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Varieties of rudeness Types and functions of impolite utterances

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Standard theories of politeness (Lakoff 1975, Leech 1983, Brown and Levinson 1987) face a number of problems. To mention but a few, it can be doubted that these theories have managed to establish truly universal concepts and classifications of (im)polite behavior; they exaggerate the relative importance of indirectness; they do not treat situational and societal constraints sufficiently; finally, they do not deal with rudeness in enough detail.

Therefore, it does not seem to be possible to describe rudeness simply as a deviation from or violation of rules and maxims of cooperative/polite communication. Starting from suggestions made by Kasper (1990) and Culpeper (1996), I will try to refine standard definitions of politeness and rudeness. Moreover, examples of rude utterances (mostly taken from spoken and written English and German dialogues) will be used to establish a typology of communicative rudeness. Several subtypes of cooperative (e.g. ritual insults, reactive rudeness, sociable rudeness) and non-cooperative (e.g. strategic rudeness in public institutions) rudeness are distinguished.

1. Introduction

What is rudeness? In order to answer this question, I would like to sketch an account of rudeness which does not simply treat it as the marked, abnormal, and irrational counterpart of politeness. More particularly, I

wish to show the existence of quite a number of types of rudeness which should be considered as cooperative communicative behavior. To do this, I will start with the highlighting of some problems and weaknesses of standard theories of politeness. After that, I will try to define a more adequate concept of politeness and rudeness (section 2). Moreover, I will develop a classification of types of communicative rudeness, taking up suggestions from Kasper (1990) and Culpeper (1996), which will be elaborated by the addition of further types and subtypes of rudeness. To illustrate this classification, I will examine 21 passages of spoken and written texts (most of the examples are taken from English and German, but five further languages will be considered occasionally) to demonstrate the types and functions of impolite utterances (section 3). When I quote transcribed passages of conversations, I will reproduce the transcription conventions of my own data as well as those of other sources, sometimes with slight modifications.

As far as terminology is concerned, 'rudeness' will be used as a cover term for all sorts of impolite verbal behavior (non-verbal rudeness will be mentioned only occasionally). Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992: 3) make the important distinction between 'first-order politeness' (= 'common sense notions of politeness'; cf. e.g. Ide *et al.* 1992 on common sense notions of politeness of English and Japanese speakers) and 'second order politeness' ('a theoretical construct, a term within a theory of social behaviour and language usage'). Taking up this distinction and transferring it to the description of 'rudeness', I would like to deal with 'second order rudeness' rather than with 'first order rudeness'. Therefore, the description of the common usage of the English word 'rudeness' will not be my main concern.

2. Politeness and rudeness

Standard theories of politeness (e.g. Lakoff 1975, 1989; Leech 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987) have to face the following problems (cf. the criticism of, amongst others, Wierzbicka 1985, Blum-Kulka 1990, Fraser 1990, Gu 1990, Kasper 1990, Matsumoto 1988, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1991 and 1997, Held 1992 and 1996: 67ff.; Watts 1992, Werkhofer 1992, Sarangi and Slembrouck 1992, Watts, Ide and Ehlich 1992, Meier 1995, Gruber 1996: 69ff.):

- one and the same type of speech act can be polite in some contexts, but impolite or even rude in other contexts (e.g. apologies, requests or justifications; cf. Meier 1995: 383ff.);
- one and the same type of speech act can be polite within one language and/or culture, but impolite or even rude in other languages and/or cultures (e.g. bare imperatives; cf. Wierzbicka 1985: 146ff.);
- both the politeness and rudeness of utterances cannot be judged without taking into account the sequential position of speech acts in a conversation (Aronson and Rundström 1989: 486; Hayashi 1996: 228); moreover, politeness and rudeness are not pre-established effects of social attributes such as power or distance because these social attributes are dynamic and negotiable properties in discourse (Fraser 1990: 232f.; Werkhofer 1992: 176; Martín Rojo 1994: 253);
- empirical research has shown that it is not always possible to equate a higher degree of politeness with the indirectness of expressions and a lack of politeness with their directness (cf. Blum-Kulka 1990: 269ff.; Held 1996: 78; also Brown and Levinson (1987: 18) admit that strategies of 'on record' politeness and 'off record' politeness need not be mutually exclusive, the latter being more polite).
- the role of politeness should not only be seen as a means of saving face with the help of strategies which avoid or mitigate face-threatening acts (a rather negative and pessimistic view, prevailing in Brown and Levinson 1987), but also as a means of addressing positive aspects of the interlocutors with the help of 'Face-Enhancing Acts'. This term was introduced by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1997: 14), who also correctly stresses that 'positive politeness legitimately holds as important a position as that of negative politeness' (1997: 15; cf. also Held 1996: 84ff.);
- the Gricean type of pragmatics underlying a great deal of research on politeness has been criticized because it is not able to explain situational and societal constraints which determine what counts as cooperative or non-cooperative behavior in everyday communication (Sarangi and Slembrouck 1992: 138ff.). Moreover, the criticism has been made that modern approaches, often starting from Gricean notions, neglect social dimensions and the historicity of politeness (Werkhofer 1992: 156ff., Ehlich 1992) and do not sufficiently distinguish between 'fact', i.e. 'interpersonally supportive communicative techniques, styles, and strategies' and 'social politeness', i.e. 'socially appropriate communicative forms, norms, routines, rituals etc.' (Janney and Arndt 1992: 24).

• finally, and most importantly for the central issue of this paper, rudeness as the negative counterpart of politeness has not been treated in enough detail in current theories of politeness (cf. Kasper 1990: 211: 'Future studies will have to address the function of rudeness as complementary behavior to politeness').

Therefore, Kasper quite correctly states that 'in the light of current evidence, it has [...] become clear that the early models, while impressive in their parsimony and elegance, are over-simplistic. Their lasting achievement is to have provided excellent heuristics to investigate a highly complex object of inquiry. As theories with claims to universality, they need elaboration and revision' (1990: 194).

However, several theoretical concepts introduced by recent politeness theories could be accepted as universals at a more general level, if it is conceded that they have to be adapted and modified for the description of polite or rude behavior in a specific language or culture. In addition to the heuristically valuable typologies of strategies of politeness, some other basic notions like 'positive or negative face' (cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 58: 'the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respects') or 'cost/benefit scales' (Leech 1983: 107), which appear in most of the current politeness theories, can and should be taken up in an attempt to refine them (cf. Janney and Arndt 1992: 27f.). The criticism by Matsumoto (1988: 424) and Gu (1990: 241f.), who doubt the assumed universality of negative face on the basis of Japanese and Chinese data, only shows that the **relative** importance of negative face differs across languages and cultures. Similarly, in spite of Spencer-Oatey's (1993: 44f.) empirical research showing that British and Chinese academics conceive situational variables like power and distance differently, one could still argue that power and distance are universally valid factors influencing strategies of politeness, but to a **certain degree** are conceptualized differently in specific languages and cultures.

One strategy for improving the early models of Lakoff, Leech, and Brown and Levinson could thus be based on being more cautious as far as claims of universality of rules and maxims are concerned. For example, Fraser correctly remarks that sentences are not inherently polite or impolite, independent of the context in which they are uttered: 'Sentences are not *ipso facto* polite, nor are languages more or less polite. It is only speakers who are polite, and then only if their utterances reflect an adherence to the obligations they carry in that particular conversation' (1990: 233; cf. also Held 1996: 107). Similarly, Meier suggests replacing

the term 'politeness' with 'appropriateness' (1995: 387): 'Within such a view, politeness can only be judged relative to a particular context and a particular addressee's expectations and concomitant interpretation'. Moreover, Meier states that 'Politeness can be said to be universal only in the sense that every society has some sort of norms for appropriate behavior, although these norms will vary' (1995: 388).

Applying these insights to the characterization of rudeness, it could be claimed that sentences are not *ipso facto* rude; it is speakers who are rude. Moreover, rudeness could be termed inappropriateness of communicative behavior relative to a particular context. Even swearwords are not inherently rude irrespective of context (cf. Sornig 1975: 159ff.). The same also holds for other linguistic phenomena which are assumed to be typical examples of rudeness in many languages/cultures, for instance loudness of voice (shouting), frequent interruptions, bare imperatives, taboo words, ironic remarks, aggressive jokes, indirect attacks, etc.

