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- Kim, Young Yun. 2001. *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Rampton, Ben. 2009. Interaction ritual and not just artful performance in crossing and stylization. *Language in Society* 38 (2). 149–176.
- Wenger, Etienne. 1998. *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pan, Yuling and Dániel Z. Kádár. 2011. *Politeness in Historical and Contemporary Chinese*. London and New York: Continuum. Hardback ISBN 978-1-8470-6275-8; 224 pp. Price: £ 75/€ 90/USD\$ 140

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The Chinese are often perceived by many Westerners and native Chinese alike to have been courteous in the past but to be somewhat less polite or rather uncivilized nowadays. Some previous studies (e. g., Young 1994) have touched upon this issue, but without exception, they focus solely on either the traditional or the contemporary aspect. The knotty yet interesting object of instigation thus remains essentially unexplored. *Politeness in Historical and Contemporary Chinese*, purposely designed to address the transformation of Chinese im/politeness during the past few centuries, is a most timely and welcome book for those of us engrossed in “the chameleon-like nature of politeness” (Watts 2003: 24).

Built on the authors’ continuing theoretical and empirical explorations of Chinese politeness (e. g., Pan 1995; Kádár and Pan 2011), this volume characterizes Chinese politeness norms and practices using a comparative diachronic approach. It thus in a large sense offers a perspective on Chinese politeness that is complementary to Gu’s (1990) conversational-maxim view and Pan’s (2000) situation-based approach.

This long-awaited book is “anchored to the so-called discursive approaches to linguistic politeness” (p. 13). Allowing for data complexity and multiplicity of interpretations, this approach enables the authors to comfortably explore the normative, ambivalent and discursive nature of Chinese politeness. In line with the discursive approaches to politeness, this book is based on an impressive corpus. The two comparable datasets, in both Mandarin and Cantonese collected in North and South China, cover periods of time spanning as long as four centuries. The data are highly varied in genres and types, including letters, novels, textbooks, newspapers, to name just a few. Hence a wide variety of practices of Chinese politeness are represented. Most notably, perhaps,

the five hundred hours of taped naturally occurring conversations is unlikely to be equalled in current politeness literature. Moreover, the contemporary data were gathered through a range of methods such as tape recording, participant observation, survey interviews, and focus groups. With such rich data the authors are able to triangulate their interpretations and findings even within the context of a fairly compact volume.

As one of the valuable characteristics of this book, as many as five appendices and two indexes are provided after the text. Among them, Chronological List of Chinese Dynasties, Simplified Chinese Transcript of the Texts Studied and Index of Chinese Expressions Studied should be particularly helpful for those unfamiliar with Chinese language and history. The carefully thought-out structure is another striking feature. Briefly, the volume starts by taking issue with the myth of Chinese politeness. The remainder of this book then centres on deconstructing this myth and reconstructing the process of changes in Chinese politeness by examining politeness in historical and contemporary China. The authors also analyze politeness in the modern or transitional period in order to map the disintegration of historical formal politeness and its underlying logic. More precisely, the text consists of six chapters as outlined below.

Chapter 1 provides the background and objectives of the book. To pinpoint the “mysterious loss of [Chinese] tradition” and the large gap between “old” and “new” politeness systems, this co-authored volume has two main areas of focus (p. 2):

- (a) to compare historical (from 18th to early 20th centuries) and contemporary (1950 to present) Chinese norms of polite communication
- (b) to uncover the driving force behind the transformation of politeness during modern times

This book is written for researchers and students interested in Chinese politeness and many neighbouring disciplines such as communication studies, sociolinguistics, etc. Given the rapid rise of China on the world stage, this volume is also targeted at general readers.

Chapter 2 begins with a challenge to the circulating misconceptions or myth of Chinese politeness. It then outlines the framework used in this volume and delineates the aspects of politeness examined. Chinese politeness has changed considerably, particularly in formality during the past centuries partly as a result of historical events. Pan and Kádár argue that stereotyping historical China as “courteous” and contemporary China as somewhat “impolite” is over-simplistic in the light of

social and discursive factors (pp. 12–13). The authors therefore propose to deconstruct Chinese politeness and reconstruct its changing process by comparing “the *formal(ized)* or *conventional(ized)* [original italics] aspects of politeness norms in historical and contemporary China” (p. 21). Within an integrated pragmaphilological-sociopragmatic approach, their guiding notion is that politeness is a reflection of linguistic rules, cultural norms and social practices.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that historical Chinese politeness was predominantly expressed by “a large lexicon of honorifics and various discursive strategies” (p. 43). Terms of address were the most frequently used honorifics. The authors argue that acknowledging the addressee’s social status or role through deferential language use was the “motor of politeness” (p. 40) in historical China. According to them, historical Chinese politeness was ritual and deferential. Like politeness in Japan and many other historical societies, historical Chinese politeness had an important ‘non-strategic’ or discernment aspect. Consequently as conventionalized acts, discursive strategies (e. g., refusals and requests) of historical Chinese politeness mostly convey self-denigration and addressee-elevation and regularly “co-occur with honorific forms” (p. 52).

