GENDER AND (IM)POLITENESS

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1. Introduction

The complex interrelationship between gender and (im)politeness has been explored from a number of different research angles over the past 40 years, particularly within the linguistic sub-disciplines of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. A considerable body of scholarly work exists. In order to account for the key developments which have helped to shape the field, this chapter focuses on key concepts and theories presented by researchers contributing to the subject area. It chronologically catalogues seminal publications, starting with the ground-breaking work of Lakoff (1975). Preceding the now classic accounts of politeness, from researchers including Brown and Levinson, ([1978] 1987) and Leech (1983), the pioneering study of language and gender presented by Lakoff was arguably the first to emphasise the overarching usefulness of exploring linguistic politeness.

The theoretical and methodological developments in the study of gender and language continue to advance the scholarship of politeness to this day. In order to shed light on how these developments can be traced back to significant shifts in the discipline of gender and language studies, this chapter discusses the key advancements in theoretical approaches and methodological frameworks. With the greater level of sophistication of tools and frameworks utilised when examining how gender and (im)politeness intersect, we see the emergence of more in-depth insights into the interrelationship

between the two concepts and also the arrival of productive new avenues for future research. With the overarching aim of facilitating the production of contemporary research in the field, this chapter presents specific examples of recent studies which shed light on how the interdependencies between gender and (im)politeness can be productively explored. The presentation of these analytical examples is also vital for mapping out empirical gaps which still need to be addressed when contributing to the subject area. The chapter concludes with the presentation of productive avenues for future research, highlighting under-investigated areas in gender and (im)politeness scholarship.

2. Key concepts and theories

Early work on gender and politeness tended to have the search for gender differences in politeness use at its core (see Coates, 2004), often using Brown and Levinson's (1978) approach. In more recent years, gender has been more widely conceptualised as something which is discursively negotiated and performatively constituted rather than something that individuals inherently possess within themselves which can simply be mapped from their sex categorization (Butler, 1990). This shift in how gender has been theorised significantly marks the separation of the social from the biological in an attempt to move away from the deadlock of binaries and sweeping statements about how men and women talk. The greater sophistication afforded by the development of theoretical and also, in result, methodological frameworks have enabled researchers to gain a more accurate insight into the nuanced and complex interrelationship between gender and (im)politeness.

The most canonical work to influence the field is undoubtedly Butler's (1990) theorisation of gender performativity, which builds on Austin's (1962) theory on the ability of language to not only describe the world around us but also to shape it. From Butler's perspective, gender is described as a verb, as something that people do rather than something that they inherently possess. Butler (2011) importantly claims that the linguistic resources interactants draw upon in the process of enacting gender have profound effects on their production of social reality. This argument is also encapsulated in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's influential definition of gender:

> [G]ender is not part of one's essence, what one is, but an achievement, what one does. Gender is a set of practices through which people construct and claim identities, not simply a system for categorizing people. And gender practices are not only about establishing identities but also about managing social relations. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003, p. 305)

The emphasis placed upon the relational nature of the enactment of gender has crucial significance for research carried out in the field, as it highlights the vital points of intersection between gender and (im)politeness. Assessments about whether specific types of linguistic behaviour are deemed to be polite or impolite are identified to be both interactionally-achieved and socially-embedded.

In Butler's (1990) original performativity theory, the argument that specific reiterative discursive practices have the power to shape social reality provides a powerful tool for explaining why specific types of linguistic practices are afforded a prototypical status and why other linguistic practices transgress the boundaries of normative expectations. Women and men may be, thus, 'represented and/or expected to behave in particular gendered ways' (Sunderland, 2004, p. 21) and this maps

directly onto expectations, evaluations and judgements about 'polite' and 'impolite' behaviour. Sunderland's work is useful here as she brings in the concept of 'gendered discourses' and describes these as practices which are closely aligned with specific gender expectations and, therefore, deemed more appropriate in specific contexts. This provides an important point of reference for politeness, particularly in terms of describing how particular types of linguistic performances become gender-coded and more or less acceptable for speakers based on gender category. At the intersection of gendered performances and beliefs constructed in relation to these performances emerge productive avenues for the exploration of how gender ideologies permeate discourse and also constrain linguistic practices. The transgression of what Butler (2004, p. 55) describes as a 'rigid regulatory frame', the requirement for 'the embodiment of certain ideals of femininity and masculinity', is integral to the identification of the specific types of discursive behaviours which are deemed to be polite and impolite.