Sarang and Slembrouck (1992) make a further attempt to increase the empirical adequacy of politeness models by considering specific constraints of communication in public institutions. Analyzing traits of non-cooperation in institutional discourse, Sarang and Slembrouck show that it can be quite 'normal' and 'appropriate' behavior not to act cooperatively. Representatives of public institutions use verbal strategies which are in the interest of their institution, and clients are expected to adjust to these strategies whether they like it or not (1992: 126ff.; cf. Lakoff 1989: 122ff.; Kasper (1990: 110) on 'strategic rudeness').

As my definitions of politeness and rudeness will be based on the notions of 'cooperative/non-cooperative/competitive interaction', these concepts have to be defined in advance. **Cooperative interaction** could be briefly characterized as follows (cf. similarly Grice 1975: 48): two persons A and B interact cooperatively if they 1) try to reach a goal G which is mutually accepted, 2) try to do this by fair and efficient means, and 3) are equally interested in reaching G or at least share some interest in reaching G. (non-cooperative and competitive interaction lack some or all of these defining properties).

Politeness is closely related to cooperativeness in this sense (cf. Held 1996: 59f.: 'Höflichkeit steht nun ihrem Wesen nach mit Kooperation in enger Verbindung'). Therefore, in a first approximation (but cf. below for a more detailed definition) politeness could be characterized as a combination of (verbal) routines and (verbal) strategies which is used to enhance cooperative interaction by 'establishing and/or maintaining in a state of

equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group [...] during the ongoing process of interaction' (Watts 1992: 50).

Returning to Sarangi and Slembrouck's claims, I would like to deal with the fact that calling non-cooperative behavior 'normal' or 'appropriate' could be criticized from a point of view which is based on idealistic assumptions about communication. However, non-cooperative communication is much less rare or exceptional than Grice's remarks (1975: 45ff.) on the Cooperative Principle and its attendant maxims would suggest: 'it is just a well-recognized empirical fact that people DO behave in these ways; [...] it would involve a great deal of effort to make a radical departure from the habit' (1975: 48). Similarly, Brown and Levinson remark that the Cooperative Principle is 'socially neutral' and that 'the essential assumption is "no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason"'. Politeness principles are, however, just such principled reasons' (1987: 5). However, strategic rudeness seems to be another type of principled reason for deviating from rational efficiency as stated in the Cooperative Principle. Therefore, Sarangi and Slembrouck are quite right when they criticize the idealistic assumptions about rationality, efficiency and solidarity underlying the Cooperative Principle of Grice (1975), the Politeness Principle of Leech (1983) and the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987).

Sarangi and Slembrouck provide at least some reasonable support for the thesis that it is **not self-evident** that politeness is simply 'the unmarked state' (Meier 1995: 388), 'la norme, par rapport à laquelle apparaissent comme "marquées" toutes les transgressions' (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1991: 53) or something that people do not even notice in a conversation because it is the normal kind of behavior (cf. Fraser 1990: 233). According to the views of Meier, Fraser and Kerbrat-Orecchioni, rudeness would have to be marked or 'deviant' behavior in all contexts. Again, however, this could only be justified from an idealistic perspective, which cannot account for the frequent occurrence of rudeness in many private and institutional contexts. The omnipresence of (at least partially) rude utterances has to be dealt with in more detail by theories of politeness. Moreover, unlike Lakoff (1989: 123), I do not believe that systematic, rule-governed rudeness is absent in ordinary conversation (cf. below section 3).

While it seems plausible, then, to assume that cooperative strategies of verbal behavior and, more specifically, politeness strategies are (at least partially) present in any communicative exchange, it is also necessary to account for the fact that rudeness, too, seems to be a universally

occurring phenomenon. Therefore, 'totally cooperative' politeness and 'totally competitive' rudeness seem to be the extreme points on a scale, while any talk exchange in a certain context/culture contains a mixture of more or less polite and rude utterances (cf. the study of Dale *et al.* (1997: 653ff.) on the speech of rapists, who quite surprisingly show that even in this extreme case of competitive interaction elements of politeness can be detected). Thus, the dichotomy of politeness and rudeness should be replaced by a continuum and become a matter of degree rather than of principle. Trichotomies like Lakoff's distinction between politeness, non-politeness and rudeness (1989: 103), Watts' distinction between politeness, politic behaviour and non-politic behaviour (1992: 50f.) or Gruber's distinction between formal, material and substantial cooperativeness (1996: 329) are valuable steps in this direction (cf. also Ide *et al.* 1992: 281).

This can also be justified by the fact that it is quite possible to be 'overpolite' in the sense that exaggerated politeness can even become an obstacle to smooth and cooperative interaction. Overpoliteness could be characterized as the failure to adapt (verbal) means of expression which normally would be considered as polite in a given language or culture to a specific situation in the appropriate way. Leech (1983: 136ff.) provides examples of pragmatic paradoxes caused by exaggerated politeness in the Japanese language/culture, which can take the form of repeatedly denying the truth of a compliment (cf. also the frustrating problems created by the repeated attempts of two people who meet at the doorway of a room, both wanting to let the other enter the room first; cf. also Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1991: 52; Pörtner 1991: 176f.). Still, overpolite behaviour is not a case of rudeness, but a less than optimal application of politeness patterns which in principle are perfectly acceptable in a given language or culture.

Similarly, utterances which at first sight seem to be rude according to standard rules of polite behaviour in a speech community can actually be cooperative behavior in specific contexts. I call such behaviour 'cooperative rudeness'. To give but one example: swear words can be used as instances of what Leech (1983: 144) calls 'mock-impoliteness' (= 'banter') or as parts of 'ritual insults' (cf. Labov 1972 and below, section 3).

Some of these forms of cooperative rudeness are even classified as politeness strategies by Brown and Levinson (1987: 221, 228). Therefore, it could be doubted whether mock-impoliteness, ritual insults and 'mock-politeness' (= 'irony'; cf. Leech 1983: 144) are types of rudeness at all because one could argue that they should rather be treated as 'odd' or

context-specific instances of politeness. Still, all these types of cooperative rudeness are not simply identical to ordinary polite behavior. Verbal utterances which are instances of **possibly** rude communication in a speech community create at least some danger of conflict and face attacks (cf. Kochman 1983: 331f., Schiffman 1984: 324 and below, section 3).

The continuum of politeness and rudeness (where politeness and rudeness are understood as prototypes rather than clear-cut, disjunctive categories) is illustrated in Figure 1:

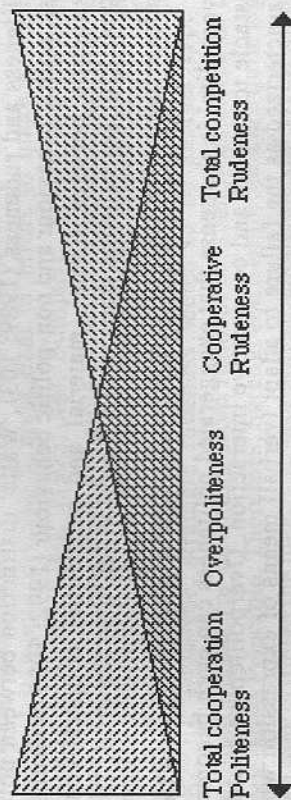


Figure 1: *The continuum of politeness and rudeness*

The rudeness part of this continuum will be dealt with in more detail in section 3, where a typology of cooperative and competitive varieties of rudeness will be presented.

