Politeness and face in Caribbean Creoles: an overview

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1. Introduction

Politeness phenomena have become a fruitful field of linguistic research ever since Brown & Levinson's (1987) classic study on the subject. Studies have dealt with a broad range of issues such as the universality and culturally specific nature of linguistic politeness practices, gendered politeness practices (Lakoff 1975; Smith 1992; Brown 1993; Holmes 1995; Christie 2002; Mills 2003) and the concept of face in the interaction of cultural, social and regional groups in a variety of contexts (Fukushima 2000; Gunthner 2000; Ide et al. 1992). Topics such as making requests, apologies, suggestions, management of conflict, business negotiations were investigated from various analytical perspectives such as interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, sociology, linguistic and cultural anthropology and have made available a wealth of data. They provide important insights into the social and linguistic practices and ideologies of individual societies and make possible cross-societal comparisons.

Surprisingly, politeness theory has generated comparatively little work on Caribbean communities. Most of the existing work on black communities deals with the African American community of the USA (e.g. Labov 1972; Mitchell-Kernan 1972; Morgan 1994; Morgan 2002; Makoni et al. 2003; Abrahams 1976). It focuses on linguistic politeness practices that appear to be distinctive of that community such as conversational signifying and the dozens in order to prove that African American English constitutes a separate (socio)linguistic system. In relation to the origin of these practices, scholars implicitly and explicitly argue that they are either based on similar African practices and/or that they emerged due to the special circumstances of slavery (e.g. ??).

So far, the research on the formation of African American varieties, currently a particularly thriving field of investigation, has predominantly focused on comparing lexical

(cf. Taylor 1977; Huttar 1985) and structural (cf. Smith 1996; Migge 2002, 2003) features in African-American varieties and in their possible sources languages. No attention has been paid to investigating and comparing entire socio-pragmatic domains (e.g. greetings, apologies) including the socio-cultural rules and principles underlying them (Price & Price 1999: 300). However, given the socio-historical context of the emergence of African American societies, it seems that continuities would be more widely found on the socio-cultural rather than on the purely linguistic level (Mintz & Price 1992: 53). Comprehensive knowledge about cultural practices on both sides of the Atlantic would therefore help to significantly further the continuing debate on transatlantic cultural continuities. Mintz & Price (1976 [1992]) and Price & Price (1999) therefore emphasize the importance of integrating social theory and analysis with the analysis of linguistic forms and practices.

Despite the fact that it has long been recognized (cf., for instance, Mintz & Price 1976 [1992]; Price & Price 1999) that the Caribbean region constitutes a rich and interesting cultural and linguistic site where cultural continuities meet with new "creolized" or innovative practices, little research has been devoted to systematically investigating the nature and the origin of these practices. To date, there are but a few isolated strands of research focusing on Caribbean creole communities (e.g. Abrahams 1983a; Fisher, 1976; Reisman 1970, 1974a, 1974b; Wilson 1969). The main reason for the lack of research in this area is that the greater part of sociolinguistic research on Caribbean Creoles has so far mainly dealt with structural aspects of variation and has paid little attention to its socio-pragmatic meanings or to the socio-cultural rules and principles that generate it (cf. Winford 1997). Research on the various facets of the communicative competence (Hymes 1971) of creole speakers is still largely absent (but cf., for instance, Sidnell 2000; Shields-Brodber 1992; Patrick 1997).

The present volume attempts to make a contribution towards highlighting the importance of communicative practices in the Caribbean context by exploring politeness issues in a number of different Caribbean Creole communities (e.g. Suriname, Guyana, Guadeloupe, Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica) and across communities in the region. We decided to focus on one particular region rather than on creole communities in general for a number of reasons. First, the Caribbean (and some parts of South America) is not only a distinct geographical area but it also constitutes a socio-cultural area. Notwithstanding the differences between the different communities of the region, it is clear that all of the modern communities have been affected by the same sociohistorical processes, e.g. slavery, colonialism, struggle for political independence.

Second, the communities also share important socio-cultural similarities (cf. also Mintz's (1996) notion of the Caribbean region as "oikoumene"!). Most of the societies in the region are quite multicultural consisting of peoples whose ancestors originated from such diverse regions as Africa, India, China, Indonesia etc. This internal diversity is, however, largely similar across the region because the populations of the different contemporary societies originated from the same geographical areas. Finally, there have been extensive contacts between the different communities since the beginning by travel, migration, dislocation. Such a mixture of internal diversity and shared cultural roots across the region makes it into a particularly fascinating area for investigating cultural adaptations, innovations and continuities.