Central to this juxtaposition of micro- and macro-level representations and enactments of gender is the role played by discourse in the negotiation of gendered identities. What many researchers drawing upon this social constructionist framework do is adopt a dichotomised understanding of the concept where discourse is defined both as 'language beyond the sentence' (Tannen, 1989, p. 6) and also 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). This increased attentiveness to the productive tensions between the local, pluralised performances of gender (Cameron, 2005) and the wider, overarching ideologies which regulate them is what brings theorising conducted by Third Wave feminist linguists together (see Mills and Mullany, 2011 for a detailed definition of

Third Wave Feminism). Christie (2000) defines the preoccupation of this approach as being concerned with the ways in which function is acquired by discourse in order to achieve specific purposes in specific contexts.

3. Critical overview of research

We organise this research overview by linking the study of gender and the study of (im)politeness in four key works. They have been carefully selected because they usefully illustrate significant points when developments in the theorisation of gender have directly interacted with developments in (im)politeness as a field of research and because they signal new directions in the study of (im)politeness and gender. The critical overview focuses on Lakoff (1975); Brown (1980); Holmes (1993) and Mills (2003).

Lakoff (1975) is an important contributor to the study of gender and (im)politeness, not just because she is the primary instigator of this field of research, but also because, as this overview demonstrates, the issues she raises have remained pertinent throughout the four decades since her original publication[1]. Current work continues to build on questions that Lakoff has raised about the ontological relationship between social identity and language, the relative power of men and women as distinct social groups and how this relates to the language used by men and women and language used to represent men and women, as well questions about how we come to understand the social meanings generated by utterances. The following account of Lakoff's work therefore highlights continuities in the scholarship on gender and (im)politeness since

[1] At the time of writing, there have been over 1000 citations of this work.

the early 1970s. However, it is important to recognize that Lakoff's (1975) analysis of gender is an application of her (1973) theorisation of politeness, and that although her account, like Brown & Levinson's, builds on Grice's Cooperative Principle, her theorisation of politeness and its relationship to social identity is quite distinct and has quite different implications for gender and (im)politeness research, and these differences are evident in the literature discussed below.

Lakoff's early (1973, 1975) works are often critiqued as a product of their time: the notion of gender is inadequately theorised in the 1975 work; they both follow the models of scholarship in transformational grammar in that they are premised on introspective evidence, including appeals to native speaker intuition; and the theorisation of politeness is formulated as a set of rules. For these reasons and others, Lakoff's politeness framework has rarely been adopted wholesale by (im)politeness scholars. However, elements of the framework are set out below because, although it does not match the systematicity of Brown and Levinson's ([1978] 1987) model, it accounts for the claims about politeness and gender that Lakoff makes and it also articulates insights into language and gender that remain relevant. Moreover, although there are some inconsistencies in the links between gender and linguistic behaviour that Lakoff proposes, her main claims about politeness are not premised on a straightforwardly essentialist model of gender and at times they are not incompatible with recent, performative, accounts of gender. Although Lakoff argues, for example, that women are required to avoid 'the coarseness of ruffianly men's language: no slang, no swear words, no off colour remarks' (1975, p. 52) and instead are expected to 'talk like a lady', she goes on to state that these behavioural patterns are tendencies and are not inevitable (1975, p. 57).

Briefly, Lakoff's (1975) analysis of gender and politeness has an overtly egalitarian agenda. It is premised on her observation that, at the time and in the society that she is writing, men and women are not social equals. Having established patterns of linguistic behaviour that she categorises as 'politeness' in her 1973 work, and which she formulates as a set of rules, her 1975 work is designed to show how these rules tend to function differently for men and women and how they can explain gendered differences in linguistic behaviour. This is worthy of research, she argues, because the differences are both a symptom and a cause of social inequalities: if women are aware of the way they speak, and the damaging effects that their linguistic choices can have, on themselves and on how others perceive them, they can change that behaviour and this in turn will lead to a more equal society. Lakoff does not suggest that there is a simple relationship between patterns of language use and the inequalities that exist in society at the time she is writing, arguing that where differences between men's and women's language are evident, this is 'a symptom of a problem in our culture, not the problem itself' (1975, p. 62).

Lakoff (1975) sets out a case for the existence of a 'woman's language', referred to as 'talking like a lady', and proposes that typical differences in men's and women's speech are due to the different linguistic choices available to them: women are expected to take up different social roles to men and these roles are seen to constrain women's language use in particular. For example, she proposes that women are expected to be 'the preservers of morality and civility' in a society, and that women's speech is therefore required to be more polite. Lakoff identifies characteristics of women's speech in order to make the point that women are, as a result of these expectations, judged according to

the stereotype of the 'ideal woman' who acts as the "arbiter of morality, judge of manners". Articulating the egalitarian agenda of her work, she goes on to state:

> My hope is that women will recognize that such a role is insufficient for a human being and will then realize that using this language, having it used of them, and thus being placed implicitly in this role, is degrading in that it is constraining. (Lakoff 1975, p. 52)

Her argument is, therefore, that by bring women's attention to the roles that are imposed on them, they will have the choice of rejecting those roles, and as a result the requirement to speak like a lady will no longer obtain.