Taking into account the distinctions made above, I would like to suggest the following general definitions of politeness and rudeness, which stress that 1) politeness or rudeness of utterances is a matter of degree; 2) rudeness is not simply derivable from politeness as a secondary phenomenon; 3) rudeness is a kind of prototypically non-cooperative behavior, but it need not always be (totally) irrational and/or competitive behavior; 4) likewise, politeness is a prototypically cooperative behavior, but it need not be always (totally) rational and there are types of less than optimally cooperative politeness; 5) only at a highly abstract level can concepts and strategies of existing politeness theories be considered to be universal (e.g. positive and negative face, relationships of cost/benefit, power and distance, and (verbal) strategies derived from these concepts); the relative importance and prominence of these concepts and strategies and their impact on the actual politeness or rudeness of utterances can only

be judged relative to verbal and situational contexts, languages, and cultures. Following insights of standard theories of politeness developed by Lakoff (1975), Leech (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987), and taking into account recent suggestions and modifications (made by Janney and Arndt 1992, Watts 1992, Held 1996, Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997, amongst others), I would like to define politeness and rudeness as follows:

Politeness is a kind of prototypically cooperative communicative behavior

- which stabilizes the personal relationships of the interacting individuals, thus making it easier to achieve the mutually accepted goal of the interaction;

- which, more particularly, creates or maintains an emotional atmosphere of mutual respect (negative face) and sympathy (positive face), which is in the interest of both (all) persons involved;

- whose goals are realized either via pre-established (verbal) routines in a speech community or by individual adaptations of these routines to a specific context with the help of strategies which systematically avoid or redress face-threatening acts and choose or emphasize face-enhancing acts;

- which is (partially) determined by concepts of power, distance, emotional attitudes and cost-benefit scales which are generally accepted in a speech community;

- which is, however, also (partially) changeable via negotiations during the ongoing talk exchange or during the social history of a speech community.

Correspondingly, the definition of rudeness runs as follows:

Rudeness is a kind of prototypically non-cooperative or competitive communicative behavior

- which destabilizes the personal relationships of the interacting individuals and thus makes it more difficult to achieve the mutually accepted goal of the interaction or makes it difficult to agree on a mutually accepted goal in the first place;

- which, more particularly, creates or maintains an emotional atmosphere of mutual irreverence and antipathy, which primarily serves egocentric interests;

- whose goals are realized either via pre-established (verbal) routines in a speech community or by individual adaptations of these routines to a specific context with the help of strategies which systematically choose or

emphasize face-threatening acts and withhold or weaken face-enhancing acts;

- which is (partially) determined by concepts of power, distance, emotional attitudes and cost-benefit scales which are generally accepted in a speech community;
- which is, however, also (partially) changeable via negotiations during the ongoing talk exchange or during the social history of a speech community.

3. Varieties of rudeness

In this section, a typology of rude communicative behavior will be developed. The types of rudeness I am going to distinguish are summarized in Figure 2, where they are roughly ordered from left to right according to the increasing degree of competitiveness. In the following, all varieties of cooperative (section 3.1.) and non-cooperative (section 3.2.) rudeness distinguished in Figure 2 will be described. Furthermore, some functions of rudeness in literary texts will be dealt with briefly (section 3.3.). Moreover, I would like to present and analyze some illustrative examples. Due to lack of space, I cannot deal in detail with all of the subtypes. But at least some of them will be illustrated with examples taken from spoken or written texts belonging to various types of discourse. The majority (15) of the 21 examples are taken from English and German texts, but I will also cite examples from five other languages (in alphabetical order: French, Latin, Polish, Spanish, Turkish; all passages in languages other than English are provided with translations).

The various types of non-cooperative rudeness are realized via verbal strategies which are arranged in Figure 2 according to Culpeper (1996), who classifies non-cooperative rudeness following Brown and Levinson (1987).²

Parallel to their five superstrategies of politeness, he distinguishes five superstrategies of impoliteness (1996: 356f.; FTA = face threatening act):

- *Bald on record impoliteness* — the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised.
- *Positive impoliteness* — the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's positive face wants.

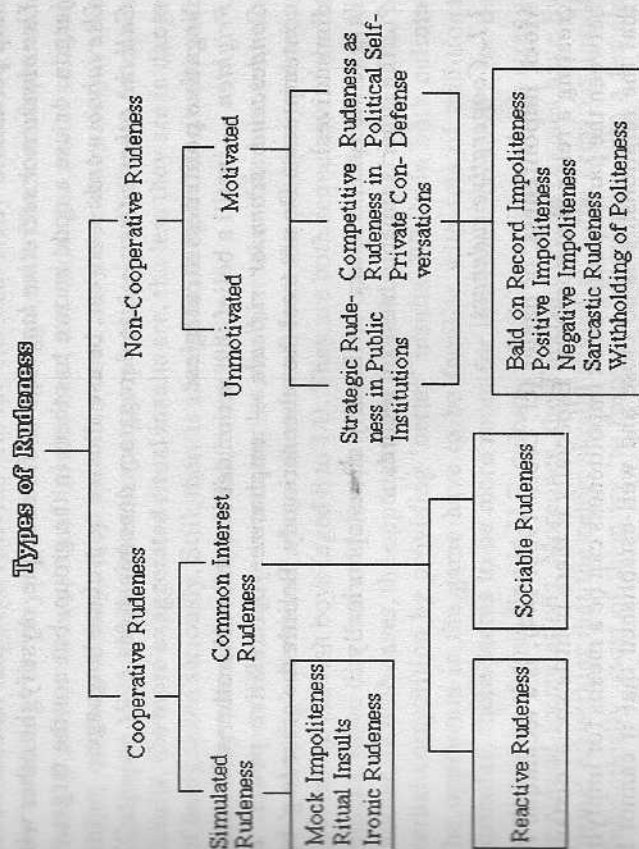


Figure 2: *Types of rudeness*

- *Negative impoliteness* — the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.
- *Sarcasm or mock politeness* — the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realisations.
- *Withhold politeness* — the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

Culpeper also offers a provisional list of some output strategies for positive and negative impoliteness (1996: 357f.). I quote a few examples: **Positive impoliteness output strategies:**

- *Ignore, snub the other* — fail to acknowledge the other's presence.
- *Dissociate from the other* — for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

Use inappropriate identity markers — for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

Use obscure or secretive language — for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.

Use taboo words — swear, or use abusive or profane language.

Call the other names — use derogatory denominations.

etc.

Negative politeness strategies:

Frighten — instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.
Condescend, scorn or ridicule — emphasize your relative power. Be contemptuous. Do not treat the other seriously. Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).

Invade the other's space — literally or metaphorically.

Put the other's indebtedness on record.

etc.

3.1. Cooperative rudeness

Mock impoliteness, or banter (cf. Leech 1983: 144), is a technique for creating a relaxed atmosphere. Especially if there is little social distance between the participants, mock impoliteness can be a means for implying that the relationship is so close and well-established that it cannot be endangered even by seemingly rude utterances. Culpeper (1996: 352) gives the example of his arriving late at a party. When he tried to explain that he had mistaken 17.00 hours for 7 o'clock, the host greeted him with the words

- (1) Host: "You silly bugger".

without negative intentions. He simply wanted to express that Culpeper was accepted into the party.

In more formal circumstances, mock impoliteness of this kind is a bit risky, but even then, it can be successfully used to relax the stiff atmosphere which can be created, for example, by slightly exaggerated negative politeness strategies triggered by large differences of power, considerable social distance, lack of emotion, etc.

Mock impoliteness can be developed into sophisticated systems of syntactic and semantic rules of **ritual insults**, known in different languages and cultures all over the world, especially among young male

adults (Culpeper 1996: 353; cf. also Senft 1987: 114ff.; 1991: 237ff. on ritual communication involving a rude variety ('Biga Sopa') of the Austronesian language Kilivila). As the classical study of Labov (1972) on 'sounding' or 'playing the dozens' amongst male Black adolescents in the U.S.A. has shown, ritual insults need not endanger social relationships; on the contrary, they are often used as 'a societal safety valve' (Culpeper 1996: 353) and enhance group solidarity. Different from real insults, the more exaggerated ritual insults are, the less they are in danger of being taken seriously. Still, there is always the danger that ritual insults turn into personal insults (cf. Kochman 1983).

I would like to give two examples, the first taken from the tradition of 'sounding' mentioned above, the second from the practice of dueling rhymes by Turkish boys (aged 8 to 14). They are both sequences of verbal attacks, often directed at close relatives of the opponent, especially at his mother. In both cases, the opponents try to outdo each other in this kind of verbal competition by providing 'better' insults. While in both cultures the opponents in the game have to be familiar with sets of traditional formulas, there seems to be more room for individual creativity for the participants of sounding in U.S. culture, which sometimes yields strange or absurd formulations. Moreover, the Turkish dueling rhymes have the formal constraint that the retort should rhyme with the previous insult. Semantically, most of them try 'to force one's opponent into a female, passive role. This may be done by defining the opponent or his mother or sister as a wanton sexual receptacle' (Dundes *et al.* 1972: 135). In the U.S. tradition, these formal and semantic constraints are typical only of older, traditional instances of 'rhymed dozens', not of contemporary practice (Labov 1972: 143). Here are two examples taken from the Afro-American and Turkish traditions of ritual insults, respectively (cf. Labov 1972: 164; Dundes *et al.* 1972: 138f.):

- (2) A: *Your mother eat coke-a-roaches.*

B: *Your mother eat fried dick-heads.*

A: *Your mother suck fried dick-heads.*

(3) A: *Has siktir!*

Come on penis get

'Get fucked!'