2. Traditions of anthropological research in the Caribbean context

There is a long tradition of research in anthropology in the Caribbean, starting with scholars such as Melville J. Herskovits (1941; also Herskovits & Herskovits (1947). These early investigations (cf. also Herskovits 1931, 1938) into "New World Negro" culture centre on their related ancestral West African forms and, particularly, the localization of particular West African linguistic and New World cultural traits.

In the 1960s and 1970s, a new generation of researchers (e.g. Wilson 1969; Abrahams & Bauman 1971; Reisman 1970, 1974; Abrahams 1983a) focussed not only on (isolated) cultural traits and their West African heritage but on cultural processes and "Caribbean transformations", as the title of an anthropological study by Sidney Mintz (1975) puts it. One of the recurrent topics dealt with here is indeed closely related to politeness issues: the structure of the moral and social system of a community and the way values like *respectability* (Wilson 1969) or *sense of decorum* (Abrahams & Bauman 1971) are realised in verbal and other forms, for instance, in the way reputation in the Caribbean is interlinked with names/titles (Wilson 1969: 74ff., Price & Price 1972) or in the "conversational rules" of the performance event "tea meeting" in St. Vincent (Abrahams & Bauman 1971). Because we think that these early anthropological studies are of vital importance to our volume, we will briefly outline some of the most influential and interesting ones (Reisman 1970; Abrahams 1970a, 1970b, 1972, 1983; Labov 1972; Fisher 1976).

One of the most pronounced studies on the duality of cultural patterning in the Caribbean, "both of Creole vs. English speech and of African vs. English culture" (1970: 129) is Karl Reisman's (1970) article on "cultural and linguistic ambiguity in a West Indian

village." He describes how this duality is, however, denied and covered by a set of techniques by which dominant cultural forms are taken on ("masking") on the surface, to be then "reinterpreted" and "remodeled" so that the two cultural strands are woven into a complex of cultural and linguistic expression. The remodelings of European forms, Reisman argues, are to some extent face-saving strategies derived from slavery times:

> Remodelings were not only useful but were a way to redress the harshness of the slavery situation, by turning commands into forms of politeness. The intonation used in "please" in shops in Antigua today is the same as that used in American caricatures of haughty British ladies giving commands to servants. (Reisman 1970: 133)

Reisman also interprets the notion of "respect" – albeit in terms of a postcolonial cultural ambivalence when he writes that "in the Antiguan situation one accepts with "respect" both the status system, with its concomitant self-definition as "low," and the total superiority of the standards and the value of English culture" (1970: 130). The polarization within this status system also entails an assertion of low status privileges and values (e.g. "unruliness", "disobedience", "going on ignorant", etc., cf. also Reisman 1974b on "making noise").

Roger Abrahams' series of articles on verbal performance in Creole culture (1970a, 1970b, 1972, 1983b), published with additional chapters as *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies* (1983a) also acknowledges this status dichotomy in the performance of verbal acts:

> There are two basic categories of behavior, the *rude* and the *behaved*; the former involves *playing the fool* or *talking nonsense*, the latter, *talking sensible*. A wide variety of acts and events are categorized and judged in terms of this basic dichotomy. Rudeness is not always judged as inappropriate by any means. Indeed there are certain ceremonial occasions (like Carnival and wakes) in which it is regarded as appropriate and is encouraged.

Abrahams explores verbal traditions and "creole eloquence" in the West Indies in a series of speech acts (e.g. joking, gossiping) and events (e.g. wakes, tea ceremonies) and describes two kinds of men-of-words performances: *good talking* (or talking sweet, 1972), associated with approximation to Standard English and stylized ceremonies, and *broad talking* (or talking bad, 1983b): "Badinage remains an integral part of the expressive and communicative dimensions of everyday life there. Almost any conversation can develop into an entertainment, especially a contest of wits" (1983a:3). While such cultural practices are investigated for a few communities (e.g. St. Vincent, Tobago), they appear to be widely represented all across the Caribbean region.