Lakoff's (1975) argument that men and women's talk is different and is typically done for different purposes is set out in detail here because later studies of gender and (im)politeness (such as Brown (1980) and Holmes (1993) discussed below) are predicated on similar claims. It also makes it possible to tease out the distinct influence of Lakoff (1973, 1975) and Brown & Levinson's ([1978] 1987) on the study of gender and (im)politeness. For example, in her (1973) theorisation of politeness, Lakoff formulates the following 'Rules of Pragmatic Competence': (1) Be Clear (2) Be Polite (1973, p. 296) which draws on Grice's (1967) work. She suggests that if a speaker produces an utterance that does not observe the maxims and is less clear as a result, the addressee is likely to assume that the speaker is being polite.[2] Lakoff proposes that the choice of which of the above rules should be followed depends on the context of the utterance, and in particular on the goals of the speaker. If, for example, the primary goal of the speaker is to maintain or promote a particular relationship, she will be more

[2] It is worth noting Lakoff's view that politeness is the result of an evaluation, as that this is also assumed in later works on gender and (im)politeness.

concerned with politeness than with clarity (1973, p. 296). As we show below, this proposition is developed in the work of Janet Holmes even though the model of politeness that she adopts is that of Brown & Levinson ([1978] 1987)

Lakoff formulates three predictive Rules of Politeness: (1) Formality: keep aloof (2) Deference: give options (3) Camaraderie: show sympathy. She argues that, when applied correctly, the Rules of Politeness should be able to predict "why, in a particular culture, a particular act in a particular circumstance is polite, or not polite" (1975, p. 64). American men, it is argued, typically orient towards Rule One: the aim being to communicate as efficiently as possible, while American women's behaviour is generally oriented towards Rules One and Two. As Lakoff points out, this seems to be a contradiction since Formality, according to Rule One, requires the speaker to 'keep aloof' (implying superiority) while Deference, Rule Two, implies inferiority. However, for Lakoff that is the crux of the problem that women face in society. Her argument is that women are required to do contradictory things: they are the arbiters of morality but have no power.

The complexity of the relationship between gendered social identities and (im)politeness is only hinted at in this brief summary, but it is worth drawing out here, as it differs radically from work on gender (im)politeness that follows Brown and Levinson's model. For example, on the one hand, Lakoff presents women's use of politeness as a strategic (and therefore a rational) set of choices, and to that extent it can be argued that she is not assuming that a speaker's social identity is a simple determinant of linguistic choices.

> If [a woman] doesn't learn to speak women's language, in traditional society she's dead: she is ostracized as unfeminine by both men and women. … But what happens if she opts to do as she ought – learn to talk like a lady? She has some rewards: she is accepted as a suitable female. (1975, p. 61)

In assuming that speakers have the autonomy to make choices, Lakoff's position here resembles that of Brown & Levinson's. However, Lakoff also argues that there are disadvantages that result if a woman talks like a lady:

> But she also finds she is treated – purely because of the way she speaks, and, therefore, supposedly thinks – as someone not to be taken seriously, of dim intelligence, frivolous, and incapable of understanding anything important (1975, p. 61)

The contradiction here, that women's linguistic performance *can* be explained as strategic but that this behaviour disadvantages them, raises questions about the extent to which this behaviour is actually chosen. Moreover, if it is the case that women are not aware that certain linguistic behaviours are damaging to the speaker, it would indicate that their use is not a strategic choice. This would imply a lack of autonomy and conscious choice that distinguishes Lakoff's theorisation of politeness from Brown & Levinson's (1978) model. The following account of Penelope Brown's (1980) study of Tenejapan men and women's use of politeness resources illustrates the distinction.