B: *Siktirdigin yere mum diktir!*

Penised got that you place to candle set up

'Put a candle at the spot where you got yourself fucked!'

- A: *Ablan* *varsa* *bana sikir!*
 Older sister your there is if me to penised get
 'If you have an older sister, let me fuck her!'

Ironic rudeness or 'mock politeness' is difficult to distinguish from its non-cooperative counterpart, *viz.* sarcastic rudeness. However, in principle, it is possible to make a distinction between mildly ironic utterances, which have the goal of teasing the hearer in an amusing way and thus contributing to the mutual entertainment in a conversation, and biting sarcastic remarks, which hide a sharp attack against the face wants of the hearer under a seemingly polite surface (cf. Kasper 1990: 210f.). This distinction is based on the underlying intention of speakers rather than the surface form of potentially ironic or sarcastic utterances. For the sake of clarity, I will use the terms ironic rudeness and sarcastic rudeness to distinguish harmless and harmful indirect offenses also terminologically (but cf. Leech (1983: 142ff.), who uses 'irony' as a generic term and Jorgensen (1996: 623), who uses 'sarcasm' as a generic term). Similarly, Attardo (1993: 555f.) makes a distinction between jokes as non-offensive communicative behavior and jokes as instances of aggressive humour. This distinction is based on factors of the speech situation (speaker, hearer, shared knowledge, in-group and out-group divisions, etc.).

The following two passages are examples of (mildly) ironic rudeness and sarcastic rudeness, respectively. The first passage is taken from an audio-taped private discussion within an Austrian family about the usefulness of AFS, an international highschool exchange program (cf. Kienpointner 1983, Appendix 39f.):³

- (4)
 F: *Die brauchn/die solln in der siebtn Klass auf die Matura studieren und solln Mitteleuropa kennenlernen*
Ja, schon, aber!
 [M: ((laut, hohe Tonlage)) *und nit die Rocky Mountains und die Alabamaberge und wie sie alle heißen* ((gespielt naiv))

 D: *Genau, und drum is der Papa nämlich nach Nordafrika g'fahrr (und nicht nach) Mitteleuropa* ((lacht))

 F: In the 7th year they need to/they should study for their school-leaving exam and should get to know Central Europe
 [M: Yes, that's true, but/

- [F: ((speaking loudly, with high pitch)) and not the Rocky Mountains and the Alabama Mountains and whatever the others are called ((with faked naivety))

 D: Exactly, and that's why Dad went to North Africa (and not to) Central Europe ((laughs))

Speaker F (the father) argues that pupils attending the 7th form of a secondary school (= the year when the exchange usually takes place) should study for their school-leaving exams and learn about the local surroundings rather than go overseas to get to know the USA (at the time when the discussion took place, the program mostly organized exchanges from Europe to the USA). Speaker D (the daughter) hides an *ad hominem* attack against her father with ironic approval: an argument which in its literal form provides a justification for her father's point of view ('Exactly, and that's why Dad went to North Africa') indirectly exposes the discrepancy between her father's statements and his own behavior (it is well known to all family members that he travelled to Morocco in his youth). However, the superficially cooperative formulation and the non-verbal cues (D laughs at the end of her turn) show that she is using playful irony and wants to tease her father rather than attack him directly with the help of sarcastic rudeness.

The next example again contains apparent approval, but the indirect message is much more face-threatening than in example (4) and, therefore, is an instance of sarcastic rudeness (cf. Kienpointner 1983, Appendix 49f.):⁴

- (5)
 L: *Es muß ja jeder Mensch, äh, sein Lebensbereich nach seinen Verhältnissen*
 [L: *richtn* *Das müßte, nein, des muß also nicht die Kellerwohnung*
 [H: *Ja, die Kellerwohnung*
 L: *nung sein.*

 L: Everyone needs, uh, to adjust his living conditions to his financial circumstances
 [H: Yes, the basement flat
 [L: It needs, no ((reaction to Huth's remark)), it doesn't need to be the basement flat.

In a TV discussion about house building, A. Lembeck, a carpenter who successfully built his own house, claims that everyone should live according to his financial circumstances. E. Huth, an architect who is engaged in residential building programs which provide decent apartments even for poor people, superficially agrees with Lembeck. But his agreement is bitingly sarcastic because he adds the remark *die Kellerwohnung* ('the basement flat'). This implies that for most poor people, Lembeck's statement would mean that they have to live in very miserable conditions. Moreover, one can infer that Huth ascribes a very naive or even cynical attitude to Lembeck. Therefore, it is not surprising that Lembeck hastens to add that he does not want to be interpreted in this way.

A further type of cooperative rudeness could be termed 'common interest rudeness' because it serves the interests of all participants in a verbal interaction, at least to a certain extent. I distinguish two subtypes of common interest rudeness, namely 'reactive rudeness' and 'sociable rudeness'.

Reactive rudeness can be termed cooperative insofar as every participant in a symmetric relationship conversation has the right to retaliate against previous personal attacks, at least as long as the reactions are moderate and remain adequate, that is, if they are not exaggerated: for example, 'licensed expression of anger is consistent with the notion of fair play' (Kasper 1990: 210). In this way, the balance of power in symmetrical interaction is restored, while the escalation of conflicts is avoided. The same holds for asymmetric relationships, where, of course, the parties involved are not reactively rude to maintain an equivalence of power, but to prevent changes in the asymmetric distribution of power, which could destabilize the relationship. Furthermore, if (over)polite formulations of speaker A (e.g. indirect hints according to off-record strategies) cause misunderstandings, it is in the interest of all participants in a conversation that A speaks in a more direct way or even proceeds by stating matters quite bluntly. This enhances the informative efficiency of interactive moves towards a mutually accepted goal. Thus, a non-escalating rude response to someone else's rude or otherwise less than optimally cooperative behavior can ensure that a mutually accepted goal is reached by fair and efficient means (which is part of the definition of cooperation given above in section 1).

Quite paradoxically, reactive rudeness can even be used to repair negative effects of politeness strategies, namely, misunderstanding due to unclear or ambiguous formulations. This lack of unequivocal informative-

ness can be the result of polite attempts to avoid face threatening acts. Aronson and Lundström (1989) analyzed discourse sequences in 30 pediatric encounters in an allergy outpatient clinic. In these interactions, politeness has to be balanced against clarity. Quite often, doctors try to formulate criticism concerning child hygiene, health and care in an implicit way, using various politeness strategies, especially when they talk to the parents. However, they start to talk in a less cautious way if they recognize that their indirect hints and advice are not understood or not taken seriously (cf. also Hayashi 1996: 245).

In the following passage, the doctor starts asking open-ended questions which convey the indirect advice that the allergic child should avoid pets. Later on, he addresses the child in a more constrictive fashion with yes-no questions. However, he recognises that the child's conduct is not in line with his indirect advice. Therefore, indirectness of expression is replaced by direct criticism from the doctor ('that's really not so smart', which is a mild attack against the positive face of the child). Moreover, it is amplified by the child's mother, 'who [...] clarifies Dr's directive, first in a neutral voice and then with great emphasis' (Aronson and Lundström 1989: 489), finally using a bare imperative.⁵

(6)

Dr: (pause) but then it's best to avoid cats or what do you say?

M: uhm.

Dr: What do you generally do in such cases? /hesitantly/

M: No, we don't have any cats so that's no, it's only in case he meets one outdoors somewhere /laughs/

.....

Dr: You do avoid them /to C/

C: Yes

Dr: So you are uhm are not one of those who always has to pat every

dog

C: No:

Dr: Well, that's fine

C: Some of them, some of them, I can pat

DR: WHAT?!