Labov, working in a much more structural linguistic framework, was largely concerned with demonstrating the rule-governed nature and distinctiveness of African American speech patterns. While most of his studies focused on phonological and morphosyntactic features,

Labov (1972) explores in great detail ritual insulting, commonly called *sounding* or *playing the dozens*[1]. Drawing on naturally occurring and elicited data, and personal narratives, he investigates the syntactic and semantic nature of sounds and the interactional rules underlying sounding. Sounds may occur in the form of rhymed couplets,

> *I fucked your mother in the ear.*
> *And when I came out she said, "Buy me a beer."* (Labov 1972: 307)

or use formulaic speech patterns as illustrated below.

1. *Your mother is/look* (*like*) _____ (Brand name, person etc. considered ugly, bizzare, e.g. *Flipper*)
2. *Your mother got* _____ (something bizarre, e.g. *a putty chest*)
3. *Your mother so* ___(neg. adjective, e.g. *ugly*) *she* _____ (sentence as in 2, e.g. *got spider webs under her arm*)

[…] (Labov 1972: 309-321)

His investigation suggests that the attributes and topics in sounding are relatively well defined. Attributes (e.g. age, weight, looks, smell) and persons (often mother, sometimes other family members) sounded on are never directly expressed but have to be inferred. Their meaning largely relies on their opposition to dominant middle-class norms of 'proper' speech. It is the cleverness of the means of expression, their absurdity and/or the amount of disgust they invoke in the audience that determines their effectiveness.

Labov also shows that sounding involves distinct highly formalized rules of interaction between several participants (e.g. antagonist A, antagonist B and the audience). It is conventionalized display of verbal skill for its own sake.[2] The effectiveness of a sound is determined by the audience. Approval is signalled by laughter, exclamations like *oh shit! God damn!* (drawn out & high pitched) and/or repetitions of part of the sound. Negative evaluations involve exclamations like *That's too much, oh shit!* (low pitch & sustained). Sounds may be transformed into real insults but people generally select sounds that do not closely focus on the real-world circumstances of their opponent and his family.

Fisher (1976) also gives testimony of the relative distinctiveness of New World verbal routines in his investigation of the Bajan speech event of *dropping remarks* or *remark dropping*. His aim is threefold: to challenge current models of communication, to substantiate

[1]There are other less widely known terms which are used in specific African American communities, e.g. *woofing* in Philadelphia, *joining* in Washington etc.
[2]Labov also distinguishes a category of so-called 'applied sounding'. These sounds appear as part of other interactions largely "to channel the direction of personal interaction in a direction that favors them."(350).

Goffman's (1964) claim that overhearers and bystanders, like ratified participants, shape the nature of on-going talk and to demonstrate that processes of communication are culturally determined. While *dropping remarks* covers several related organized routines "during which the shifting relationship between the vilifier and the target individual is itself the subject of discourse." (227), Fisher's analysis focuses only on the most common type, the so-called triangular form (see the example below).

> A woman chose to wear an overly bright shade of lipstick to a party. She overheard a woman say, "Oh, I thought your mouth was burst," to a man whose lips were perfectly in order. (Fisher 1976: 231)

In this kind of interaction a speaker addresses an utterance to a hearer (the man) with the intention of dropping a remark to an overhearer (the woman wearing bright lipstick). The hearer is not the target of the utterance but functions as what Fisher calls a sham receiver of a veiled comment about some disagreement between the speaker and the overhearer. The remark derives its potency and essentially becomes recognizable as an 'insulting remark' because it is imperfectly integrated into the ongoing talk between the speaker and the hearer. However, the speaker usually also alerts the intended recipient by various other means such as a change in volume, a styled voice, eye-contact etc.

This indirect strategy for escalating a conflict is considered more effective than a direct attack or comment because the speaker does not have to admit to the insult nor do the speaker and hearer have to know all the details of the disagreement. *Remark dropping* takes place during the early stages of dispute escalation while direct confrontations only emerge later.

While some of these studies also work with the concept of "face" (Fisher 1976, Reisman 1974??), they were written before this was also discussed and integrated into a linguistic model of politeness theory. For this volume, we think that a critical inclusion of politeness theory can provide a useful analytical frame for a more systematic investigation into and discussion about these phenomena.