In contrast to Lakoff's account, Brown & Levinson's (1978) theorisation of politeness has very little to say about gender, but it is briefly mentioned in a section that focuses on sociological applications and which draws on Brown's research in Tenejapa in the 1970s (later published as Brown, 1980). Brown's work offers a useful indication of the developments in the study of gender and politeness that follow from Brown &

Levinson's model. For example, as indicated above, both Lakoff's (1973) theorisation of politeness and her (1975) application make generalisations about behaviour across cultures that are based largely on introspection and on her observation of middle-class white American men and women. Moreover, these observations are not the result of a systematic elicitation of data and her claims are not supported with evidence. Brown's work, on the other hand, is based on a systematic study of context-specific interactions within a particular culture, and is designed to make claims only about the behaviour of men and women in that specific culture within a selected set of contexts. Her study therefore engages with the growing recognition, evident in the developments in gender and language scholarship at the time, that the behaviour of white middle-class women should not, as had previously been the case, be seen as representative of all women's behaviour. Brown's study also instantiates a move towards more evidence-based, empirical studies of gender and language.

Brown's (1980) study does build on Lakoff's work, but she observes that so far that work has led to a preoccupation with identifying characteristics of female speech on the basis that "women feel unsure of themselves because they have been taught to express themselves in 'women's language,' which abounds in markers of uncertainty". In opposition to this concern with psychological states, Brown develops her own stance by arguing that her aim is to develop a methodology that allows language use to be analysed according to the specific features that distinguish the speech of men and women in order to show how this is related "in a precisely specifiable way to the social-structural pressures and constraints on their behaviour" (1980, p. 112). She proposes that men's and women's speech needs to be compared within specific contexts of use if gendered differences in language are to be identified and accounted for. Starting from

Lakoff's claim that women are more polite and applying the politeness framework she had developed with Levinson, Brown looks for evidence of face-saving acts in different contexts of use, asking the following questions of her Tenejapan data:

> Under what conditions and in what situations do women actually use more polite expressions than men do in comparable situations? And why? (1980, p. 117)

She also articulates the way in which her analysis is informed by the (Brown & Levinson, 1978) politeness framework she is working with:

> If women are more polite than men, our theory suggests that women are either 1) generally speaking to superiors 2) generally speaking to socially distant persons, or 3) involved in more face-threatening acts, or have a higher assessment than men have of what counts as an imposition. (1980, p. 117)

Brown's analysis shows that the Tenejapan women in her study do use polite expressions differently to the men across the culture-specific interactional contexts in which she elicits her data. Charting the number of face-saving strategies used by her cohort, she argues that the women are "more sensitive from moment to moment to the potential face-threateningness of what they are saying and modify their speech accordingly" (1980, p. 131). She concludes that this is related to the specific power differential between men and women in that society citing, amongst other causes, women's vulnerability to men in a society where "wives, sisters, and daughters are likely to be beaten if there are threats to their reputation" (p. 131). She argues that these women's use of politeness strategies are functional in that they enable the women to avoid the very real consequences of carrying out an unmitigated face-threatening act. Brown concludes that her work addresses a need in studies that relate language and gender at the time she is writing to show "how the ways in which women choose to

express themselves reveal truths about their social relationships and their social status in society" (p. 133).

In her early work Janet Holmes' (1988, 1993, 1995) charting of differences in men's and women's speech, adopts many of Brown's methods: she adopts systematic methods of data elicitation, focusing on naturally occurring conversation, addressing the impact of different contexts of use and focusing on the specific behaviour of a single cultural cohort: in this case men and women in New Zealand. Holmes adopts Brown & Levinson's ([1978] 1987) framework, and assumes that politeness behaviour is strategic. However, Holmes moves on debates within (im)politeness research by engaging with contemporary developments in research on gender and language in which 'women's language' was redefined in a positive light. In particular, however, it is Holmes' rejection of Lakoff's assumption that women's language is 'deficient' in some way (cf Spender, 1985, Uchida, 1992) that echoes developments in the study of language and gender. Indeed her alternative premise is indicated in the title of her (1993) paper: "New Zealand women are good to talk to".

In developing the thesis articulated in the title, Holmes (1993) accepts Lakoff's claim that women are more polite than men and she also builds on her argument that women and men have different interactional goals and that this accounts for differences in their speech patterns. However, she refines this set of premises by arguing that women typically orient towards "social-affective functions" of talk while men orient towards its "referential function". In doing so Holmes takes issue with Lakoff's depiction of 'women's language' as responsible for women becoming 'hesitant, unconfident, spineless creatures' (1993, p. 96). Instead, she proposes that her analysis of women's

language identifies a speaker who is "female, sociolinguistically and pragmatically sensitive, and a cultural rather than a linguistic conceptualization" (1993, p. 91). Holmes supports this claim through an investigation of gendered differences in interactional style, the use of pragmatic particles and the realization of speech functions. Her analysis identifies sex-specific correlations with a number of quantifiable features including: amount of talk; number of interruptions; number and type of hedges including different types of tag questions; number of apologies and number and type of response to apologies; number and type of compliments and response. Holmes interprets her findings as offering evidence that "women respond sensitively to the demands of context" in a number of ways, arguing that the patterns in her findings are not evidence of powerlessness "but should rather be seen as positive features of women's speech". She supports this claim by proposing that the many "facilitative patterns which characterize women's speech in general also characterize the speech of those in leadership roles or positions where they are responsible for ensuring the success of an interaction" (1993, p. 111).