C: Some of them I can pat

Dr: Well, but that's really not so smart /in a restrained voice/

M: You shouldn't do that, you know

C: No

M: You SHOULD NOT do that

I will now turn to **sociable rudeness**. It is based on the fact that certain subgroups of a speech community can have a positive attitude towards rudeness. In this case, sociable rudeness can even be used as a means of expressing group identity and solidarity. Such 'involved styles' (cf. Tannen 1992: 28ff.; 1993: 214ff.), which are different from 'mock impoliteness', are not simply faked rudeness. The subgroups of a speech community which engage in sociable rudeness agree to experience their own behavior as at least slightly aggressive (cf. below).

In her interviews in a lower-middle class urban neighborhood in Philadelphia, Schifffrin found that Jewish couples tended to use strategies of communication which would be experienced as aggressive, non-cooperative behavior by other groups of the Anglo-Saxon speech community: preference for disagreement, increased volume, rapid tempo, persistent attempts to get the floor (Schifffrin 1984: 318). Yet, the speakers interviewed by Schifffrin seemed to enjoy this conversational style as a means to enhance sociability, as their metacommunicative comments show: *She'd fight it out with me. She'd thrash it out. That's the best way to do it!*. Or: *We Jews like to fight it out* (1984: 328; 333). This way, sociable rudeness is similar to ritual insults. The latter, however, are more formalized (cf. Schifffrin 1984: 331) and less serious as far as propositional content is concerned. Of course, Schifffrin also found that 'cooperation between speakers and support of speaker's selves, may not be too deeply buried beneath surface forms of competition and threats to speakers' selves' (1984: 324). This is an important fact because otherwise it could be argued that this conversational style is only judged to be rude from an out-group perspective, while not being rude at all from an in-group perspective. To give but one example: talk exchanges like the following (1984: 318), where Freda many times in vain tries to get the floor, would not be accepted as sociable communication by many other social groups or cultures. They would insist that in pleasant conversations, overlaps and interruptions should not occur (or at least, not very often; cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974: 706: 'Overwhelmingly, one party talks at a time' and Brown and Levinson 1987: 232ff.).⁶

- (7)
 F: *An intermarriage in this country has proven t'be, quite often, very healthy for the children...I think it's: a healthy attitude.*
 J: *Not when it comes to a Jew! They're not-*

- a non-Christian remember. [But when a Scotsman=]
 [I'm talkin' about =]
 F: =marries an [Irish man,] a Pole marries a- a:-a=
 [I'm talkin']
 F: =what, whatever, it's not so bad, cause the offspring is healthier
 J: too.
 The child is healthy. [I mean] ph- physiologically.
 But [I s:-] [physi]l
 F: Why not when it comes to a Jew?
 J: The Jew is still the last one t'want t'intermarry. Read it anywhere.
 The=
 But I sa:
 F: =Jew is the one who will not accept.
 J: The rabbis preach, ["Don't intermarry,"]
 But I did- [But I did say]
 F: those intermarriages that we have in this country are healthy.
 That's all I said.

3.2. Non-cooperative rudeness

On the same lines as Kasper (1990: 208f.), I have distinguished **motivated** ('the speaker intends to be heard as rude') and **unmotivated** ('the violation of the norms of politic behavior due to ignorance') **rudeness**. Kasper mentions two obvious cases of unmotivated rudeness which are both the consequence of insufficient linguistic and cultural knowledge: the impolite behavior of children and of adult foreigners.

To these types of unmotivated rudeness I would like to add the unintentional mistakes made by adults within the same culture/language. Of course, these mistakes (e.g. slips of the tongue which create rude utterances) can be motivated subconsciously (that is, they can be Freudian slips), although they are clearly not consciously intended to be rude. To give but two examples: Freud (1974: 62) mentions the case of Dr. Stekel, who assumes that a female patient is suffering from Basedow's disease. Among other symptoms, this disease leads to an enlargement of the thyroid gland visible as a swelling of the front of the neck. Now this is not a pleasant thing to have to tell to a female patient. Therefore, the following slip of the tongue, which results in a very offensive face-threatening act directed against the positive face of the patient, is created by the unsuccessful attempt to hide unpleasant thoughts about the patient's enlarged thyroid gland (= goiter):

- (8) Dr. Stekel: *Sie sind um einen Kopf größer als Ihre Schwester.*
lit.: 'You are one goiter taller than your sister'

Dr. Stekel wanted to say that his patient is *einen Kopf größer* (lit.: 'one head taller') than her sister. Instead, he says, that she is *einen Kopf größer* (lit.: 'one goiter taller') than her sister. This is facilitated by the phonetic similarity of the German nouns *Kopf* [kopf] ('head') and *Kropf* [krɔpf] ('goiter').

The next example is taken from a video-taped TV-debate, which took place one month before the elections for the Austrian National Assembly ('Österreichischer Nationalrat') on 17th December 1995. The leader of the conservative People's Party (ÖVP), Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel, and the leader of the right wing Freedom Party (FPÖ), Dr. Jörg Haider, are introduced by the presenter Rudolf Nagiller. The presenter first asks Haider to characterize his political opponent in a few words. After Haider has finished his presentation, Nagiller turns to Schüssel and asks him:⁷

- (9)
[Nagiller: Herr Doktor Haider äh 'tschuldigung, Herr
Doktor Schüssel
[Haider: Ich bin ich ((gehobener Zeigefinger der rechten Hand))
Schüssel: I am who I am ((raised index finger of the right hand))
[Nagiller: Dr. Haider uh 'scuse me, Dr. Schüssel
[Haider: Schüssel
Schüssel: I am who I am ((raised index finger of the right hand))

As the political positions of the two parties involved are rather close, Nagiller's confusion is extremely threatening for Schüssel's positive face as a party leader, because it seems to imply that Schüssel is almost identical with Haider. Even though he did not exclude the option of forming a coalition with the FPÖ at the time when the discussion took place, Schüssel wanted to present himself and his party as the better alternative and, therefore, insisted on a clearly demarcated identity (cf. his tautological slogan 'I am who I am', which, of course, is not sufficient to prove an independent political identity; on tautological arguments see Kienpointner 1996). Of course, Nagiller did not want to be rude intentionally, but as it was common knowledge in Austria at the time of the discussion that Schüssel did not explicitly exclude a coalition with Haider's FPÖ, Nagiller's mistake could be interpreted as a Freudian slip,

too (cf. Freud 1974: 80 for another example of an ideologically motivated slip): It could imply that, subconsciously, Nagiller believed that Schüssel and Haider were not so different.

I now turn to **motivated rudeness**, which can be subdivided according to three important functions which it fulfills for institutions, individuals and social groups, respectively: 1. It can be used to serve the interests of public institutions by attacking the positive or negative face of individuals who have to submit themselves to the representatives of the institutions and their procedures; I call this first type of motivated rudeness 'strategic rudeness in public institutions'; 2. a second type of motivated rudeness is used by individuals (usually: friends or close relatives) who share a long history of severe conflicts and habitually and systematically use strategies of rudeness to put the opponent down and to emerge victorious in these quarrels; this type is called 'competitive rudeness in private conversations'; 3. the third type is typical of inter-group conflicts and confrontations, where it is part of the in-group identity and an important means of enhancing the in-group's stability so that the respective out-group is systematically treated in a very rude way. This type I call 'competitive rudeness in inter-group confrontation'.

Strategic rudeness is a means of achieving the goals of an institution in the most efficient way (e.g. in courtroom discourse, cf. Lakoff 1989: 124ff.). Whereas reactive rudeness is considered to be legitimate only because of its position in a speech act sequence, that is, its non-initiating character, strategic rudeness can also initiate a talk exchange. In certain discourse types, for example, American courtroom discourse, 'the prosecutor is licensed to attack the defendant in a manner incompatible with the principles of politic conduct in ordinary conversation' (Kasper 1990: 210). Strategic rudeness typically (but not exclusively, cf. below) occurs in circumstances where the institutional constraints establish 'an asymmetric distribution of rights to communicative practice that reflects the unequal power relationship' (Kasper 1990: 210) of the participants of the interaction (cf. also negotiations between employers and employees or conversations between TV hosts and their guests).

