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Understanding im/politeness across cultures: and iinteractional approach to raising sociopragmatic awareness

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Abstract
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Keywords
politeness, im, understanding, raising, awareness, approach, sociopragmatic, iinteractional, cultures, across

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UNDERSTANDING IM/POLITENESS ACROSS CULTURES: AN INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO RAISING SOCIOPRAGMATIC AWARENESS*

Michael Haugh and Wei-Lin Melody Chang

ABSTRACT

Politeness is an important aspect of communication, particularly across cultures where misunderstandings can have very negative relational consequences. Yet while various approaches to politeness in the context of second language learning have been developed, such approaches have either been largely atheoretical in their conceptualistion of politeness or have employed models that do not adequately capture participant understandings of politeness across cultures. In this paper, it is argued that an approach encompassing participant understandings of politeness is a more appropriate starting point for raising sociopragmatic awareness about im/politeness across languages and cultures. An interactional approach whereby raising pragmalinguistic awareness about the interactional achievement of particular meanings and actions in interaction is combined with raising sociopragmatic awareness about what underlies evaluations of those meanings and actions as polite is advocated. It is argued that raising sociopragmatic awareness in this way provides learners with the means to analyse differences between the politeness systems of their first and second languages, thereby allowing them to make more informed choices.

Key words: Sociopragmatics, Interactional pragmatics, Politeness, Face, Taiwanese Mandarin, (Australian) English

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1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of helping second language learners to acquire not only the sounds, vocabulary and grammar of the target language, but also its pragmatics has been increasingly acknowledged by both researchers and language teachers alike. Considerable work has been done, for example, on the teaching of various speech acts, including requests, refusals, compliments, in different languages (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Chang, 2011; Ishihara, 2010a; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010; Kasper, 2001a; Yu, 2004, 2011). A distinction which is often made in teaching pragmatics to L2 speakers is that between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). The former includes linguistic forms and strategies (or more broadly "resources") used to convey interpersonal or relational meanings, while the latter encompasses the users' perceptions of the context, including perceived sociocultural norms, underlying the interpretation and performance of communicative acts as (in)appropriate.

Research has indicated that the development of pragmatic competence, whether pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic, can be facilitated by explicit instruction. This is where learners are not only exposed to contextualised input, but are also encouraged to engage in (meta)pragmatic analysis of relevant phenomena, thereby raising their awareness of pragmatic norms in their second language (L2) (Ishihara, 2010a; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Kasper, 2001a; Kasper & Rose, 2001; Rose, 2005; cf. Murray, 2009). There is some controversy as to which particular teaching approaches are more effective (Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Rose & Ng, 2001; Taguchi, 2011; Takimoto, 2008). There are also the very real questions around the agency of L2 speakers in emulating or resisting those perceived norms (Haugh, 2007a; Ishihara, 2010b), their motivation to focus on such pragmatic similarities and differences (Takahashi, 2005a), and indeed whose norms we are talking about in the first place (House, 2010). However, it appears that having students analyse authentic interactions in the L2 at progressively greater levels of complexity is an effective means of promoting deeper engagement with pragmatic phenomena (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005; Kasper, 2001b; Rose, 1994; Taguchi, 2011; Takahashi, 2005b).

Politeness, which forms an integral part of pragmatic competence, has also received attention in regards to how it should be taught. Many of the approaches to the teaching of politeness have advocated a mixture

of explicit and implicit approaches, whereby particular linguistic forms and strategies associated with politeness are taught directly, along with engaging learners in communicative interactions that encourage them to develop their pragmatic competence by putting such forms and strategies into practice (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conejos, 2003). Yet while various approaches to politeness in the context of second language learning have been developed (Bou-Franch & Garcés-Conenjos, 2003; Byon, 2004; Cravotta, 2004; Davies, 1986; Da Silva, 2003; LoCastro, 1997; Meier, 1997), they have been largely atheoretical in regards to the conceptualistion of politeness; or alternatively, they have employed Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, which is arguably inadequate for promoting understanding of sociopragmatic differences in politeness systems across cultures (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003). Previous approaches are also arguably inconsistent with the recent discursive shift in L2 pragmatics research, namely, "the shifting view of pragmatic competence as a monolithic trait within individual learners to an emergent state jointly constructed amongst participants in discourse" (Taguchi, 2011, p. 304), as they employ traditional positivist analytical frameworks.