The search for binary distinctions in the linguistic behaviour of men and women, which Holmes's early work illustrates, became less of a preoccupation for gender and language research as the complexities of gender as a social category began to be recognized in the light of work by theorists such as Butler (1990) and Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (1992). As we indicate in section two above, from the 1990s on, scholarship on gender and language increasingly engaged with gender as an unstable construct that speakers achieve through their use of linguistic resources rather than as an essential quality that is reflected in patterns of speech. Mill's (2003) work usefully illustrates how this change in direction has informed the study of gender and (im)politeness. In her book *Gender*

and Politeness Mills develops the social constructionist notion of gender by synthesising it with developments in (im)politeness research by theorists such as Eelen (2001), who had argued that (im)politeness is not an inherent quality of an utterance, but is a quality attributed to an utterance within a specific context of use. Mills adds to this development in (im)politeness scholarship by locating that evaluative behaviour within an established set of social theories that relate discourse and community to gender identity.

Premised on a constructivist model of social identity (see Cameron 2005), Mills' (2003) work is located within the Foucauldian paradigm (Foucault, 1972), which holds that social identity is realised through the subject positions that we take up when engaging in available discourses. Mills (2003, p. 25) argues that, although as individuals we have the illusion that we are able to choose the linguistic resources we use in everyday life, these choices do not take place in a social vacuum. Rather, Mills proposes that available discursive structures constrain what can be said in a particular social context, how it can be said, and who can say it, arguing that "discourses themselves set out the parameters within which those limited choices can be made" (2003, p. 25). The way in which this informs Mills' development of (im)politeness theory can be seen in her argument that judgements about politeness are inevitably linked to judgements about social identity and are also context dependent (where context is theorised within the Communities of Practice paradigm developed by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992):

> … hypothesised stereotypes of feminine and masculine behaviour obviously play a role in the production of what participants see as appropriate or inappropriate speech. However decisions about what is appropriate or not are decided upon strategically within the parameters of the community of practice and within the

> course of the interaction rather than being decided upon by each individual once and for all. (Mills 2003, p. 235)

In her own analysis of interactional data, Mills' approach can be contrasted to Holmes' early work in that, rather than focusing on differences in the way that males and females use and respond to politeness resources, her concern is to analyse what politeness (or more specifically, what is evaluated locally as politeness) is used to achieve within a particular community of practice (Mills, 2003, p. 231).

The four key works discussed in this critical overview have been chosen because they illustrate four key points when developments in the theorisation of gender and language studies have intersected with developments in the study (im)politeness. We conclude this section by indicating just three of the ways in which other examples of (im)politeness research that addresses gender have engaged with some of the issues raised in these key works. The first issue revolves around whether the use of politeness resources is always a strategic choice. Brown (1980), following Brown & Levinson's (1978) model assumes that speakers have an autonomy that is not evident in Lakoff's (1975) model. From Lakoff's perspective, because men and women have been socialised to behave in different ways, women can't simply choose, for example, to use Rule Three politeness (camaraderie) with men because it would not generate the same social meanings as when men are using camaraderie with other men. Lakoff's original study generated a range of scholarship that focuses on (primarily) women's linguistic choices in order to show that they are different to, and more polite than, men's. One example is Ide's (1982) work , which takes up this issue in relation to honorifics, arguing that Japanese women's speech is more polite than men's (p.378) and attributing this to differences in social power. Ide goes on to develop her work on gender and honorifics in

a later study (Ide, 1989) in which she argues against the notion of politeness as strategic, and instead develops the notion of discernment politeness (*wakimae*) which corresponds more closely to Lakoff's theorisation of gendered social constraints on politeness behaviour (Ide, 2005, p. 60).

The second issue relates to the question of whether there actually is, as Lakoff proposed, a distinct 'women's language' that is typically more polite than men's. Although Holmes' early work discussed above suggests that in New Zealand English this is the case, and although Ide's (1982) study suggests that it is also the case in Japanese, following developments in the theorisation of gender in recent years, scholarship in the field has tended to see 'women's language' as an ideology that, as Mills' (2003) proposes, is discursively produced. Okamoto and Shibamoto Smith (2004, p. 4) argue in relation to Japanese, for example, that the qualities of polite speech attributed to women should be seen as evidence of normative expectations rather than actual usage. Moreover, the extent to which these expectations are realisations of a discourse that constrains Japanese women's speech is identified by Inoue (2006, p.1) who argues that this discourse allows Japanese women to be rendered as a "knowable and unified subject both to herself and to others".

