Interpreting Impoliteness in the Context of AI

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Impoliteness Interpreting in the Context of AI

Three parts for today's talk:

Part I: Impoliteness Theory
Part II: Impoliteness Interpreting
Part III: Interpreting Conflictive Talks & AI

Impoliteness (& Politeness)
some key concepts

Face:

- the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact (Goffman 1967, p. 5).
- the public self-image that every (competent social adult) member wants to claim for himself (Brown & Levinson 1987, p.311)
- Although the concept of face seems to hail from China (cf. Hu 1944; Ho 1976), much modern writing on face draws upon the work of Goffman (e.g., 1967), Culpeper (2011, p.399).

.*Two components of face*:

- Negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others' (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.312).
- Positive face: 'the want of every member that his wants be desirabl to at least some others … in particular, it includes the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired' (Brown & Levinson , 1987, p.312).

The two aspects of face = basic wants, which every (social) member knows every other member desires, and which in general it is in the interests of every member to partially satisfy (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p.312).

Impoliteness (& Politeness)
some key concepts

FTAs: Face threatening acts

- Acts that 'threaten face', i.e., acts that 'run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker. **By "act", we have in mind what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication …** (Brown & Levinson 1987, p.313)
- Any action that impinges to some degree upon a person's face (typically, orders, insults, criticisms) is a face threatening act (Culpeper 2011, p. 400)
- Two types of FTAs (Brown & Levinson 1987, pp. 65-68):
  - those that primarily threaten the hearer's face, e.g., orders, requests, threats, criticism, contradictions, and the mention of taboo
  - those that primarily threaten the speaker's face (1987: pp. 65–68),e.g., expressing thanks, unwilling promises and offers, apologies, the breakdown of physical control over one's body, and confessions

Impoliteness (& Politeness)
some key concepts

Facework

- 'the actions taken by a person to make whatever he [sic] is doing consistent with face' (Goffman, 1967, p.12).
- People are generally motivated to avoid face threat and are willing to incur costs in order to save face.
- Facework can be designed to maintain or support face by counteracting threats, or potential threats, to face. This kind of facework is often referred to as redressive facework, since it involves the redress of an FTA.

Assessing the amount of face threat of FTAs

Brown & Levinson (1987, p. 74-78): an assessment of the amount of face threat of a particular act involves three *sociological variables:*

weightiness of an FTA:

Wx = D(S,H) + P(H,S) +Rx (B &L 1987, p. 76)

1) Distance (D): a symmetric social dimension of similarity/difference between the speaker and the hearer. It is often based on the frequency of interaction. The reciprocal giving and receiving of positive face is symptomatic of social closeness.

2) Relative Power (P) of the hearer over the speaker is an asymmetric social dimension. It is the degree to which a participant can impose his/her own plans and self-evaluation. Deference is symptomatic of a great power differential.

3) Absolute Ranking (R) refers to the ordering of impositions according to the degree to which they impinge upon an interactant's face wants in a particular culture and situation.

Five Superstrategies for Politeness

Possible strategies for doing FTAs

(Brown & Levinson 1987, p. 316)