Perhaps the most extreme cases of strategic rudeness can be found in army recruit training discourse. In addition to the great inequality of power, the particular training philosophy is responsible for the high frequency of rude utterances. In order to create the ideal soldier, the training officers try to destroy the recruits' individuality and self-esteem, and then rebuild it in the desired mould. 'In effect, impoliteness is used to

depersonalize the recruits [...]. In the context of the army, impoliteness is not the haphazard product of, say, a heated argument, but it is deployed by the sergeants in a systematic way as part of what they perceive to be their job.' (Culpeper 1996: 359). The following passage taken from an authentic dialogue between a recruit (Private Alves) and three sergeants (filmed at an American recruit training base in 1980, cf. Culpeper 1996: 359f.) shows many strategies of impoliteness, which together create an extraordinary degree of rudeness. They are employed by one of the sergeants, who wants to punish Private Alves for her bad performances in the training program and a recent instance of insubordination against her squad leader.⁸

- (10)
 S1: *you're going to mess up one of my squad leaders [indistinct] any way you can how about it= =don't bullshit me now Alves you want to jump*
 PA: *=I=*
 S1: *you want to jump on somebody= =JUMP ON ME then.... who*
 PA: *=no=*
 S1: *shut up Alves you're the one who is running your little*
 PA: *said that sergeant*
 S1: *mouth again you're the one intimidating and threatening my squad leaders.... bullshit tell that god damn lie to someone that believes*
 PA: *I didn't sergeant*
 S1: *your ass private you've already proven to be a damn habitual liar*

This passage shows a cumulation of positive and negative impoliteness strategies. Sergeant 1 interrupts Private Alves several times, thus denying her the right to speak, ignores her attempts of justification, uses taboo words ('bullshit', 'ass', 'god damn'), belittles her ('your little mouth'). At the paralinguistic and non-verbal level, he frequently shouts at Private Alves and invades her space, placing his mouth approximately ten centimetres from Alves's ear (Culpeper 1996: 363). Moreover, there is no chance of defining a mutually accepted goal of the interaction, let alone fair means of achieving it.

However, strategic rudeness need not always be based on asymmetric power relationships. Public debates in parliaments or a heckler's shouts during speeches can demonstrate astonishingly rude utterances. In

these cases, we have to deal with other subtypes of strategic rudeness, where the participants try to damage the positive and negative face of their opponents in public to reach their strategic goals (e.g. to win an election, to convert people, to make fun of other people, etc.). The following two examples will illustrate this.

In the TV-debate already quoted above, both Haider and Schüssel repeatedly and systematically try to damage the positive face of their political opponent by portraying him as a person who is not to be taken seriously as a potential Austrian prime minister. There is no question of finding a compromise which would make a coalition or at least closer political cooperation or some other mutually acceptable goal of the debate possible. The main interest of both parties seems to be egocentric. This can be seen, for example, by the fact that Schüssel uses a dubious analogy to equate Haider with a young hooligan: he quotes the title of a song by the late cabaret artist Helmut Qualtinger, which has become a classic and is very well known in Austria. In this song, Qualtinger portrays himself as a young 'wild one' with a motorbike (*ein Wilder mit seiner Maschin*), who does not know where to go, but is content with getting there faster.⁹

- (11) Schüssel: *Ich möchte nicht, so wie mit Ihnen/wie das bei Ihnen viele Leute sehn, einen 'Wilder auf seiner Maschin' erleben, 'I weiß zwoa nit wo i hinfahr, aber dafür bin i schneller dort', der legendäre Qualtinger-Song. (lächelnd)*
 Schüssel: I don't want, as in your case/like many people see you, to experience a 'Wild one on his bike', 'I don't know where I'm going, as long as I get there faster', the legendary Qualtinger-song ((smiling))

Schüssel somehow mitigates his comparison with his non-verbal behavior and to a certain extent distances himself from the comparison by quoting it as the opinion of many Austrians (*viele*). But given the more or less hostile climate during the whole debate, which is reflected by many verbal and non-verbal cues, Schüssel's smile is better interpreted as a means to reinforce a sarcastic *ad hominem*-attack which is far from fair (moreover, Haider's notorious right wing statements would have left room for much more serious political criticism).

To give another striking example, in the public speech event of 'witnessing and heckling' (cf. Van Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 142ff.), the parties involved, namely fundamentalist preachers and college students in the U.S.A., systematically provoke each other with expressions and utter-

ances which are considered to be extremely rude by both parties (cf. e.g. the following utterances, taken from Van Eemeren *et al.* 1993: 144f.):

(12)

Jed Smock (preacher):

*Your girl gets pregnant, and you go out and kill the baby and you say,
'Well I sure had fun.*

.....

*Some of these girls would rather lie face down in their own vomit than
hold a baby to their breast.*

.....

X (heckler): *You should have been aborted, Jed.*

In this case, too, the speech situation is characterized by symmetrical power relationships. The mutual insults are the consequence of incommensurable beliefs, world views, and argumentative patterns rather than of asymmetry of power. Furthermore, in the passage quoted above, we can see a fundamental difference in style and verbal strategy between preacher and heckler, although both act in a very rude and aggressive way. On the one hand, the fundamentalist preacher uses heavily offensive reproaches (e.g. portraying the members of his audience as extremely reckless and immoral people) as a means to intimidate and eventually convert his audience, that is, he is serious about everything he says. On the other hand, the heckler sarcastically insults Smock to tease and provoke him and to make him finally lose his temper.

Competitive rudeness in private conversations differs from strategic institutional rudeness. While the latter can be employed almost without emotions, the former is usually connected with the strong feelings which are the outcome of the intimacy typical of spouses or close friends. This does not mean that intimacy automatically leads to a higher degree of rudeness. On the one hand, in a close relationship 'one has more scope for impoliteness: one may know which aspects of face are particularly sensitive to attack, and one may be able to better predict and/or cope with retaliation that may ensue' (Culpeper 1996: 354). But on the other hand, people with close relationships 'are more likely to have close identity of face wants [...]. Thus the scope for impoliteness is reduced, since in normal circumstances one presumably wishes to avoid self face damage' (Culpeper 1996: 355). Therefore, competitive rudeness in private conver-

sation and its escalation can be the result of many intermingling factors, for instance, differing conversational styles and personality traits of the participants, as well as their sex, age and cultural background (cf. Tannen 1993). In any case, however, the opponents consider communication as a zero sum game where there are only winners and losers. Therefore, the basic motivation underlying politeness, namely, that 'it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61; cf. also Culpeper 1996: 354), is suspended.

As it is very difficult, if not impossible, to record authentic examples of competitive private rudeness, I have taken passages from Edward Albee's play *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (cf. Watzlawick *et al.* 1974: 138ff.; Schank 1987: 81ff.). A prototypical example of two different styles of highly competitive private rudeness is shown by George and Martha, the main protagonists in this play. Both Martha and George use all types of impoliteness strategies (cf. Bollobás 1981 on various types of irony employed by them) to insult and provoke each other and their guests (Nick and Honey). However, George systematically prefers off-record strategies (especially, sarcastic rudeness), whereas Martha systematically prefers on record strategies, especially positive impoliteness strategies (taboo words, derogatory names). See the following three passages, where only in the first one do Martha and George attack each other directly, using loaded French swearwords (however, given the fact that it is less likely to cause real offence by using a foreign language, the code-switch in the first passage could imply that (13) should rather be analyzed as a ritual insult). In the second and third passage, Martha directly attacks George, while he tries to make a fool of her, sarcastically exposing her aggressive formulations or other kinds of alleged unacceptable behavior to their guests. His sarcasm does not go unnoticed, as Nick's remark in the third passage shows:

(13) GEORGE: *Monstre!*

MARTHA: *Cochon!*

GEORGE: *Bête!*

MARTHA: *Canaille!*

GEORGE: *Putain!*

MARTHA [with a gesture of contemptuous dismissal]:
Yaaaahhhh!

(14) MARTHA [swinging on George]: *Look, muckmouth... you cut that out!*

GEORGE [innocence and hurt]: *Martha!* [to Honey and Nick]

Martha's a devil with language; she really is.

