ways in which participants negotiate interactional control. One of the speakers may, for example, noticeably inhibit the other speaker from fully participating in the activity and thus adopt a

[5] The tape recorder was turned on by the advisor after seeking the student's permission for the recording.

dominant role in the interaction, which may then be reflected in the subsequent discourse and the outcome of the interaction.

This section has described the linguistic and interactional means with which face-threatening activities can be made recognizable and negotiated in the interactive context of conversation. As the sample of data illustrates, the description of the linguistic patterns and strategies extends beyond the structural or functional properties of the utterance, taking into account aspects of turn-taking and conversational participation. Through examining the negotiation of conversational turns, the production of utterances can be linked with aspects of discourse management, e.g. monitoring the interlocutor's reactions (Faerch and Kasper 1984, Kasper 1989b). In this way it is possible to capture the way in which utterances and actions are negotiated in the time-bound process of talk.

5.2.2. Management of Activities

Beyond the micro-level of linguistic expressions and aspects of turn-taking behaviour, it is necessary to examine the ways in which the participants engage in the negotiation and construction of conversational activities which emerge over a longer sequence of conversation in the form of action sequences or chains (Pomerantz 1978). Potentially face-threatening activities set up expectations concerning the way they should be handled, and in this way shape the organization of the conversation. They generally project some form of a response, and may also restrict the type of response to some extent. The way actions and their responses are formulated can be examined from the perspective of preference organization, or response priority (see e.g. Levinson 1983, Bilmes 1988). As conversation analysts have shown, interactants have methodical ways of organizing responses as 'preferred' or unmarked, on the one hand, and 'dispreferred' or marked, on the other hand. It has been argued (see Brown and Levinson 1987, Heritage 1989) that the different ways of responding can be seen to be related to the

need to maintain face. A face-supportive (preferred) way of accepting an invitation, for example, is generally emphatic and makes use of maximizing strategies, whereas a rejection, which can be seen as a potentially face-threatening action, is often delayed, softened and justified by, for example, giving reasons for refusing. In this way all conversational activities have interactional consequences and affect the organization of the sequences in which they are embedded.

The focus of analysis at this level is on the phase of talk which (ideally) begins with the introduction of a particular face-threatening activity to be dealt with, consists of the negotiation of the activity and its response, and ends when an outcome or a solution achieved in the negotiation and some arrangement for relevant future action is made. Such sequences are identifiable in discourse through the orientation of the speakers to the specific activity to be dealt with. The analytic distinctions used in the description of the sequential management of a potentially face-threatening activity are summarized in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2. The management of face-threatening activities.

PREPARING AND FOCUSING ON THE ACTIVITY
Pre-sequences, anticipatory moves Insertion Sequences, Side sequences Orientation and negotiation of face concerns
NEGOTIATING THE RESPONSE
Sequential patterns for utterance and response Face and response priority: First pair parts — Second pair parts preferred/ dispreferred e.g. request — compliance/ refusal invitation — acceptance/ refusal offer — acceptance/ refusal complaint — denial/ admission
NEGOTIATING PROBLEMS AND IMPLICATIONS
Corrective sequences e.g. meaning negotiation; 'repair' of face damage

In the description of these sequences, attention is paid, first, to the ways in which actions are prepared with anticipatory sequences (pre-sequences), which guide the interlocutor towards a new activity in conversation, and secondly, to the ways that actions project particular types of reaction and response. In this way the analysis aims to capture the ways in which the participants negotiate interpretations of the activity in focus and pay attention to the constraints that the activity sets for subsequent discourse. An invitation, for example, projects a limited set of responses: it sets up the expectation that it is accepted or turned down, and whatever follows an invitation in discourse will probably be interpreted in the light of this expectation. Thirdly, the analysis focuses on the kinds of sequences that the actions form. It is important to find out, for example, whether and how the participants observe the structural constraint of organizing actions in pairs (e.g. request - compliance or invitation - acceptance) or whether the

sequences take more complicated forms and whether there are any observable asymmetries with respect to different participants' expectations of relevant organizational patterns. Through identifying and describing such patterns of organization in the conversation, it is possible to examine how the concept of face and face-threat interacts with the ways that the activities emerge in the process of conversation.

A more detailed sequential analysis of Excerpt 1 shows that there is some asymmetry in the way that topics and activities are understood and negotiated. While the first lines establish the type of activity to be dealt with (request for information/ advice), the participants do not arrive at a shared understanding of the more specific nature of the activity until later on in the interaction. As was noted above, the student's turns opening the main topic are followed by the advisor's questions which seek to clarify a specific aspect of the topic (the identity of the student's friend) before proceeding to the actual request. The sequential pattern which emerges from the exchanges in lines 6-14 is one of insertion sequence. The main activity does not proceed until the topic raised in this sequence is negotiated and closed (lines 12-14). However, as it turns out, the advisor's understanding of the projected activity is not in line with the student's. Lines 15-21 establish the nature of the request and show that the exchanges concerning the identity of the student's friend in fact have no direct relevance for the ensuing talk.