In this paper, we propose an interactional approach to promoting sociopragmatic awareness of politeness systems across cultures amongst L2 learners. We argue, in particular, that in attempting to teach linguistic politeness to L2 learners, we must pay close attention as to what exactly we are focusing on in attempting to raise sociopragmatic awareness. We propose an interactional approach that draws from recent discursive theorization of politeness (Arundale, 2006; Eelen, 2001; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003), and which is firmly rooted in analyses of authentic interactional data (Haugh, 2007a, b, 2010). We then illustrate how this interactional approach to raising sociopragmatic awareness can be implemented with reference to a particular relational practice, namely, teasing banter. We conclude that such an approach provides learners with the means to analyse differences between the politeness systems of their first and second languages, thereby enabling them to make more informed choices in constituting their second language identities.

2. AN INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO RAISING SOCIOPRAGMATIC AWARENESS

Politeness research has witnessed a discursive turn in the past decade (Eelen, 2001; Locher, 2004; Mills, 2003; Watts, 2003), which involves a shift towards analysing politeness phenomena in longer fragments of authentic discourse, a focus on the evaluation of utterances in context by hearers as well as the speaker's production of them, and a distinction being made between interpretations by participants (first-order politeness) versus analysts (second-order politeness) (Kádár & Mills, 2011). There is considerable debate about how such principles should be implemented (Haugh, 2007b), but there has been a general move away from structuralist accounts of politeness, such as that proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), which focuses on the analyst's interpretation of a speaker's production of "polite" utterances, to more interactional and discursive models of relational work where the participants' understandings are the primary focus.

One broadly discursive approach to politeness that has been proposed in recent times is the interactional approach (Arundale, 2006, 2010; Haugh, 2007a, b, 2010). In the interactional approach, politeness is conceptualised as an interpersonal evaluation that arises in conjunction with the interactional achievement of meanings and actions by participants. The evaluation in question is of *persons-in-relationships*, that is, an individual or group of individuals as construed in a particular society) as connected with or separated from other persons. This evaluation involves casting persons-in-relationships into valenced categories, that is taken-for-granted understandings shared across relational networks about persons and how we expect them to behave in the context of those relationships. In general terms, these range from good to bad, appropriate to inappropriate, like through to dislike and so on. A key set of interpersonal evaluators relates, of course, to the valenced categories of im/politeness, although it is important to note these are not restricted to "polite" and "impolite", but encompass "over-polite", "under-polite", "mock impolite", "mock polite" and so on and so forth.

The way in which connection and separation are conceptualised varies across different languages and cultures, a point which is of great consequence when considering politeness across cultures. In Taiwanese Mandarin Chinese, for instance, connection can be conceptualised in part

as *chengyi* ('sincerity'), while separation can be understood as encompassing *keqi* ('restraint'), albeit not exclusively (Chang & Haugh, 2011; Haugh, 2006). Notions of *chengyi* and *keqi* also intersect in some respects with the basic distinction between *zijiren* ('insider') and *wairen* ('outsider') (Ye, 2004). This contrasts with (Australian) English, where connection-separation can be understood as presumed social similarity and equality, and one's own "space" respectively (Goddard, 2012; Haugh, 2010, 2011). Evaluations of connection-separation are made by individuals, and thus can vary across participants in an interaction. Thus, while participants may all understand that one participant has apologised to another, for instance, they may not all evaluate this apology in the same way. One participant may evaluate the apology as supportive of his person in the context of that relationship (i.e. polite), while another may evaluate it as threatening to his person (i.e. impolite). These evaluations depend, in part, on what the individual participants want, expect, or presume to be appropriate.