3. Politeness, Face and Personhood

As a lay concept, most competent adult members of a society know what "politeness" means and what kind of behaviour is evaluated as polite versus impolite. Both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of what is commonly referred to politeness, such as saying "thank you" and "please" or making space for others in a crowded area is acquired behaviour and its prescribed rules are part of children's general and linguistic socialization process. As a research issue in

linguistics, the beginning of increased interest in politeness may be placed with the emergence of pragmatics as an important new field in linguistics.[1] Here, the focus of attention goes beyond the everyday notion of politeness (and beyond prescribed etiquette rules) to include a broad range of issues in the study of strategic verbal behaviour in social interaction[2] (and including behaviour which, in everyday notions of politeness, would be considered impolite, e.g. insults).

3. 1 Politeness theory

Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1970, 1972) speech act theory as well as Grice's work on conversational implicatures provided the first theoretical ground for the exploration of linguistic politeness in the 1960s and '70s. Some of the early models of politeness were thus expansions of Grice's Cooperative Principle (CP) (Lakoff 1973), or took CP as a starting point for a model of general pragmatics (Leech 1983) which would then include a Politeness Principle (PP) with six or more maxims (Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy). The PP in Leech's terms is meant to regulate the "social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative in the first place" (1983: 82).

The approach politeness theory is most commonly associated with, however, is Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson's book (1987) *Politeness. Some Universals in Language Usage*, first published (in Goody 1978) as an extended, book-long article in a collection on politeness phenomena. Though controversial, it remains an important reference point and still the most influential model of politeness up to date. Central to Brown and Levinson's model is the notion of "face", a term that is borrowed from and associated with the sociologist Erving Goffman (1967, 1971). Face here is defined as "the public self-image that every member [of a society] wants to claim for himself" [or herself] and seen as something that "is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction" (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61). Face consists of two related aspects, of *'negative face*', "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom of imposition", and of *'positive face'*, "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (ibid).

Both negative and positive face can be damaged or threatened and some verbal acts are inherently "face threatening acts (FTAs)": directives or requests, for instance, restrict an

individual's claim to freedom of action and freedom of imposition and are examples of negative FTAs. Insults or criticism, on the other hand, violate an individual's desire to be liked and approved of and are thus positive FTAs. The central goal of Brown and Levinson's theory is to specify the circumstances in which a set of five specified general politeness strategies will be selected. Positive politeness and negative politeness are two such policies, "redressive actions" which are used to either minimize a particular face threatening act (especially negative politeness) or widened to the appreciation of the addressee's wants in general (positive politeness). Thus, to claim common ground, to notice and attend to the hearer's interests, to use in-group identity markers are strategies to enhance the hearer's positive face, whereas indirectness, apologies, impersonalizations are ways to make a negative face threat (e.g. a request) less imposing. Brown and Levinson (1987: 74) maintain that in many, and perhaps all cultures, the seriousness of a FTA is assessed by taking into account the factors (i) 'social distance' (D) of S (speaker) and H (hearer), (ii) the relative 'power' (P) of S and H, and (iii) the absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture.

3. 2 Criticism

Among the criticism on Brown and Levinson's model[3], and perhaps the point most relevant to this volume, is their claim to *universality*. While acknowledging that there are intercultural differences in politeness – the factors D, P, and R may result in differing levels of weightiness (Wx) – the general framework of face threatening acts and the associated politeness strategies are assumed to be shared. This is something which has been questioned by scholars such as Wierzbicka (1985, 1991) who asserts that cultural norms, such as directness/indirectness, self-assertion, intimacy, which are reflected in speech acts, differ not only from one language to another, but also from regional and social variety to another. As Meier contends,

> Each speech community has means to communicate deference, mitigation, directness, and indirectness, etc. It dare not be assumed, however, that these means will find functional equivalence across languages and cultures. The folk notion of one culture being 'more or less polite' than another can be ascribed to one language using linguistic forms, for example, that are associated with a different meaning in a comparable context in another speech community. Politeness can be said to be universal only in the sense that every society has some sort of norms for appropriate behavior […]. (Meier 1995: 338)

Such a speech community-based view on politeness is something we emphatically would like to take up in our culture-specific explorations of politeness phenomena in the Caribbean region.