The third and final issue that this overview has identified is the extent to which aspects of social identity (such as gender) and the social meanings attributed to linguistic resources (such as (im)politeness) are both the end-products of a socially situated evaluative process of the sort identified by Mills (2003). The complexities of addressing two unstable entities have been addressed in recent approaches to sociolinguistics which draw on Silverstein's (2003) notion of indexical orders and Agha's (2003) notion

of enregisterment as a context for understanding metapragmatic evaluations (see also the chapter on Indexicality and (im)politeness in this volume). This approach has, in turn, led to the development of new methodologies for exploring the relationship between gender and (im)politeness. A useful example is Cook's (2011) work on the indexical scope of honorifics in a Japanese committee meeting which brings to light the way in which gender is just one aspect of social identity that is implicated in the participants' use of honorifics to construct an institutional identity. Further examples of this approach are discussed in the Case Studies section which follows.

4. Case studies

In this section, we provide illustrations of empirical investigations which explore how local performances of indexicalised gendered identities are inevitably constructed against a backdrop of more global expectations relating to these performances. In keeping with the predominant adoption of approaches associated with Third Wave Feminism, the studies presented here draw upon Butler's (1990) theoretical notions of gender. They also articulate productive avenues for future research and aid the advancement of the field of gender and (im)politeness. Apart from highlighting important empirical gaps, we also wish to foreground specific challenges which still need to be addressed by researchers contributing to this particular field of enquiry.

By selecting empirical studies conducted by Planchenault (2010) and Mullany (2011), we aim to highlight the heterogeneity of theoretical frameworks, texts and contexts studied in the contemporary analysis of gender and (im)politeness. The construction of a rich and multi-vocal perspective on the interrelationship between (im)politeness, gender and other types of indexicalised identities is crucial for mobilising scholarship on

how these concepts intersect. This broad perspective, however, can be only achieved by studying the various contexts in which interaction takes place.

Accessing various global settings and analysing data pertaining to contexts which have traditionally received less scholarly attention is one of the key methods of bridging empirical gaps which currently exist in the study of gender and (im)politeness. This issue is addressed by both Planchenault (2010) and Mullany (2011). Planchenault (2010), for instance, moves away from the predominantly adopted approach of studying the language used by speakers of English. In her analysis of communicative practices of a virtual community of transvestites on a French-speaking website, Planchenault (2010) explores how various linguistic devices are used to enact gendered identities. This departure from the hegemony of researching anglophone communities proves very productive as it allows the researcher to highlight language-specific features which have a profound effect on gendered performances and their interpretations. This is also observed in the case of the analysis of a text of introduction (Planchenault, 2010, p.99) presented in Extract 1:

Extract 1

Bonjour à vous toutes, je suis très émue à la pensée de me trouver parmi vous et d'être la copine de la semaine je ne l'aurais jamais imaginé. […] Mercde vos témoignages à toutes qui me donnent aussi la force d'être et un merci tout particulier à Isabelle pour son site.

'Hello to all[f] of you[f], I am very moved[f] to be among you and to be the girlfriend of the week. I would never have expected it. […] Thanks to all[f] of you for your life

stories; they give me the strength to be myself and a special thank to Isabelle for her website.'

In Extract 1, we observe both direct and indirect indexing of gender (Ochs, 1992). The former is visible in the employment of a female term of address, 'girlfriend', and also feminine forms of pronouns and verbs such as 'all', 'you' and 'move'. The overt gender indexing that is observed in the posting is shown to not only be afforded but also necessitated by the prevalence of grammatical gender in French. The majority of comments analysed by Planchenault (2010) follow a similar pattern to Extract 1 and include further female terms of address and feminine forms of lexical choices used by the authors of the online messages. Despite claims of computer-mediated communication (CMC) being able to afford any of its participants a greater level of anonymity with regards to direct indexicality of gender (Graddol and Swann, 1989), evidence from the data collected by Planchenault (2010) indicates that this is not likely to be the case in languages characterised by the widespread use of grammatical gender. This plays a crucial role in highlighting how language-specific features can have influence on the construction of gender identities, politeness and also the 'textual cross-dressing' (Danet, 1998) which is performed by users of the website.

