THE DARK SIDE OF POLITENESS: A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF NON-COOPERATIVE COMMUNICATION

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English in the University of Canterbury by J. P. M. Austin

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ABSTRACT

I examine the Brown and Levinson (1978) model of politeness. On the assumption that a model of face attention must involve impolite as well as polite interactive behaviour, I construct an analogous model to deal with what I term Face Attack Acts. I show that an extension of a politeness model in this way reveals serious flaws in some hypotheses central to Brown and Levinson's work.

I apply the principles of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986) to the extended model, and show how the theory can offer an explanatory account of face attention, on a continuum from polite to impolite. Relevance Theory makes predictions about the interpretation of utterances in context, which explain how the face-oriented aspect of interaction is recovered by hearers.

I show that Relevance Theory provides a motivated way of linking utterances with facts about power asymmetries and group-membership which are seen to be recoverable by the interpretive process. I apply the resulting face-attention model of utterance interpretation to examples of the use of language to encode power and communicate assumptions about social behaviour and status.

In terms of previous accounts of utterance interpretation, particularly Grice's Cooperative Principle and maxims, the account of face attention which incorporates Relevance Theory has greater explanatory power. In practical terms, this application of Relevance Theory is shown to be illuminating in raising the assumptions underlying non-cooperative communication to a conscious level, at which their validity can be sustained.
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Introduction

Every face-saving practice which is allowed to neutralize a particular threat opens up the possibility that the threat will be willfully introduced for what can be safely gained by it. Goffman (1967:24)

1. General Remarks

Interaction between people who do not enjoy equal status and power is based on a system of strategy selection which allows all participants to adjust their processes of utterance production and interpretation according to mutually manifest social rules.

Status discrepancies make continuous role definition necessary during interactions that should be routine. As a result, all group members are sensitized to problems of ambiguity and are forced to form new ground rules (that is, establish norms) for each situation.

Epstein (1971:194)

The maintenance of asymmetry in relationships, therefore, is dependent on appropriate linguistic adjustments in interaction, based on the notion of mutual reinforcement of face requirements. This is not necessarily a cooperative venture.

Previous models of communicative behaviour, particularly those which focus on politeness and cooperation as central features, seem to define the maintenance of asymmetry as a deviant or marginal activity. They do not say that non-cooperative language use does not occur, but they appear to regard politeness as the norm and its reverse as a deviance restricted to a tightly constrained range of situations. This is not the case, according to researchers in asymmetric discourse. (Thomas 1985a, 1985b, 1986). Non-cooperative communication is a rational strategic method of interaction for the protection and strengthening of certain societal structures like gender and racial power asymmetries, in-group solidarity and group exclusivity. In such situations, skilful application of face attack strategies is a device for social cohesion, and marks the speaker/user as a successful member of the group within which s/he maintains her/his identity. Face attack is the other side of the politeness coin, and it must be integrated into a
theory of politeness if social relations which are linguistically expressed are to be adequately accounted for. This can be done by using the central theory of face.

The notion of politeness is one much used in the sociolinguistic and ethnographic literature. Politeness is centred around the concept of face, after the definition by Goffman (1967). The assumption behind previous work on face is that politeness is the norm, and that it forms the basis of social organisation. I will challenge this notion, and show that many of our social organisational procedures rely not just on politeness but on its reverse, often crucially. In such a theory face continues to play a pivotal role and it will be shown that face attack theory results from making further predictions of a theory of face.

In chapters one and two, I begin with the classic account of linguistic forms of politeness, the paper by Brown and Levinson (1978), who construct a model of politeness strategies. I construct an analogous model, which deals with the choice of strategies to destroy rather than maintain face, and I show how the choices can be made from a range of strategies, from safe to risky. The major difference between the two models lies in the way in which face-risk is calculated rather than in the variables used to calculate it or the strategies which encode the result of that calculation.