However, while evaluations of connection-separation, and thus im/politeness, are made by individuals, it is also apparent that such evaluations are made in recurrent or regular ways across relational networks, ranging from groups of families and friends, to localised communities of practice, through to a larger and more diffuse societal or cultural group. To be a member of such a group means being held accountable, and holding others accountable, for what is presumed to be appropriate, where accountability is understood to involve real-world interpersonal consequences, such as approval and social inclusion or censure and social exclusion (Kádár & Haugh, forthcoming). While in intracultural situations we generally only talk of the understandings of members or "insiders", or what is termed an *emic* understanding, in cross-cultural or intercultural situations we are inevitably dealing with the understandings of outsiders or non-members, or what is termed an *etic* understanding (Haugh, 2007a). In understanding politeness across cultures, then, we are not only interested in the (often variable) understandings of participants themselves vis-à-vis politeness, but also in the contrast between emic and etic understandings of politeness. The advantage of the interactional approach over traditional theories of politeness such as face-based approaches (e.g. Brown and Levinson, 1987) or maxims-based approaches (e.g. Leech, 1983), is that it explicitly allows for and provides the framework for exploring multiple understandings of politeness.

In relation to raising sociopragmatic awareness about politeness across languages and cultures, then, we propose that four steps proposed by Huth & Talgehani-Nikazm (2006) for employing insights from conversation analysis (CA) in teaching L2 pragmatics, can be adapted in the following way.

1. Introduce learners to a particular phenomena (what we term a "relational practice"), e.g. teasing banter.
2. Present examples of the phenomenon in authentic interactions in the learners L2.
3. Compare examples of it in their L2 with authentic examples in their L1.
4. Reflect on differences and similarities between these examples and they ways in which they intersect with different emic and etic understandings of connection-separation, or other relevant sociopragmatic dimensions of politeness.

The advantage of employing this approach over others is that it is also consistent with the recent move in teaching L2 pragmatics towards a greater focus on the understandings of participants, and the use of authentic, naturally-occurring interactions (Haugh & Chang, forthcoming).

3. RELATIONAL PRACTICES ACROSS CULTURES: TEASING IN (AUSTRALIAN) ENGLISH AND (TAIWANESE) MANDARIN

Practices are recurrent and recognisable ways of constructing (sequences of) utterances that afford particular meanings, actions and evaluations. These practices are described as discursive, so as to emphasize that such practices do not exist in isolation, but rather are always defined in relation to other discursive practices, drawing upon them in complex ways. In this approach, then, it is argued that as interpretations of meanings and actions are interactionally achieved, interpretations and evaluations of persons and/or relationships may also co-ordinately arise. When such interpretations and evaluations arise in recurrent and recognisable ways, we suggest this coordinate set of interpretations and evaluations constitutes a "relational practice" (cf. Holmes and Schnurr 2005).

In this section, we compare examples of teasing as a type of relational practice, and how it can occasion evaluations of im/politeness.

Teasing encompasses a diverse and heterogenous range of activities (Keltner et al 2001: 235), but in pragmatics it generally refers to "mocking but playful humorous jibes" directed at others (Drew 1987: 219), often in forms designed to lightly irritate, annoy or goad the recipient (Pawluk 1989: 148). It combines elements of (repeated) provocation and playfulness directed at others, as well as self, running along a continuum from bonding and nipping to outright biting (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997). One of the important functions of teasing is to foster interpersonal and/or group solidarity (Boxer and Cortés-Conde 1997; Haugh 2010; Norrick, 1993; Straehle, 1993), and in such instances can be characterised as form of mock impoliteness (Haugh & Bousfield, 2012). However, it can nevertheless occasion evaluations of impoliteness or offence in some instances.

This potential for offence is particularly evident in intercultural settings where such forms of teasing can be evaluated negatively, even though it is understood by all participants to be (ostensibly) jocular or non-serious. In a set of interviews with Taiwanese living in Australia it emerged that such teasing amongst Australians could indeed be interpreted as offensive (Chang and Haugh, 2010). In the excerpt below, for instance, the Taiwanese informant who has been working in an Australian government department for three years describes her feelings when she witnesses such teasing.

(1) GC: 有時候會蠻 cruel 的, 有時候會蠻殘酷的, 對有時候會覺得有點 mean 這樣, 對,可能他, 有時候講話, 就是例如說 She is a cow, 他就直接這樣講, 或是直接講, you are a cow 這樣子, 對阿所以會很 shock, 不知道怎麼反應, 但是還好不是對我講啦
'Sometimes [people] can be very cruel, sometimes [people] can be very cruel, yes, sometimes [I] feel [they] are a bit mean. Yes, maybe sometimes he says, for example, "she is a cow". He says that directly or even says that directly "you are a cow" [to the person]. Yes, so [I feel] very shocked, and don't know how to react. But luckily [those jokes] are not toward to me'
(Chang and Haugh, 2010)

Yet despite her own negative evaluation of the teasing, she nevertheless recognizes this is a common-place practice amongst Australians. It is also evident, as we shall see, that teasing can occur amongst Taiwanese.