The second issue in politeness theories which seems particularly relevant for our volume is the idea of *normativity*, i.e. the evaluation of polite behaviour as a shared social norm. Politeness theories generally assume shared expectations of the behaviour of an adult, competent person in social and interpersonal interaction (cf. Eelen 2001: 121-41 for an overview and comparison). The acquisition of verbal (and other) behaviour which is considered appropriate and "normal" by the majority of the community is also regarded as part of children's socialization. As Arndt & Janney put it,

> All people in a culture who wish to be regarded as normal must eventually learn to make roughly similar types of inferences about their experiences. The penalty for not doing this is social exclusion, being labeled abnormal, retarded, defective, or deviant. […] Frameworks [of common knowledge, experience, expectations, and beliefs that enable people to be tactful] are absolutely essential to tactful communication because without them, as Mead […] points out, people cannot think about their own projected behaviour from the perspective of the 'generalised other' and imagine how it might be interpreted or what its consequences might be. (Arndt & Janney 1992: 30-31)

While Brown and Levinson focus more on the individual rather than on cultural norms, they implicitly also acknowledge the presence of shared norms by excluding, at least partially, "juvenile, mad, incapacitated persons" from their framework. The Caribbean seems a praticularly interesting site to explore the value of the concept 'normativity' in politeness: first because of the region's many different cultural influences and a long history of parallel societies with highly different norms and evaluations of behaviour which has its origin in the slavery period. And secondly, because of the resulting long tradition of undermining norms and evaluations of the dominant stratum of society.

3. 3 Face and self

The third notion which will be dealt with extensively in the contributions to this volume is that of *face*. As noted above, this is a key concept in Brown and Levinson's model. Their use of the term face, however, although derived from Goffman, differs in many aspects from his original concept[4]. As Watts (2003: 102) points out in his criticism, Brown & Levinson's perception of face is a highly individualistic one, which may not apply to "'cultures' where the individual is defined by virtue of his or her membership in the social group". But even without stressing cultural differences, the notion of 'face' in Goffman's theory contrasts with such an exclusively individualistic view and is part of a social theory of the *self*.

In his writings on face and self (cf. Goffman 1955, 1956, 1967), Goffman presents two different images of self (cf. also Branaman 1997: xivii): a) The self as a social product, and b)

The self as an individual's construct where the individual is able to strategically manipulate the social situation and others' impressions of themselves. Both images have seemingly contradictory aspects to them: The self may be socially determined, but an individual can also behave in ways out of keeping with social norms. The self may be something that is constantly constructed by the individual in social interaction, but the individual is also restricted in that he or she cannot choose freely the image of self they would like to present. Rather, this self-image has to comply with the status, role and relationship it is granted by the possibilities of the social order. In other words, the construction of self is an ongoing process in which social determinants are in constant negotiation with the individual's strategies of self-presentation. Face plays an important part in this interaction as it is described as an "image of self delinated in terms of approved social attributes" (Goffman [1955] 1967: 5). Watts (2003: 105) describes the relation between self and face as follows:

> For Goffman face is a socially attributed aspect of self that is on loan for the duration of the interaction in accordance with the line or lines that the individual has adopted for the purposes of that interaction. It does not reside in or on the individual. As a social attribution, it cannot be the image that an individual wishes to have accepted by the other participants. The self, however, can be transformed by social interaction from a social attribution to an individual attribution.

In cases of incongruence between the individual self-claim and the possibilities granted by the social order – or in cases of unconvincing performance –, the self can also be violated: "Any event which demonstrates that someone has made a false claim, defining himself as something which he is not, tends to destroy him. If others realize that the person's conception of self has been contradicted and discredited, then the person tends to be destroyed in the eyes of others" (Goffman [1952] reprinted in Branaman & Lemert 1997: 16).

Goffman's focus on face and the presentation of self in everyday life is a particularly significant starting point for explorations of social roles and of the public and private self in the Caribbean. Verbal performance plays a large role in Caribbean creole culture, as was shown, for example, in Abrahams (1983). Ritualized verbal behaviour may be seen here an essential part of the construction of self in public life.

3. 4 Politeness studies

Numerous studies have been conducted in the last two decades in the context of politeness theory. Quite a number of them are speech act-based and deal with a cross-cultural comparison of either one (e.g. compliments, Herbert 1991; complaints, Olshtain & Weinbach) or several speech acts (e.g. requests and thanks, Held 1996; volume on request and apologies,

Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper 1989). Others deal with several politeness phenomena in a particular language and/or culture (e.g. Chinese, Lee-Wong 1999) or a comparison of politeness patterns in different languages and cultures (e.g. English and Greek, Sifianou 1992). Gender has been a special focus in many politeness studies (e.g. Holmes 1995, cf. also Mills 2003), also: socialization and L2 behaviour.