Apart from being indexed directly and overtly through the use of markers of feminine identities, gender is also constructed by means of drawing upon the wider ideology relating to the concept. In Extract 1, this is visible in the adoption of collaborative talk stereotypically associated with femininity. The author of the post uses expressions of gratitude and phrases associated with formulaic politeness to rely upon normative beliefs about how men and women talk to construct gender identities of self and others.

The usefulness of Butler's (1990) performativity approach is highlighted, particularly with regard to unpicking the intricacies of gendered performances and the interdependencies between more local practices and specific global beliefs about the interrelationship between gender and (im)politeness.

An in-depth insight into how the netiquette of the website is shaped by beliefs about gendered performances is also revealed in the analysis of how evaluations about (im)politeness of specific gendered performances are constructed against the backdrop of normative representations of gender – in particular, hegemonic masculinity. This is observed in the analysis of a comment posted by one of the moderators of the website (Planchenault, 2010, p. 92):

Extract 2

> *Et si vous êtes un homme … quelques conseils indispensables: Je pense qu'il est inutile de vous recommander de marcher sur des œufs, et notamment d'abandonner cette 'mâle assurance' qui se confond souvent avec la muflerie.*
> 'If you are a man … some vital advice: I think that it is not necessary to remind you to be extremely careful, and most of all to leave this "male confidence" behind because it is too often mixed with boorishness.'

The noun 'boorishness' is used in Extract 2 in reference to the negative evaluation of some of the practices concerned with enacting hegemonic masculinity. The dissociation from these practices and the performance of hegemonic masculinity plays a crucial role in galvanising a shared sense of identity of the members of the virtual community and also in the representation of the self versus other users of the website.

The choice of this particular research context thus makes a valuable contribution to the discussion of how evaluations about what is deemed to be polite or impolite are affected by the enactment of pluralised gendered identities, which themselves are a result of gender indices intersecting with other types of identities, including non-heteronormative identities. Planchenault's (2010) study highlights the value of accessing under-researched settings and exploring these interdependencies of identity construction from a politeness perspective.

The value of studying localised evaluations of gendered performances in under-researched contexts is also addressed in Mullany's (2011) analysis of language used by ice-road truckers in Canada. With the study of white collar environments still largely dominating the scholarship of workplace discourse and the analysis of gender and (im)politeness, relatively little attention has been paid to various types of working class settings. The choice of this particular context is shown to be productive as Mullany (2011) explores the interrelationship between gender, social class and (im)politeness.

The interplay between these concepts is visible in the interaction presented in Extract 3 (Mullany, 2011, p.76-77), where two members of a community of practice, Rick and Hugh, talk about Rick's working conditions:

Extract 3

Rick's cab. He is talking to Hugh [his boss] on his mobile phone.

01 Hugh: what's wrong with truck now Rick every time I phone

02 you you've got a complaint

03 Rick: Well because I'm fucking tired of freezing in this

04 fucking thing (-) it's fucking cold in here

05 Hugh: If it's freezing I told you to get the fucking thing fixed take it

06 to the mechanic (-) you got a mechanic

07 Rick: So you get me running so I'm running with no heat

08 Hugh: Nobody's fault but your own go take it get it fixed

09 [you've got a mechanic]

10 Rick: [No I'm fucking freezing] all of the time man fucking getting

11 pretty pretty tough to fucking want to go for a load when you're

12 freezing all other time (-) I'm kind of abandoned

13 he [re]

14 Hugh: [Aband]oned? What are you talking ab [out?]

15 Rick: [I'm just] left

16 fucking hanging here like is costing me a fortune just to feed

17 myself

18 Hugh: What have you gotta eat I mean you went through like two

19 grand in a fucking week (-) so what are you what are y- what

20 are you spending it on going to the bar every night?

21 Rick: s- see that's what I mean Hugh you got a totally different fucking

22 attitude when you're up here you come up here and

23 just don't give a fuck as long as you're hauling loads and I

24 don't think that's fucking right

25 Hugh: You've got a mechanic Rick take it over there quit your fucking

26 whining about it

Rick and Hugh employ the expletive 'fucking' twelve times in Extract 3 to strengthen the propositional meaning of their utterances. The enactment of hegemonic masculinity which is observed in this case is not only highlighted by this high frequency of swear words used by Hugh and Rick during the course of their interaction but also by their employment of a range of stereotypical competitive interactional styles, all working to indirectly indexicalise masculinity. When issuing directives, Hugh does not minimise asymmetries stemming from the hierarchical make-up of the team. His employment of directives is characterised by drawing upon direct and unmitigated speech act forms. These can be observed in lines 5-6, 8 and 25-26. Towards the end of the extract, in lines 21-24, Hugh's behaviour is assessed negatively by Rick who accuses him of not being concerned with Rick's wellbeing. Hugh responds by also attacking Rick's positive self-image, describing his voicing of opinion as 'whinging' (line 26).