Here we examine two instances where teasing is deployed to foster interpersonal solidarity between participants, first in an interaction between Australian speakers of English, and second in an interaction

between Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese. The data comes from language corpora that are available through the web for teaching and research purposes, namely, the Griffith Corpus of Spoken Australian English (GCSAusE), and the Multilingual Spoken Corpus (MSC) of Mandarin Chinese.[1] We will then revisit the issue of how such teasing, despite appearing to be similar in function as a relational practice, can give rise to diverging understandings or even misunderstandings in intercultural settings.

3.1 Teasing banter in Australian English

In this excerpt, four family members are talking at home after lunch about an unusual gift Melissa has given to Cindy and Bryan. Up until the point this excerpt begins, the other three (Bryan, Tim and Cindy) have been trying to guess what the gift is, but the tone of the conversation shifts into a teasing frame at this point. We use a simplified form of transcription here in order to make the transcriptions more accessible to a wider range of learners. Square brackets are used to indicate overlapping speech, and a dash to indicate a cut-off or interruption of an utterance.

(2a) GCSAusE03: 1:31

1	B:	I mean, is that a crap paint job or is it, is that art[istic?]
2	M:	[Ohh] I just pulled the price tag off it.
3	T:	It looks like [it's been done-]
4	B:	[No I'm talking] about the paint job in general like it looks it looks like obviously they were holding this bit here because they haven't painted that bit. [Where they] were holding it.
5	T:	[Ah right.]
6	M:	[Ooh]
7	T:	[It looks] like it was done with a pen.
8	B:	Does it?
9	T:	Yeah it [looks-

[1] The GCSAusE is made available through the Australian National Corpus (www.ausnc.org.au), while the MSC of Mandarin Chinese is available on request from the COE program at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (http://www.coelang.tufs.ac.jp/english/language_function.html). A review of other available spoken language corpora in English and Chinese can be found in Haugh & Chang (forthcoming) and Chui & Lai (2008), respectively.

10 M: [Oh, I didn't notice that.
11 B: It looks like Joanna's painted it.

12 C: He[hehe.
13 M: [No, I didn't notice that.

Bryan starts by asking about the way in which the gift was painted (turn 1). While there are two candidate answers here, Bryan is being ironic about the paint job being artistic, and is in fact teasing Melissa that it is poorly done. Melissa's response in turn 2 is not directed at this tease, however, so Bryan continues with an account of why he thinks it is not a well painted (turn 4). Tim then takes this tease further in suggesting that it looks like it was done with a pen rather than painted on, implying that it is not professionally done in turn 7, after an initial attempt to tease Melissa in turn 3 was interrupted by Bryan. The teasing sequence is continued by Bryan who suggests that it looks like it was painted by a child through a reference to Joanna (turn 11). While Melissa herself responds in a po-faced manner (turns 10 and 13), repeating that she did not notice the paint job, Cindy's laughter in turn 12 marks this sequence as non-serious teasing.

In a subsequent excerpt from the same conversation, the jocular frame becomes even more overt.

(2b) GCSAusE03: 2:04
14 C: I bet you bought it blind drunk.
15 B: Hahaha
16 T: After you'd been to the Bundy Rum fac[tory.]
17 C: [hahaha]
18 B: I reckon th(h)is is [what Dad t(h)ried]to eat his
19 C: [What a great idea!]
20 B: Chinese with after the [rum and coke] they sold him
21 C: [Hahahahah]
22 B: with too much rum in it
23 T: Yeah, he was [chewing on it]
24 B: [and this is the] result. He's chewed
[on it.] Did he have to get some new teeth while he
25 C: [Hahaha]
26 B: was, when he came back.
27 C: Heheha.
28 ((pause))
29 C: Oh, [that's funny.]
30 M: [Well I thought] it was a joke really.