While most analyses focus on national languages/cultures (e.g. English versus Polish/Japanese/Chinese), there are comparatively few studies which explore politeness phenomena in particular (speech) communites. Apart from a few studies on African-American (e.g. Labov 1972; Mitchell-Kernan 1972; Morgan 1994; Morgan 2002; Makoni et al. 2003; Abrahams 1976), non-standard varietes of English have largely been ignored,[5] as have been contact varieties (with some notable exceptions, e.g. Miriam Meyerhoff's study on apologies in Bislama "*Sorry* in the pacific").

As already described in section 2, there are but few linguistic and anthropological studies on Caribbean Creoles which include the notions of politeness and/or face, and even fewer recent ones such as, for instance, Garrett's work (to appear), on "learning to curse" in St. Lucia.

4. Structure and Scope of this Book

The aim of the present volume then is to contribute towards filling this research gap with a volume centering on one aspect of the communicative competence of creole speakers, namely politeness and face phenomena in the Caribbean Creoles. By presenting a collection of innovative contributions on a range of topics such as greetings, address forms, bad language, socialization and discourse, parent-child discourse etc. we hope to provide further insights into the communicative practices of Caribbean creole speakers and to offer further incentives for a more fruitful exploration of the nature of the connections between the different creoles communities.

Three wider areas of investigation strike us as particularly interesting and important for the analysis of linguistic practices in Caribbean Creoles. These three focal points are reflected in the respective sections of the book.

4. 1. Focal points in this volume

Section one deals with issues of *Performing rudeness and face maintenance.* The practice of insulting in the African-American context first received attention in William Labov's classic (1972) "Rules for ritual insults". In the Caribbean region, strategic use of "bad language" and face threats are a significant phenomenon, as can be shown by the four contributions in this section. The integration of politeness and face theory with a close analysis of linguistic forms and practices in a range of communities (e.g. in Panamanian Creole, Jamaican) and contexts is particularly interesting for explaining motivation and socio-pragmatic effects of such verbal routines, for instance, in the construction of a particular social identity. The pan-Caribbean extra-verbal form of commenting, 'kiss-teeth' is examined and interpreted in the light of face-management in the public sphere. A comparison of Caribbean and African-American with West-African (Nigerian) ritual insults additionally explores cross-Atlantic continuities in a socio-pragmatic field. In the Jamaican context of dancehall culture, homophobic threats and insults are investigated in their function of asserting masculinity.

Section two focuses on *Face attention and the public and private self*. Attention to face and positive politeness practices are explored in a number of speech acts and practices, such as greetings (cf., for instance, Duranti 1997) in various communities (Barbadian, Pamaka), advice-giving or strategic uses of Caribbean forms of address. Here, the identities and social roles of participants in the particular context are of crucial importance to the analysis of these particular speech acts. In turn, the very act plays an essential part in the construction of the individual's position in the interaction.

Section three examines the ways *Socialization and face development* are interlinked. The question of universal versus culture-specific aspects of face and politeness becomes particularly significant when we look at face development as part of linguistic and cultural socialization (cf. also Ochs 1984). In two contributions dealing with different Caribbean communities (Trinidad, Guadeloupe), face development is looked at in parent-child discourse.

Most of the ten novel contributions are based on empirical data (qualitative, or a combination of qualitative and quantitative), with a theoretical grounding in the ethnography of communication, interactional sociolinguistics or related approaches.

4. 2 Contributions in this volume

In section one, **Peter Snow** (University of California, Los Angeles, USA) examines the use of so-called bad language in spontaneous discourse on the Panamanian island of Bastimentos. His contribution titled *The use of bad language as a politeness strategy in a Panamanian*

Creole community suggests that participants use such language as a form of participation in conversation. Snow investigates the employment of "obscene assessments" as a local politeness strategy which interactants utlilize to cooperatively preserve the face of the speaker during on-going talk. His in-depth-analysis is based on recorded conversation and story-telling activites of a group of Bastimentos Panama Creole English speakers.