(15) GEORGE [also to the guests]: *Our son ran away from home all the time because Martha here used to corner him.*

MARTHA [braying]: *I NEVER CORNERED THE SON OF A BITCH IN MY LIFE!*

GEORGE [handing Martha her drink]: *He used to run up to me when I'd get home, and he'd say, 'Mama's always coming at me.' That's what he'd say.*

MARTHA: *Liar!*

GEORGE [shrugging]: *Well, that's the way it was... you were always coming at him. I thought it was very embarrassing.*

NICK: *If you thought it was so embarrassing, what are you talking about it for?*

Inter-group rudeness occurs in the following situations: on the one hand, majority and/or powerful social groups often use strategies of rude communication as a means to degrade members of out-groups. This typically occurs in face-to-face interaction between in-group members and out-group members, but also when members of the majority group talk contemptuously about absent out-group members. On the other hand, minorities and/or powerless groups can use **rudeness as a means of social self-defense** and political criticism. In the latter case, rude expressions and communicative strategies can be employed as 'anti-language' in the sense of Halliday (1978: 164ff.) against the norms of powerful social groups, who at the same time are often the majority in a society/culture. If one does not simply take for granted the linguistic norms and the world view of the majority and/or the powerful groups, anti-languages cannot be judged as inherently unacceptable. On the contrary, for the members of the social groups using them, they are perfectly acceptable strategies of communication. This makes them similar to strategies of sociable rudeness. However, different from sociable rudeness, anti-languages are systematically and intentionally employed to attack the face of persons who are not members of the group and are, therefore, not considered as (mainly) cooperative communicative behavior.

Inter-group-rudeness is an extremely widespread phenomenon. In verbal interactions of members of powerful and/or majority groups (henceforth: dominant groups) with members of powerless and/or minority groups, quite often the first tend to belittle the latter systematically. Of

course, not all members of dominant groups use the same verbal strategies or share the same ideology; more specifically, not all of them use aggressively rude utterances. Moreover, ethnocentric or even racist world views can also be verbalized in a very indirect way (cf. Van Dijk 1993; Windisch 1990: 82ff.). However, in the dialogue from which the following passage is taken, members of the dominant group use swearwords, aggressive jokes and belittling qualifications to attack the positive and negative face of members of minority groups. In example (16), a German worker (Alfred) tells one of a series of explicitly racist jokes. Given the presence of a foreign worker (Ali, apparently Turkish; in reality: Günter Wallraff, who acts as an undercover journalist to document the inhuman practices of employers and systematic exploitation of immigrant workers in Germany), the following joke is an instance of a most offensive and humiliating insult (Wallraff 1985: 111):

(16)

Alfred: *Was ist der Unterschied zwischen den Türken und den Juden?*

Ali: *Alles Menschen, kei Unterschied.*

Alfred (triumphierend): *Doch! Die Juden haben's schon hinter sich!*

Alfred: What is the difference between the Turks and the Jews?

Ali: All human beings, no difference.

Alfred (triumphantly): No! The Jews already have it behind them!

The next examples are taken from in-depth interviews concerning the attitudes of native Swiss people towards immigrant workers. Here, the rude utterances are not produced in the presence of out-group members. Moreover, in contrast to example (16), the interviewee (an elderly lower middle class woman) denies having racist or xenophobic views. This fits well into Windisch's findings that popular styles of thinking and reasoning are rarely completely consistent (1990: 70ff.). Furthermore, the interviewee seems to be partially aware of the rudeness of her utterances (cf. her meta-linguistic comment *en bon français*) containing drastic metaphorical expressions for the physical effects on her body, which are created by the presence of certain out-group members in Switzerland:

(17) *Moi je ne suis pas raciste, pas du tout raciste, j'aime tout le monde....Moi ce qui me fait chier, en bon français, c'est les frontaliers, c'est surtout ça.*
.....

Le Jura, je le vomis comme les communistes. C'est un canton que j'ignore maintenant. C'est pas des Suisses.

'I am not a racist, not at all, I love the whole world. ... What makes me shit, in plain English, are the international commuters, that's it, more than anything else.

.....

The Jura, it makes me absolutely sick, like the communists. It's a canton I ignore now. They are not Swiss.'

Thus, example (17) shows less direct, but still clearly recognizable strategies of rudeness (cf. the verbs *chier* ('to shit') and *vomir* ('to vomit')), which damage the positive face of minority groups. The first group consists of the immigrant workers, namely the international commuters. They are accused of not living permanently in Switzerland and, therefore, not taking over the duties of ordinary citizens (this becomes clear from the verbal context of example (17)). The second out-group are separatist inhabitants of the canton Jura, who are condemned by the interviewee to the degree that she equates them with members of another out-group, the Swiss communists. Finally, via over-generalization she denies the whole population of the canton the status of being Swiss.

The counterpart of rudeness of dominant groups is rudeness as a means of **social self-defense**. It is employed by powerless groups all over the world. These groups use patterns of phonology and word formation to create a partially new lexicon, full of derogatory lexical expressions which show their contempt for official values and their protest against the political establishment. In this way, they create anti-languages, which are at most partially understandable for the majority and/or powerful groups (note that Culpeper (1996: 357f.) included the use of obscure or secretive language/jargon in his impoliteness strategies!). I will provide the following two examples: firstly, I will mention an anti-language used by a minority of social outcasts, namely the jargon of delinquents as described by Martín Rojo (1994: 'caló carcelario', 'caló jergal'), which is spoken by a Spanish ethno-cultural minority.¹⁰ Secondly, I will show that anti-languages need not always be spoken by minorities, citing the example of the anti-language used by the suppressed majority of native speakers of Polish during the Communist dictatorship (cf. Wierzbicka 1990).

Martín Rojo (1994) taped a simulation of a hold-up in a shop in which the jargon speakers agreed to take part while they were in prison. Their jargon has several functions: it enhances group identity and cooperation

and creates a radically different vision of the world and of society (e.g., the verb *trabaja/ar*, 'to work', is used in jargon with the meaning 'to rob'). Moreover, the jargon speakers know that their victims in the hold-up do not understand the jargon, but 'they will perceive its values of aggression and offense, making the message even more effective' (Martín Rojo 1994: 263); remember Culpeper's substrategy of positive impoliteness 'Use obacure or secretive language'. See the following utterances, taken from the simulated hold-up (Martín Rojo 1994: 263):

(18) *¡Venga los bastos pa arriba!* (Spanish: *Venga las manos arriba!*)
'Hands up!'

¡Aquí todo el jayer! (Spanish: *Aquí todo el dinero!*)

'Hand over all the money!'

¡Yo te chivo aquí mismo, lacorra!

'I'll screw you right here, girl!'

Wierzbicka (1990) describes the verbal strategies used by Polish people as a means of political self-defense against the official propaganda of the totalitarian Communist regime: 'if the fear and hatred toward an oppressing regime and its institutions cannot be expressed via free speech, free press, or free publications, they can be expressed in underground words and expressions, and this very fact can bring a captive population a measure of psychological relief and liberation' (Wierzbicka 1990: 8). Many political institutions and their members, especially the political police 'UB' ('Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego', 'Office of Public Security'), were referred to with derogatory terms like 'ubowcy', 'ubecy', 'ubole', which carry associations of dread and horror ('ubowcy'), scorn and contempt ('ubecy') and maliciousness and stupidity ('ubole'), respectively (Wierzbicka 1990: 32). But even relatively harmless designations like 'enbecy' (singular: 'esbek', that is, member of the 'SB' = 'Służba Bezpieczeństwa', 'Security Service', the institution replacing 'UB' in the mid-1950s, following an attempt to create a new and better image of the political police) could be used as a term of abuse, speaking to someone who is not an employee of SB. See the following example (quoted after Wierzbicka 1990: 40):

(19) *Ten pijany krycza...: "Ty kurwo polityczny! Ty esbeku, gnoju pierdolony!"*

'The drunk shouted: "You dirty political whore! You esbek, you fucking shit!"'

3.3. Rudeness in literature

I would like to conclude with a few remarks on the use of rudeness in literature. Sell (1992: 126) states that 'All literary texts [...] to some extent challenge existing norms of politeness if only in order to win attention and be interesting'. This remark could be seen as an argument for the markedness of rudeness in relation to politeness, an assumption I have criticized above (cf. section 2). But there are literary genres (e.g. ancient Greek comedy of the 5th century BC) where rudeness is so common that it belongs to the highly expectable rather than to the surprising phenomena. So rudeness must serve at least some other functions than merely to surprise.