31	C:	I love it!
32	M:	Ah he he.
33	T:	[What] else did you get at the Moor Park markets.
34	C:	KAhkahkah
35	M:	I bought nothing for you!
36	B:	[Yeah], she knew you
37	T:	[Haha!]
38	B:	wouldn't appreciate it.

Cindy initiates this teasing sequence by suggesting Melissa bought the gift when she was drunk (turn 14), which elicits laughter from Bryan (turn 15), and a continuation of the tease by Tim, who suggests Melissa bought it after a tour of a rum factory (turn 16), which elicits laughter from Cindy in turn. Bryan and Tim then co-construct another tease, with Bryan first suggesting that the gift was used by their father to eat after having had too much to drink (turns 18, 20, 22), Tim then proposing that their father chewed on it (turn 23), and Bryan subsequently claiming the gift looks like it does because of that (turn 24). Cindy displays appreciation of the tease with laughter (turn 27) and explicit approval (turn 29). Melissa then retracts her initial stance in relation to the gift, claiming that she didn't really mean it to be taken seriously (turn 30), and subsequently laughs (turn 32), although Cindy at this point also disaffiliates with the mocking of the gift by claiming she actually did like it (turn 31). Tim then asks what else Melissa bought at the markets, but through his elongated intonation (turn 33), and Cindy's laughter in response (turn 34), this inquiry is also framed as teasing. This elicits a counter-tease from Melissa who implies Tim doesn't deserve a present (turn 35), which is subsequently supported (ostensibly at least) by Bryan who suggests Tim wouldn't appreciate it (turns 36, 38), and greeted with laughter by Tim himself (turn 37).

In this sequence, then, we can see how the teases are framed and interpreted as non-serious or jocular by Bryan, Cindy and Tim through laughter and further elaborating on teases initiated by others. Melissa, on the other hand, initially responds by feigning ignorance that the gift might be treated as a joke, before finally claiming that she really intended it as a playful gift. Bryan, Cindy and Tim thus collaborate in projecting a threat to Melissa's person (i.e. casting her as being overly enthusiastic about a gift that is not very impressive), but at the same time index solidarity amongst themselves. As Melissa eventually goes along

with the teasing, and even launches a counter-tease directed at Tim, which elicits some support from Bryan, the dynamic of this relational solidarity shifts again by the end of this sequence. It appears that her evaluations of the teases are not necessarily the same as those of the others though (cf. turns 10, 13, 29, 34), and that Cindy also shifts her stance in relation to the mocking of the present (turn 31). Ultimately, however, all four participants are able to index relational solidarity through their willingness to engage in mutual teasing.

In the following interaction between two Taiwanese speakers, we can find evidence of the occurrence of an ostensibly similar practice in Mandarin Chinese.

3.2 Teasing banter in Taiwanese Mandarin

In this conversation, two friends (Lin and Chen) are talking about their shopping trip to a department store. At the point where the excerpt below begins, Lin is saying she feels like going shopping again even though she spent a lot of money the day before.

(3) MSC of Taiwanese Mandarin: “Shopping”: 1:30

1	L:	阿，還蠻想逛街的，雖然昨天才花了，大失血，呵呵呵 (Ah, [I] really want to go shopping although [I] just spent a lot yesterday. Hehehe)
2	C:	哈哈哈，可以不要，不要再亂買了嗎？ (Hahaha, can you not buy [any] unnecessary [things] again?)
3	L:	我也想啊！ (I want to [do so])
4	C:	真是的 ([exasperated] Oh)
5	L:	對不起我爸。呵呵呵 (I feel sorry for my father. Hehehe)
6	C:	對阿，真覺得是那個耶，敗家女。 (Yeah, [I] really think that [you] are a shopaholic)
7	L:	屁啦，你們還不是一樣。呵呵呵 (Nonsense. You guys are the same. Hehehe)
8	C:	唉唷，我最近都沒有買東西耶，省錢。 (I haven’t shopped at all recently. [I’m] saving money)
9	L:	後火車站怎麼說？ (How do [you] explain the shopping in the Hou Train