The second article in this division is *Ritualized insults and the African diaspora: Sounding in African American Vernacular English and wording in Nigerian Pidgin* by **Nicolas Faraclas, Lourdes Gonzalez, Migdalia Medina, and Wendell Villanueva Reyes** (University of Puerto Rico, USA). Ritual insulting, long established as an African American practice, (Labov 1972) is here explored in a comparative perspective. By using audio-recorded data, the authors analyze verbal dueling among Nigerian Pidgin speaking children in Port Harcourt to reveal syntactic, pragmatic and discursive similarities between West African and African American practices. Faraclas and his co-authors attribute these correspondences to a cultural continuity between West Africa and the communities of the African diaspora in the Caribbean and the rest of the Americas.

Esther Figueroa (Hawai'i) examines the pan-Caribbean phenomenon of "Kiss-Teeth" in *Rude sounds – Kiss Teeth and negotiation of the public sphere*. She shows in her analysis how this oral gesture is used as a means to defy or defend the established moral discourse. In so doing, Kiss-Teeth is also a part of the management of the public sphere. Using examples from observation as well as from texts in media and literature, Figueroa explores the role of performative language in the political contestation over public and counter-public spheres, and the negotiation of moral standing between individuals within the public sphere.

Jamaican Dancehall culture serves as a site of investigation in **Joseph Farquharson**'**s** (University of the West Indies, Jamaica) contribution on *The Sociopragmatics of Homophobia in Jamaican (Dancehall) Culture.* The author analyses how derogatory lexical items and threats in songs are performatively used for asserting a Jamaican male identity. By using a speech act analysis of lyrics, Farquharson interprets the use of homophobic performances in the Jamaican socio-cultural context.

In section two, **Bettina Migge** (University College Dublin, Ireland) explores in her article *Greeting and Social Change* greeting routines and the transformations they are undergoing in the in the Eastern Maroon community. Based on data coming from long term participant observation, discussions with native speakers, and natural recordings in the Pamaka

community, her investigation reveals that the Pamaka community employs a range of greeting procedures that differ both in terms of their structural makeup and the social meanings they constitute.

Drawing on the techniques of conversation analysis, **Jack Sidnell** (University of Toronto, CA & Northwestern University, IL) examines the *The Interactional Organization of Expertise and Uncertainty in Advise-giving Sequences* in an Indo-Guyanese village. His analysis of recorded conversations of talk surrounding a particular community event shows that phenomena such as expertise and uncertainty emerge from a complex interactional organization of turn-taking. Sidnell shows how in the interaction of paricipants, the display of both uncertainty and of expertise are crucially interlinked.

Janina Fenigsen (University of South Carolina, USA) looks at the relationship between register choice and face-work within greeting practices in Arawak Hill, Barbados. Drawing on ethnographic field data, *Meaningful Routines: Meaning-making and the Face Value of Barbadian greetings* considers pragmatic functions of greetings and factors that figure in their construction. Fenigsen shows that greeting routines can become a site of ideological contestation and questions ideas of the primary function of greeting as a courteous indication of recognition.

Forms of address in English-lexicon Creoles: The Presentation of Selves and Others in the Caribbean Context by **Susanne Mühleisen** (Johann Wolfgang Goethe-University Frankfurt, Germany) investigates the development and use of forms of address in the Anglo-Caribbean context. Drawing on historical material, this paper discusses the origin and use of some specific nominal forms of Caribbean address, as well as (optional) second person singular/plural distinction in the pronominal system.

In the last section, which deals with language socialization and face development, **Valerie Youssef** (University of the West Indies, Trinidad) examines the development of attention to face needs in three Trinidadian children based on an analysis of recorded data. *'May I Have the Bilna?' The Development of Face-Saving in Young Trinidadian Children* seeks to shed light on the issue of universality versus particularity in the onset of attention to face.

Alex Louise Tessonneau (Université de Paris VIII) makes an excursion into the francophone Caribbean in her *Learning Respect in Guadeloupe: Greetings and Politeness Rituals.* She looks at the way greetings are taught to children from a very early age, and are part of the

process of socialisation which operates on children. Tessoneau's diachronic study of greeting rituals shows their importance in the interaction between individuals and how they reflect changes in socialization patterns.

5. References

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[1] For an overview of prepragmatic approaches, cf. Watts (2003: 54-56)
[2] *First and second order politeness….*
[3] For an excellent critical overview of the various politeness theories in comparison, cf. Eelen 2001.
[4] For a pointed criticism on this issue, cf. Watts (2003: 101-107)
[5] With exceptions, cf. for instance, de Kadt 1992.