It is noteworthy, however, that the apparent lack of shared understanding is not treated as a problem by the participants. While it is possible to trace the asymmetry to the first two turns by the student (lines 1 and 3) and the subsequent reactions to these turns by the advisor, the sequential consequences are dealt with in an orderly way and no explicit correction or meaning negotiation sequences follow. Instead, the participants quickly adjust to a new phase in the encounter and focus on the actual request when it becomes interactionally relevant (lines 18-22). Face considerations may have a role in explaining this pattern: the participants may be avoiding explicit negotiation of meaning

because such orientation to the asymmetry involved might pose a threat to a balanced participation framework and also to interpersonal relations.

Once the main request is made transparent with an explicit question, it is responded to quickly and efficiently. As was noted in section 5.2.1. the question is constructed cooperatively by the two participants (lines 18-21). In lines 22-23 the advisor gives an immediate, unmitigated response to the question. The response is thus of the preferred type: the advisor complies with the student's request for information/ advice by providing a relevant answer to her question directly and without delay. However, the activity is not treated as complete at this point. When the student responds with only minimal acknowledgements (e.g. *a:h mm*, line 24, and *yes or yeah*, lines 26, 29), the advisor elaborates her response with further explanations (lines 25, 27-28, 30, 32 and 34). The negotiation of the response thus extends until a full acceptance is provided by the student in the form of a thanking routine (*thank you so very much*, line 35). After this turn marking the end of the request sequence, the advisor turns to another topic, raising the question dealt with previously in the insertion sequence (line 36).

5.2.3. Overall Organization

Table 3 outlines the aspects of organization which are examined at the most global level of analysis, that of whole conversational episodes or encounters. At the most global level of analysis, the focus is on the overall development of specific conversational events. Particular attention can be paid to the exchanges at the beginning and end of the conversations, the development and negotiation of interpersonal relations and the patterns of participation and interactional control which provide the framework within which conversational topics and activities are negotiated.

TABLE 3. Global aspects of organization.

CONVERSATIONAL BOUNDARIES
Opening and closing sequences Boundaries of (topical) phases or episodes
TOPIC DEVELOPMENT
Chains of topics and activities
NEGOTIATION OF CONTEXT
Interpersonal relations Interactional asymmetries Patterns of control

The activities at conversational boundaries, openings and closings, are an important aspect of overall organization because they generally reflect the 'ambience' or the atmosphere in which the conversation takes place (Mey 1993: 214). They also often show the participants' attempts to coordinate contextual assumptions and thus make explicit their orientation to relevant aspects of the setting and encounter (e.g. institutional identities, goals and purposes). In opening sequences the participants create the context for further talk, make manifest their contextual assumptions regarding, for example, their mutual relationship, and negotiate an initial domain of 'common ground' on the basis of which to continue. This type of conversational cooperation is particularly important in intercultural and second language conversations where shared background may be very limited and there is a greater need to establish a common basis for further talk. Closings, on the other hand, can be seen to reflect the participants' orientation to the outcome of the preceding discourse and their possible expectations for future interaction.

Conversational topics and activities are the content of the conversation, in other words, what is talked about. At the macro-level of analysis it is possible to focus on the ways topics

develop and follow each other, and the kinds of chains which they form through various patterns of action. Topics which are face-threatening can be seen in terms of episodes in which the speakers deal with some interactional problem or trouble (cf. e.g. Jefferson 1988). By describing such episodes, it is possible to follow the process of negotiation which starts with opening up the topic, focuses on the problematic activity and deals with possible problems and/or arrangements arising from it, and finally leads to the closing of the face-threatening topic.

At the global level, attention can also be paid to the ways in which the participants negotiate contextual assumptions throughout the encounter. The development of interpersonal relations is of particular importance. The distance between the participants, for example, may shift in the course of the encounter. Similarly, various interactional asymmetries arising from the participants' different access to the language used and different background knowledge in relation to sociocultural and situational factors (e.g. institutional position and power) may result in specific patterns of interactional dominance or control, so that one participant may come out as the dominant party, and may appear to achieve her/his goals better than the other.

Further observations can be made on the ways that locally emerging asymmetries influence the development of the conversation. It is important to note that global aspects of conversational organization cannot be examined independently of the local level phenomena. Global phenomena cannot be seen simply as arising from external features of the situational context but must be examined as products of the interactive process. This means that their identification and description must be grounded in a detailed analysis of the local contexts of talk which show the participants' efforts to negotiate meanings and interpretations in real time. Thus the analysis should aim to reveal how global phenomena may become salient in the actual process of interaction and how the participants call upon them to make sense of the current activity.

To illustrate some global aspects of organization it is interesting to examine the end of the interactional event from which Excerpt 1 was taken. After some 15 minutes of talk, the participants arrive at a point where they seem to deal with the previous topic and activity as completed and proceed to bring the whole interaction to a close. Excerpt 2 below shows how the closing phase is accomplished.