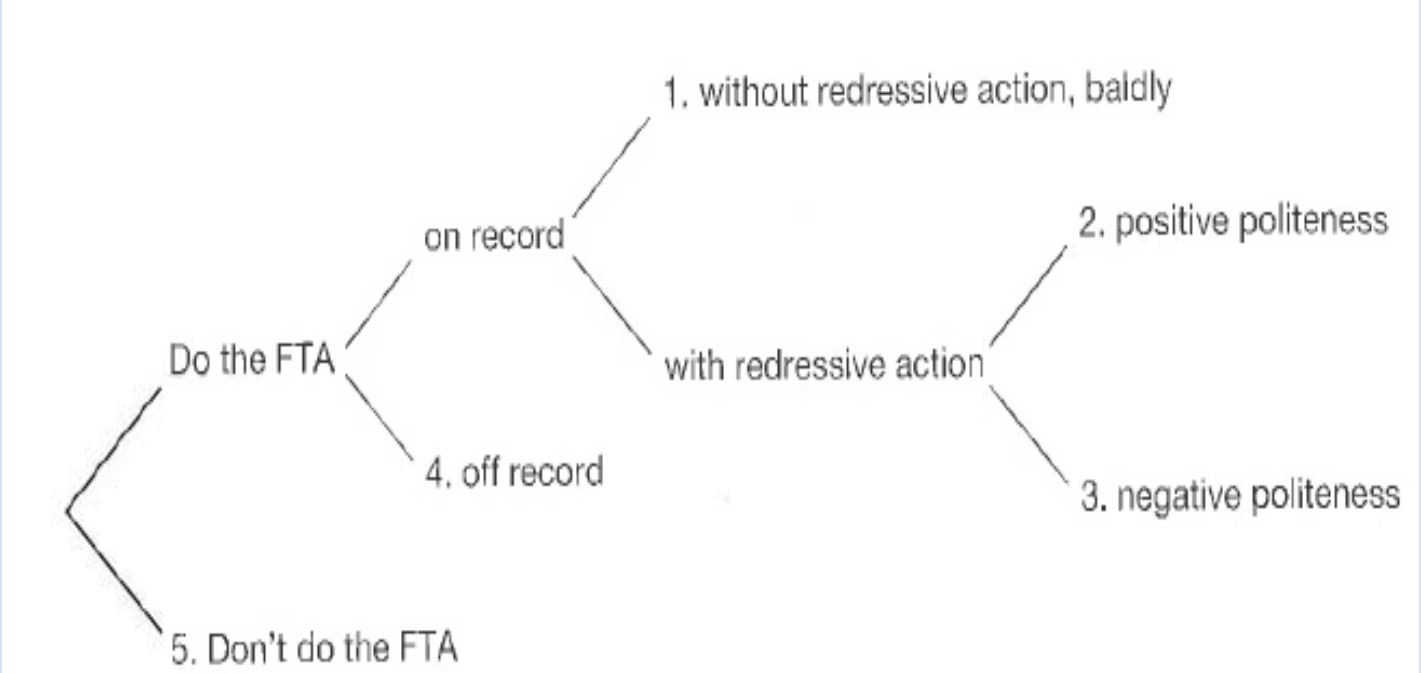

Figure 22.1 Possible strategies for doing FTAs

My view towards the five superstrategies for politeness

They should all be recognised as 'redressive' .

∵ Politeness strategies are designed to counterbalance or minimize the threat to face, to maintain H's face to some degree:

- '**Not doing an FTA**' needs to be understood as 'not doing an FTA' verbally; there are non-verbal acts that function as FTAs. The context for not doing an FTA verbally indicates to the actor that doing the FTA verbally will be seen as impoliteness, The actor thus uses 'silence' to redress face threat, which leads the situation to be similar to that for (verbal) off-record FTAs.

- **Off record FTAs**: : there is more than one ambiguously attributable intention, so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself to one particular intent (ibid.; p. 316). My view: 'the more than one unambiguously attributable intention' is a way designed to mitigate or redress the threat of the FTAs.
- **Bald on-record FTAs**: The context is such that it removes the 'threat' to face, so that the content of the FTA is seen as 'benefit', or 'help', or 'favour', to the actor.

Impoliteness Theory
some key concepts

Impoliteness

[T]he communication of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive verbal face threatening acts (FTAs) which are purposefully delivered:

- i. Unmitigated, in contexts where mitigation is required, and/or,
- ii. With deliberate *aggression*, that is, with the face threat exacerbated, 'boosted', or maximised in some way to heighten the face damage inflicted.

(Bousfield 2008, p. 72)

Impoliteness Theory

Two superstrategies for impoliteness

(1) On record impoliteness

The use of strategies designed to *explicitly* (a) attack the face of an interactant, (b) construct the face of an interactant in a non-harmonious or outright conflictive way, (c) deny the expected face wants, needs, or rights of the interactant, or some combination thereof. The attack is made in an unambiguous way given the context in which it occurs.

(2) Off record impoliteness

The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant's face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature … and can be cancelled (e.g., denied) …, given the context in which it occurs Bousfield (2008, pp. 94-95).

My view towards the two superstrategies for impoliteness

Aggressive FTAs

in contrast to what I called ‘redressive FTAs’ in the case of politeness

Impoliteness Theory
some key concepts

Output strategies for impoliteness:

- Subsumed under superstrategies, are "particular, identifiable strategies, within an appropriate situational context and activity type" (Bousfield 2008, p. 99), such as sarcasm, criticism, shouting.
- Can be verbal and/or non-verbal.

Interpreting Impoliteness

an experimental study

Background

[U]nder many circumstances which arise in conference settings, in press conferences, in technical and commercial seminars, in political speeches to list just a few examples, arguably, the neutral conduit model is a useful ideal, still widely accepted within the profession as the default standard (Gile, 2017, p. 241)

In a conduit model: interpreters are supposed to, or required to interpret whatever is said by a speaker.