Varieties of rudeness like those I have illustrated in section 3.1 and 3.2 can be employed as a stylistic technique by authors of fictional dialogues. Rudeness can be highly comical; therefore, it is frequently used in comedies. For example, it is funny if a person has such a mean character that he or she does not care at all about insults, even if they are meant seriously and there are no mitigating circumstances. In Plautus' comedy *Pseudolus* (v. 357ff.), the pimp Ballio, due to his immoral breach of contract, is gravely insulted by Agorastocles and his slave Pseudolus. Instead of reacting with similar verbal means, he stays calm and even completely agrees with each of the insults and thus renders his opponents helpless.

But rudeness can also be highly dramatic: 'Impolite behaviour, either as a result of social disharmony or as the cause of it, does much to further the development of character and plot' (Culpeper 1996: 364). Therefore, it is also used in tragedies (cf. Culpeper's analysis of impoliteness strategies in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; 1996: 364ff.; cf. also my remarks on Albee's play *Who's afraid of Virginia Woolf*; many more examples could be given).

Moreover, literature can be used as a kind of anti-language which creates an alternative view of reality (Halliday 1978: 182) or is used to formulate political protest. Therefore, from antiquity, rudeness has been frequently used in poetry, or, in our time, it is often used as a stylistic strategy in rock songs (where it can also serve the function of creating a group language, namely an anti-language of the youth). Here are two examples.

In one of his poems (carmen 57), the Roman poet Catullus (84-54 BC) outrageously insults both Julius Caesar and his favorite Mamurra, using swear words (*cinaedus*: 'lecher'; *pathicus*: 'fairy'), sarcastic com-

ments (*uno in lectulo, erudituli ambo*: 'erudite in the skills of one divan, each'), which implies a homosexual relation between Caesar and Mamurra), and derogatory descriptions. The text and a free English translation are quoted after Peter Whigham (1969: *The Poems of Catullus*. A Bilingual Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press, p. 117, p. 279).

(20) *Pulcre convenit improbis cinaedis,
Mamurrae pathicoque Caesarique.
nec mirum: maculae paris utrisque,
urbana altera et illa Formiana,
impressae resident nec eluentur:
morbosi pariter, gemelli utrique,
uno in lectulo, erudituli ambo,
non hic quam ille magis vorax adulter,
rivales sociei puellularum.
pulcre convenit improbis cinaedis.*

'Caesar Mamurraque!

A peerless pair of brazen buggers,
both tarred with the same brush
this, from the city, that, from south Latium,
the stain ingrained no purgative can flush...
double dyed, the 'heavenly twins',
erudite in the skills of the one divan, each
as voraciously adulterous as the
other — joint competitors in the woman's market.
A peerless pair of brazen buggers!'

The contrast between form and content of the poem is further sharpened by Catullus' masterful use of stylistic devices (e.g. the metre (Hendekasyllabus), the consistent use of parallel and antithetical syntactic structures, the symmetry created by the identity of the first and the last verse, the elegant allusion to Caesar's and Mamurra's alleged sexual orientation through 'feminine' diminutives (*in lectulo*: lit. 'in a little bed'; *erudituli*: lit. 'little erudite ones'), etc.).

In their song 'Pea', the members of the crossover rock band Red Hot Chili Peppers hurl insults at prototypical representatives of conservative and/or right-wing groups with a massive dose of abusive words. Stylistically, the taboo words (a whole series of four-letter words like *fuck* and cumulations of swearwords like *homophobic redneck dick*) stress the

sharp contrast between the innocence and harmlessness of small plants, animals and pacifists introduced in the first part of the song (cf. the recurrence of lexical material expressing minuteness: *little, small, teeny tiny, pea, ant* and the hyperbolic *nothing*) and the abrupt change to aggressive rudeness in the second part (unexpectedly already starting in the last line of this part of the song: *So I can fuck your shit up*). This strongly emphasized antithetical structure could be interpreted as the expression of an outburst of anger by peaceful creatures who are too powerless to act against the dominant groups (cf. *You are big and tough and macho/You can kick my ass*) in society, those who can therefore only be attacked verbally:

(21) PEA (Anthony Kiedis, Flea, Dave Navarro and Chad Smith 1995)

*I'm a little pea
I love the sky and the trees
I'm a teeny tiny little ant
Checking out this and that
I am nothing
So you have nothing to hide
And I'm a pacifist
So I can fuck your shit up

Oh yeah I'm small

Fuck you asshole
You homophobic redneck dick
You're big and tough and macho
You can kick my ass
So fucking what.*

4. Conclusions

Given the difficulties of providing universally valid principles of politeness and the ubiquitous occurrence of rudeness in various types of institutional and private conversation, it does not seem self-evident to consider politeness as unmarked, normal communicative behavior, whereas rudeness, as a (partial) violation of politeness maxims, would always be marked and/or exceptional behavior. Therefore, I have tried to define politeness and rudeness as the extreme points in a continuum of more or less cooperative or competitive communicative behavior.

Moreover, several varieties of rude behavior can even be classified as more or less cooperative behavior (mock impoliteness/banter, ritual insult, reactive rudeness, sociable rudeness). Cooperative rudeness fulfills a number of important social functions and quite often stabilizes rather than endangers social relationships.

I have argued for a moderate relativism which accepts the universality of notions like positive and negative face, face threatening and face enhancing acts, and parameters like power and distance at an abstract level, but asks for culture- and language-specific adaptation and modification of these concepts as soon as the explanation of actual utterances is concerned.

Nevertheless, many questions remain open. First of all, one can ask whether the Cooperative Principle of Grice and the Politeness Principles, Maxims and Strategies of Lakoff, Leech and Brown and Levinson could be reformulated in a way that claims of universality could be better justified (cf. the interesting attempt of Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997: 11ff.). More specifically, one can ask whether there are universal gender-specific differences as far as different varieties of cooperative and non-cooperative rudeness are concerned. After all, it has often been claimed that men tend to use rude utterances more frequently than women (for different views cf. Brown and Levinson 1987: 30ff.; Frank 1992: 20ff.; Tannen 1993: 14f.). Another question (which I tend to answer negatively) concerns the linguistic form of rude utterances: are there at least a few inherently impolite or rude acts irrespective of contexts and cultures (cf. Leech 1983: 83; Culpeper 1996: 351; Kerbrat-Orecchioni 1997: 12)?

Certainly, many more studies of politeness and rudeness will be necessary for a full answer to these questions.

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Notes

1. Cf. Grice's definition (1975: 45ff.) of the Cooperative Principle: 'Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged' and some of its attendant maxims: 'Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of this exchange)', 'Do not say what you believe to be false', 'Be relevant', 'Be perspicuous'.

2. This does not mean, however, that we have to accept Brown and Levinson's claims about the universality of rules and strategies of politeness, the view of rudeness as marked and/or inherently irrational communicative behavior, the ranking of strategies of politeness according to the degree of indirectness of utterances, etc.
3. Transcription: 'F' — father; 'M' — mother; 'D' — daughter; 'J' — self-correction/interruption; '[' — overlapping utterances; '(())' — prosodic and non-verbal behavior; '(X)' — difficult to understand; '.....' — deleted sequence.
4. Transcription: '[' — overlapping utterances; '(())' — pragmatic commentary.
5. Transcription: 'Dr' — doctor; 'M' — mother; 'C' — child; ':' — prolonged syllable; '-----' — overlapping utterances; 'J' — description of how talk is delivered; '(pause)' — marked pause; CAPITALS — relatively high amplitude; '.....' — deleted sequence.
6. Transcription: 'F' — Freda; 'J' — Jack; '[' — overlapping utterances; **Bold** — special emphasis.
7. Transcription: '[' — overlapping utterances; "'xcuse'" — first syllable slurred; '(())' — non-verbal behavior.
8. Transcription: 'S1' — Sergeant 1; 'PA' — Private Alves; '...' — pauses; '=' — one utterance immediately following from another; 'CAPITAL LETTERS' — loud speech.
9. Transcription: '/' — self-correction; '()' — non-verbal behavior.
10. Cf. also the language of thieves in Buenos Aires called *lenguaje lunfardo* (*lunfardo* = 'thieve') mentioned by Fontanella de Weinberg (1987: 142) or the underworld language of Calcutta, a variety of Bengali; cf. Halliday (1978: 172ff.).

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