Although historical Chinese politeness was predominantly conventionalized, formal tools of politeness could also be used to express emergent politeness or non-polite meanings such as negative emotions. At the same time, deference or politeness sometimes could be conveyed by unconventional means such as banter (p. 58). Moreover, the authors argue that since late imperial China was by nature a hierarchical society, historical politeness was unequally distributed between the social groups of the “powerful”, the “powerless” and women (p. 61). Compared with other social groups, those with more power had a larger repertoire of self-denigrating terminologies at their disposal and “were entitled to be addressed by similarly elaborate terms of address” (p. 62). Women’s status was determined by their husbands or families. Hence they were addressed accordingly while they referred to themselves with very few denigrating terms. Interestingly, contrary to the stereotypical view on historical politeness, many encounters containing rudeness are identified in the vernacular data and politeness strategies were often ignored between intimates such as family members (p. 67).

Chapter 4 is the central part of this book as it not only surveys politeness norms and practices in contemporary Chinese but also compares them with those in historical China. We are told that, due largely to the impact of political events, contemporary Chinese politeness practices have shifted from the traditional over-reliance on honorific lexicon to discursive moves and discursive strategies. Although new terms and expressions were introduced to meet new sociopragmatic requirements,

the number of address terms in contemporary China is much smaller than those in the historical period (p. 85). Ritualized and denigrating/elevating honorifics used most frequently in historical China have nearly disappeared. Instead, many discursive strategies are used, among which particles, turn-taking, small talk and mocking or teasing occur most frequently (p. 90).

At the discourse level in contemporary Chinese, speech acts such as refusals, apologies and requests are often performed using various discursive strategies such as indirectness and taking redressive action. A speech act delivered in a traditional ritualized form would very often be perceived as inappropriate or insincere (p. 101). The authors' analysis of the discursive strategies used in contemporary written texts is especially novel and interesting. The authors demonstrate that in Chinese newspapers contextual, textual and presentational cues such as the font, size and colour of the news all play an important role in contemporary politeness practices.

The discrepancy between the heavy use of honorifics and deferential lexicon in historical China and the increasing importance of discursive strategies and contextual cues in contemporary China accounts effectively for the myth of Chinese politeness. In spite of China's ideological campaign to promote the use of equalitarian terms, the cultural norms of hierarchy and the value of in-groupness remain "intact" (p. 108). A case in point is that, as in the past, the resources of polite expressions are asymmetrically distributed among the "powerful" and the "powerless". The lack of formalized politeness in contemporary China may be perceived as impolite. However, the authors argue – probably drawing insights from Bourdieu's (1977) theory of practice – that "the 'anomaly' may become the norm and the norm may become the anomaly" (p. 112). Hence Chinese politeness practice is dynamic, fluid and in constant flux.

Chapter 5 attempts to get to grips with the "miraculous" collapse of the historical politeness system. A comparison between politeness in Mainland China, Singapore, Taiwan and North Korea shows that no easy links can be established between the loss of historical honorifics and historical/political events and ideologies. Nor does "transitional" data provide sufficient evidence for the shift from historical to contemporary politeness. The authors argue that the key lies largely in the language itself: "historical Chinese was inherently vulnerable to social changes" (p. 128). As a representing medium of Confucian class ideologies it was vulnerable to large-scale changes in modern (transitional) times when hierarchy was being strongly criticized. In languages such as Korean and Japanese, honorifics are built into the grammar but Chinese honorifics are not. The historical Chinese politeness system, there-

fore, collapsed for two interdependent reasons: it rested on Confucian hierarchical ideologies and it was ungrammaticalized (p. 152).

Finally, Chapter 6, “Deconstructing Chinese Politeness”, shows three sets of linguistic tools that the authors identified in their data analysis which are used to express Chinese politeness: “honorifics and deference lexicons, discursive strategies, and lack of polite expressions” (p. 155). The linguistic tools employed are similar in historical and contemporary Chinese politeness, but the scope and domain range for their usage have changed. Despite these differences, Pan and Kádár maintain that historical and contemporary Chinese politeness functions as one rather than two totally different systems. They argue this is because politeness interacts with linguistic rules, cultural norms and social practices. In China, it is the cultural norms that hold them together. The whole text concludes by highlighting that the misperceptions or misrepresentations of Chinese politeness were “largely due to the mismatch between the unchanged cultural norms and the changed linguistic expressions of politeness caused by changing social practices.” (p. 161).

In summary, *Politeness in Historical and Contemporary Chinese* tackles a seemingly unanswerable question. This book exemplifies the strength of the use of combined methodological approaches in investigating politeness in general and the development or evolution of politeness in particular. Written in a lively, engaging, and reader-friendly style, this book will appeal to both academics and ordinary readers.

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