		station?)
10	C:	後火車站誰買的比較多？ (Who did the most shopping in the Hou Train Station?)
11	L:	哈哈哈 (Hahaha)
12	C:	想到這個就很厲害。 (When [I] think of this, [I think you] are amazing)
13	L:	我也是逼不得已的。 (I'm compelled [to do it])
14	C:	你應該要看醫生吧？ (You should see a doctor)
15	L:	哈哈 (Haha)
16	C:	幫你介紹精神病院。 ([I can] help introduce you to a psychiatric hospital)
17	L:	要不然我們下次去士林，士林感覺，便宜，然後 (Otherwise we can go to Shilin next time. Things are cheaper there and-)
18	C:	我覺得我要在你們身邊，你們才不會亂買， 我昨天才離開你們半小時，你們就買了快一萬，呵呵呵 (I think I need to be [there] with you guys, so you won't buy unnecessary [stuff]. Yesterday I was only away for just thirty minutes and you guys almost spent $10,000 NT dollars on shopping. Hahaha)
19	L:	呵呵呵，那下次去士林夜市好了。 (Hehehe. Then [let's] go to Shilin night market next time)
20	C:	哇靠，你們都不帶錢，你們差不多都跟我借。 (Wow. You guys never bring [any] money. You guys almost always borrow [money] from me)
21	L:	你是我們的金主啊！ (You are our financial sponsor!)

Chen responds with a request that Lin not keep buying things so casually without thinking whether they are really necessary (turn 2). Her request is framed as non-serious or teasing through her laughter that treats Lin's previous claim as non-serious, as well as the formal way in which the request is formulated. Lin goes along with this teasing frame by claiming she would like to stop but does in such a way that implies she thinks she probably won't be able to stop (turn 3), to which Chen then further frames the interaction as teasing through a particle indexing exasperation with this implication (turn 4). Lin further aligns with the teasing frame by going on to claim that she feels sorry for her father since she is

(presumably) spending his money (turn 5). This occasions a teasing accusation from Chen that Lin is a shopaholic (turn 6), to which Lin attempts a counter-tease, claiming that Chen is the same (turn 7). Chen, however, rejects the tease (turn 8), and while Lin attempts to tease Chen again (turn 9), Chen successfully counters Lin's through launching her own counter-tease (turn 10). Lin responds with laughter (turn 11), and once again goes along with Chen's tease in claiming she is unable to stop her shopping habit (turn 13). Chen furthers this teasing sequence by suggesting that Lin needs to see a doctor (turn 14), to which Lin once again responds with laughter (turn 15), and then offers to introduce Lin to a hospital for psychiatric treatment (turn 16). While Lin then attempt to move back into a serious frame about their next shopping trip (turn 17), Chen continues the banter by teasing Lin that she spent a lot of money without Chen their to control her (turn 18), to which Lin responds again with laughter (turn 19). Chen then complains in a teasing manner that she is always having to pay for Lin's shopping addiction (turn 20). Lin goes along with this teasing complaint in counter-teasing Chen that she is their "financial sponsor" (turn 21).

In this sequence, then, we can see how the teases are framed and interpreted as non-serious or jocular by Chen and Lin through laughter, going along with the teases, as well as through (attempted) counter-teases. In engaging in such teasing banter, Lin and Chen are ostensibly projecting threats to each other's person (i.e. casting each other as shopaholics), but in doing so are simultaneously projecting support for their relationship. In other words, they are able to index relational solidarity through their willingness to engage in mutual teasing. In this sense, then, it appears the participants are evaluating the teasing not as offensive, but rather as "mock impolite", or at least not impolite.

3.3 Using authentic materials to raise sociopragmatic awareness

In these two excerpts, we have seen how teasing banter can be used amongst Australian speakers of English and Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese to index relational solidarity. While space precludes a more extensive discussion, it is striking just how similar these practices are despite underlying differences in how politeness and relational work more broadly is conceptualised across these two languages and cultures.

Our point in describing this particular relational practice is to demonstrate how such an approach can be used to illustrate similarities as well as differences in politeness systems across languages and cultures. In focusing on developing the sociopragmatic awareness of learners about politeness across cultures, it is important that we do not fall into the trap of identifying only differences, as it is often in interpreting practices that appear, on the surface at least, to be similar that the greatest potential for intercultural offence arises. There are, of course, differences in the ways in which this particular relational practice arises in interactions amongst Australian speakers of English versus Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese. Many of these relate to the pragmalinguistic resources by which teasing banter is accomplished. Others relate to the underlying conceptualisation of connection-separation.