Excerpt 2

1 A: I'll I'll try to contact her and (.) so (well.) please drop by
2 S: thank you very much=
3 A: =well maybe=
4 S: tomorrow is it ( ) =
5 A: =well I can try yes (.) to- [tomorrow yes yeah]
6 S: [( ) whenever suits] [you ( )]
7 A: [yeah well] I can try
it
8 of course it depends on-on-on if-if she's there at the moment (.) but
9 anyway I can try even this afternoon (.) so eeh
10 S: thank you ve [ry
11 A: [yeah] but it's lunchtime [so maybe it's not worth trying
12 S: [yeah (.) yeah (.) yeah (.)]
13 A: now
14 S: no
15 A: but if you drop by ( ) tomorrow then maybe I -I know more
16 S: thank you very much
17 A: okay it's no (.) problem [((laugh))
18 S: [nice to see you again]
19 A: you too so
20 S: thank [you]
21 A: [eheh] thought that because I haven't seen you I-I-I thought
22 that well everything (.) it- is- appears all right because
23 usually [it means
24 S: [yes]
25 A: that there is something
26 S: [thank you so very much]
27 A: [laughs]
28 S: [laughs]

As the excerpt shows, the encounter is brought to a close through a gradual transition from the previous topic to pre-closing and closing sequences. In line 1 the advisor indicates a shift towards a closing phase by restating an earlier offer to

contact someone and inviting the student to call on her again in order to find out more information about something discussed earlier. The student responds with an expression of thanks, indicating alignment with the advisor's turn. The subsequent lines (3-16) extend and elaborate this sequence by focusing briefly on relevant details and by ratifying the action agreed upon with a further confirmation sequence (lines 15-16). In lines 16-20 the speakers again take another step towards the closing by exchanging another thanking sequence and a complimentary routine. Finally, the advisor takes up the topic of the student's calling in to see her, thus briefly returning to the topic of the student's visit, and the student responds with a further thank you. The encounter ends with shared laughter.

This excerpt shows how the closing is achieved in a context-specific, orderly and face-supportive way. While the sequence contains typical features of pre-closing and closing routines, it also reflects the institutional context of the discourse event. The advisor's offer of further assistance and cooperation becomes relevant not only as the sequentially relevant response to the previous turn, but also by virtue of her institutional identity, which sets up certain constraints for appropriate behaviour. The ways in which the offer of help is formulated and arrangements are made for future action can be described as face-supportive: they express a cooperative and helpful orientation to the hearer and her problem. In the same way the student's repeated thanking routines mark her identity as client and the recipient of assistance or expert advice. They are also face-supportive in showing appreciation of the advisor's help. Further, both participants contribute to the orderly management of the closing with quick, sometimes partially overlapping responses to each other's turns and mutually supportive turns marking agreement and cooperation (e.g. in lines 4-6 and 11-12). Even though no explicit closing routines such as 'goodbye' are employed, the participants achieve a jointly negotiated and mutually face-supportive exit from the encounter.

6. Concluding remarks

As research on the politeness dimension of discourse has accumulated, the inadequacy of the major theoretical approaches has become increasingly clear. While the link between politeness and linguistic action is still relevant, it is clear from empirical work on a range of settings that this link is not best described in terms of single utterances or acts and their realization under some situational constraints. What remains to be done is to show how face considerations enter into the formulation of utterances and turns in specific interactive contexts. With focus on both linguistic detail and the social process of talk, a pragmatic approach to politeness in interaction can offer both the analytic concepts and methodology to extend the focus of research in this direction.

Future investigations will have to pay increasing attention to the ways in which politeness shapes and is shaped by the process of interaction itself and the way it enters into the negotiation of series of actions and reactions in specific situational contexts. As Kasper (1994: 3210) points out, future research must uncover how the ongoing discourse constitutes, maintains and alters participants' relationship, their rights and obligations and the atmosphere in which linguistic action takes place. In order to tackle these tasks a broader theoretical and empirical basis for analysis needs to be established.

This paper has attempted to make a contribution to this effort by examining the relationship between linguistic and conversational action and the notion of face from an interactional perspective. I have proposed a set of analytical concepts and distinctions drawn from research in various relevant fields in an attempt to outline an empirically workable framework which can be used to investigate a range of communicative events in which politeness and the consideration of face is likely to be a relevant dimension to examine. The specific focus of this paper has been on interaction in settings involving asymmetries of linguistic and interactional resources,

such as intercultural contexts. In order to understand the success or failure of such interaction, it is not enough to identify routine ways of performing actions in different linguistic or cultural groups. What is needed is an approach which allows the investigation of actual encounters where different norms and practices come into contact and are subject to the demands of the time-bound process of interaction. I hope that the framework outlined here proves useful for others engaged in empirical work in the field.

Appendix: Transcription symbols

1. Overlap	
a) beginning of overlap	[yes [yea:h
b) end of overlap	I used to smoke [a lot] more [I see]
2. Latching of utterances	studied here at least one year= =yeah
3. Untimed pauses (less than 1 second)	(.)
4. Timed pauses (1 second or longer)	(no of seconds) e.g. (1)
5. Transcriptionist doubt	( )
6. Verbal descriptions	(laugh) (cough)
7. Intonation: Rising intonation	?

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