Interpreting Impoliteness

an experimental study

Background

AIIC (2022)

Article 10: Fidelity of Interpretation

Interpreters shall strive to translate the message to be interpreted faithfully and precisely. They shall endeavour to render the message without embellishment, omission, or alteration.

Interpreting Impoliteness
the experiment

Interpreting Impoliteness

Definition of the five impoliteness interpreting strategies

Category of potential impoliteness interpreting strategies	Definitions
Attenuation	where the illocutionary force of impoliteness is downtoned or attenuated. Illocutionary force as such is not measurable but can give us some cue as to prevailing tendencies. The constellations of a speaker's behaviours and co-textual and/or contextual features that co-occur in time and space enabled me to properly code cases of attenuations.
Close rendition	where "the interpreter is doing what s/he would actually be supposed to do in accordance with the conduit model of interpreting, that is, reconstructing the level of face threat intended by the original speaker" (Bartłomiejczyk 2016, p. 233). Close rendition mostly relies on literal translation, but this is not so simple, especially for longer chunks of speech texts. If shifts happen, they are often small enough to preserve the level of face threat present in the original.
Omission	zero rendition of the original FTA.
Strengthening	"where face threat present in the original is made more acute" (Bartłomiejczyk 2016, p. 231)
Misrepresentation	where the interpreting is completely different from the original FTA or is based on some words used the original FTA, but the message is incorrect.

Interpreting Impoliteness
Research findings

Interpreting Impoliteness

Research findings

〔1〕

Interpreting Impoliteness
Research findings

〔2〕

Interpreting Impoliteness
Research findings

〔3〕

〔5〕

〔4〕

Interpreting Impoliteness
Conclusion & Discussion

Conclusion

Interpreters are embellishing speakers who are being impolite in their speech (cf. interpreters' ethics).

Discussions:

- For public figures, e.g., in the case of Donald Trump or Nigel Farage, an interpreter may run the risk of changing their public image. Q: do public speakers favour attenuation or close rendition by interpreters?
- In the case of attenuation/omission/misrepresentation/strengthening, how do the interpreting audience feel if they notice the different reaction from audience who uses the SL?
- If attenuation/omission/misrepresentation/strengthening is intentional, why?
- How shall we train interpreting students to interpret conflictive speeches, such as impolite speeches, racist speeches, sexist speeches?

Interpreting Conflictive Talks and AI

- "As non-marginal human linguistic phenomena within certain types of discourse the concepts of conflictive illocutions (in general) and of impoliteness (in particular) within interaction are […] worthy of study, critical consideration, and research" (Bousfield 2008, p.1). Implications for interpreters: no way to avoid

What is the role of AI here:

Generative AI:

- Close rendition regardless of context, or embellishment? If the latter as this research has found, can generative AI judge when to?
- ASR good enough for interpreting? (e.g. can ASR recognise accents, dialects?)
- The human touch; Where mediations are necessary? Ethics issues for sensitive talks, e.g., confidentiality (AI in relation to servers), privacy.
- Low- vs high-resource languages (into vs out of English)?
- Mistakes?

MT output can produce mistranslations that are difficult to spot due to increased fluency, output that exhibits gender and racial bias, and inexplicable "hallucinations" that bear no relationship to the source text (Moorkens & Arenas 2024, p.78).

Interpreting Conflictive Talks and AI

What is the role of AI here:

CAI tools (ASR):

Wang & Wang (2019): Can Computer-assisted Interpreting Tools Assist Interpreting? (Thanks to Marianna for inviting me to give a talk here at UN after you've read this article)

Findings: accuracy, but a mixed picture for fluency

- How is the case for SIM?
- Cognitive load for SIM & CON interpreters (Gile 2009's Effort Models)?

The Future of the Profession

Will AI replace human translators and interpreters?

Reality: AI is changing the world of work

uncertainty: how AI will do so & whether change = positive, or = negative

When **CAT** tools initially emerged, it was widely believed (and indeed feared) that they would radically transform the face of translation and change the role of the translator immeasurably.

To a certain extent, this is true but the impact of such technologies did not transform all areas of translation, primarily because CAT tools are only suited to particular types of texts in particular subject areas. As such, they do not feature as prominently in the work of all translators.

(Byrne 2012, pp. 17-18)

My view:

AI ≠ competitor

AI = collaborator in the workflow

Human T/I: areas demanding higher quality, high value, mediations, etc.

The Future of the Profession

Will AI replace human translators and interpreters?

The Stanford University-led *One Hundred Year Study on AI* report suggests that

> the main opportunity for AI in the coming years is to augment human capabilities, and thus research and development should focus on effective human–AI collaboration (Moorkens & Arenas 2024, p. 83)

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