In the interaction between the Australian speakers of English there is an underlying orientation to not taking oneself too seriously (Goddard, 2009; Haugh, 2010), which is what occasions the teasing of Melissa by the others. In the interaction between the Taiwanese speakers of Mandarin Chinese, however, the teasing is reflective of an assumption about their "insider" (*zijiren*) status. By teasing each other, in other words, the two Taiwanese participants can show they are sincere in treating each other as *zijiren*. When we contrast these *emic* perspectives, while we find that such instances of teasing involve co-constructing "solidarity" in both Australian English and Taiwanese Mandarin, from an Australian emic perspective it is not assumed that participants are in fact intimates, but rather participants are simply appealing to the social sanctions that can be levelled at those who "take themselves too seriously". One upshot of this underlying sociopragmatic difference is that while teasing banter can even arise amongst Australian speakers of English who are only just getting acquainted (Haugh, 2010, 2011), it does not readily occur in interactions between unacquainted Taiwanese. Instead, it is something that occurs more often than not amongst intimates, such as family and close friends because of the way in which it (generally) invokes *zijiren* ("insider") status.

Of course, from an *etic* perspective (i.e. when Taiwanese are observing such teasing amongst Australians or vice-versa), this creates the potential for perceived offence. On the one hand, it opens the way for teasing amongst Australians who are not intimates (e.g. work colleagues) to be evaluated as offensive or "impolite" by Taiwanese, as we discussed

in example (1). It also opens the way for Australians to perceive Taiwanese as "taking themselves too seriously" when they do not respond in expected ways to such teasing, as noted in excerpt (4) below.

(4) GC: 就是來迎合他們的玩笑, 但是你又不能讓他們覺得不好笑, 這樣會把氣氛弄得很僵, 所以有時候我會覺得很難去迎合他們的笑話, 很難.
([I] just go along with their jokes, but you can't let them feel [your response is] not funny. This will spoil the atmosphere. So sometimes I feel it is very hard to go along with their jokes, very difficult)
(Chang and Haugh, 2010)

Here the Taiwanese informant reports that she finds it difficult to go along with such teasing, but recognises that her lack of appropriate uptake (i.e. furthering the banter) can spoil the joking atmosphere amongst the interactants. This, in turn, could occasion negative evaluations of her by other Australian participants. In this way, we can start to understand why teasing can be evaluated from a cross-cultural perspective as impolite or offensive in some situations but not in others.

The efficacy of using naturally occurring interactional data to raise sociopragmatic awareness in classrooms was evaluated in multiple ways, including through (1) an examination of the actual research projects students produced using the corpus data, (2) a written survey which all the students taking the course answered, and (3) a focus group conducted with a small number of students in that course, the details of which are reported in Haugh and Chang (forthcoming). It is difficult, of course, to "prove" that raising sociopragmatic awareness actually facilitates better intercultural interactions, given the multitude of variables that one would be required to control for in such a study. However, it was evident from these various evaluative strands that the students responded positively to this approach, and it indeed facilitated greater awareness of the possibility of multiple understandings of im/politeness in intercultural interactions.

4. CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have briefly shown in this paper how two examples of authentic interaction can be used to illustrate a particular relational practice,

namely, teasing banter. We have claimed that such teasing can be deployed to index relational solidarity between participants, and for this reason it is relevant to understanding politeness more broadly. This is just one example of many types of relational practices that can be found across English and Mandarin Chinese. Our purpose here has not been to attempt to describe, let alone prescribe, all the different kinds of relational practices that might be found. Instead, we suggest that engaging with authentic interactional data, and comparing analogous practices across the L1 and L2 of the learners, provides one useful means of raising sociopragmatic awareness amongst those learners. In this case, we are proposing that understanding politeness across cultures goes beyond normative ways of requesting, refusing, complimenting and the like. It requires engagement with the various ways in which participants accomplish their relationships in real-life interaction. Spoken language corpora provide an ideal source of such authentic interactions for language teachers, as we have attempted to show here. On this view, then, raising sociopragmatic awareness is ultimately about giving learners the tools with which to engage in interaction across cultures in more informed ways.

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