Despite being stereotypically associated with working-class environments, the enactment of hegemonic masculinity observed in Extract 3 and many other interactions analysed by Mullany (2011) is responsible for the erosion of workplace relationships, which eventually results in two members of the team leaving their jobs.

Linguistic devices used by the truckers and their boss when enacting gendered identities are shown to have nuanced and multi-faceted functions. Expletives and humour, in particular, are illustrated to enact solidarity and collegiality on some occasions but then underpin and run counter to the expression of collegiality on other occasions, which has a detrimental effect on the truckers' workplace relationship over time. The analysis of

evaluations made by truckers in relation to their gendered performances allows Mullany (2011) to deconstruct the normative and essentialist representations of what is assessed to be impolite or polite in this working-class setting. Through the analysis of a blue-collar environment, this study also demonstrates the value of gaining new insights into the relationship between stereotypical assumptions about how gendered identities are indexicalised and clearly correlated with local assessments of (im)politeness.

Importantly, the study of language used in different contexts has enabled researchers to shed light on the relational nature of identity and the fact that assessments about what is considered to be polite or impolite are, as illustrated in the studies presented above, frequently informed not only by assumptions about gender but also other types of identity construction. An important avenue for further research is, then, exploring what is often referred to as intersectionality (Block and Corona, 2016) so how identities such as ethnicity, social class, age and sexuality relate to (im)politeness in tandem with gender.

Planchenault (2010) and Mullany (2011) also demonstrate the usefulness of juxtaposing local, context-specific performances of gender within global representations of what these performances entail, particularly regarding deconstructing gendered stereotypes. The analysis of localised gendered performances plays a crucial role in challenging monolithic and essentialist assumptions about gender. Both studies thus provide a valuable contribution to the discussion of how dominant representations of gendered concepts are reproduced and resisted in interaction. By doing so, they also give empirical substance to theoretical claims about pluralised gendered identities (Cameron, 2005).

5. Summary and future directions

Here, we have highlighted the significant role that gender has played in politeness research since its inception. The two concepts of gender and (im)politeness are inextricably linked and the fields of gender and language studies and the pragmatics and sociolinguistics of politeness owe much to the theoretical and methodological explorations that have taken place at the interface of gender and politeness. As we have illustrated here, some of the most seminal work on gender and language has advanced thinking in the field of politeness studies as a whole. The chapter has tracked the chronological development of the field of gender and politeness research, from Lakoff's early work, through to the culture/difference approach, where more quantitative research emerged (Holmes, 1993, 1995), to the focus to look locally, adopting more qualitative, ethnographic approaches, from Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's (1992, 1999) hugely influential work, through to the more recent adaption of 'discursive' approaches, which also tend to favour qualitative, micro-textual approaches.

While not all research into gender and (im)politeness can be described as feminist, the issue of redressing gender inequalities necessitates the subject area to have a clear political agenda. Articulating it by critically engaging with normative representations of gender is arguably one of the key premises of research conducted in this field and it also constitutes one of the crucial elements that set this area of politeness research apart from others. The continuous effort to redress the negative influence of gendered ideologies on everyday discourse is, however, associated with its own set of challenges.

While the current research on gender and (im)politeness to a large extent critically engages with the dichotomised and essentialist paradigm of gender difference, as illustrated in the case of studies presented above, there is still relatively little evidence of the cross-pollination between the findings of research conducted in this academic research field and the beliefs expressed in mainstream populist discussions of the topic. While we can observe a promising growth of discussions drawing upon the current theorising of gender, the mass media are still frequently culpable for reverting to normative and dichotomised conceptualisations of gender and (im)politeness. We would suggest that one of the challenges facing researchers contributing to this field is addressing this problem by persistently reasserting findings of the latest research into gender and (im)politeness, and placing more emphasis on external engagement.

The field of gender and politeness has come a very long way in the last 40 years, though there is still a great deal of scope for future development. One of the areas that need to be redressed is to examine the interplay between gender and politeness in non-white, non-Western groups. With the exception of a cluster of work on Japanese which we have referred to above in section 3, more empirical research needs to be gathered from non-white, non-western groups. There is also a need to examine the complex interplay between gender, politeness and intersectional identities, including sexuality. Research on gender and sexuality has started to emerge, as we have seen with Planchenault's (2010) work, but there is a need for research to take place across different cultures to ensure that that the field of gender and politeness research becomes more culturally and empirically diverse.

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