In chapter three, I show that the structure of Brown and Levinson's model is challenged by the facts which emerge when the model is extended. I show that generalisations of the kind made by Brown and Levinson cannot apply in a theory of either politeness or impoliteness. In particular, it will be shown that it is often impossible on the basis of their realisations to maintain a distinction between acts oriented to positive and negative face. I also show that the contrast between on-record and off-record behaviour in the Brown and Levinson model is not adequately motivated, and that the claim that face attention is paid exclusively either to negative face or to positive face is falsified by an extension of the model.

An explanatory account of face attention as a whole is to be found by application of a recent theory of utterance interpretation, relevance theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986). In chapter four, I apply the principles of relevance theory to the problems raised by the Brown and Levinson-type model, and I show that relevance theory predicts the similarities between politeness and impoliteness while also predicting that the differences which arise are a function of context.

Chapter five provides some selected applications of the extended relevance theory detailed in chapter four. I apply the principles of relevance theory to some interesting contemporary
social phenomena, and show how interpretive analyses of the kind offered by relevance theory illuminate the social facts in these situations.

2. Face

I begin with a definition of the concept of face, to clarify what is meant during the course of this work. I start with Goffman's (1967) definition.

The term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact.

Goffman (1967:5)

Brown and Levinson define face in two ways; in terms of positive and negative face.

**negative face**: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others.

**positive face**: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others.

Brown and Levinson (1978:67)

I distinguish between positive and negative face, in the following way.

Positive face is the desire of the individual to have a recognised value in the society in which s/he lives. The individual needs to know about her/his standing in relation to others, including others' opinion of the individual, and the relative status of the individual and others. The derivative needs of this general desire are the need to be liked, to have one's needs appreciated, to have one's value ranked as highly as possible - in other words to maintain a self esteem.

Negative face constitutes the other element of the desire for a place in society. Here the desire is for an imposition-free space, wherein the individual can maintain self esteem and freedom of action within the general boundaries set by society. The individual needs to be able to assess her/his freedom to act or to refrain from acting, depending on preference, responsibility or external constraints. Derivative needs include the desire to be free from coercion, imposition and constraint within the space the individual claims for herself, or that society allows.

Brown and Levinson's notions of freedom of action have their basis in a Western version of the
concept. Freedom and freedom from imposition are culturally defined concepts. If one takes a society where roles are rigidly defined, most people do not expect or in fact want freedom to perform the role of others. What they want is freedom to perform their own role and freedom from impediment in performing the roles of others. Therefore, the negative face concept as defined above is descriptively more accurate than that defined by Brown and Levinson. Their definition predicts that in general human beings will actively seek freedom from imposition; a type of anarchy which individuals in fact avoid.

It is also important to note that, while two elements of face can be distinguished, the division between them in terms of face-oriented activities is not absolute. Attention to face cannot be subdivided neatly into negative face-regard or positive face-regard, as the effects overlap consistently. Face is rather ambiguous as to perception and effect. If a speaker attacks a hearer's self-esteem, the result will be that the hearer will subsequently feel constrained to some extent in interaction with the speaker, thus her negative face will have been affected as well. The converse of this is that, if one pays attention to preserving the hearer's face needs, this will result in a greater feeling of freedom on the part of the hearer in subsequent interactions. Therefore, it can be said that a particular act is addressed to either positive or negative face, but that attention to one has a secondary effect on the other. In actual realisations, the distinction cannot be entirely upheld. While there are cases where the positive or negative primary orientation is quite clear, the recipient's perception in terms of the effects it has on her self-esteem or future interactional behaviour is of an amalgamation of the two.

Face is a constant in interaction. There may be other, more immediate motivations for communicating, but considerations of face are always part of the social aspect of interaction. Goffman acknowledges this, while stating that face-orientation can be seen as the traffic rules of interaction.

By repeatedly and automatically asking himself the question, "If I do or do not act in this way, will I or others lose face?" he decides at each moment, consciously or unconsciously, how to behave.

Goffman (1967: 36)

Particularly in situations where there is some social reason why a participant's face is at risk, or where s/he feels some face threat, s/he will find that considerations of face may well override the communicative purpose of the interaction. In such cases, extreme sensitivity to, and knowledge of face attack strategies is indispensable to the hearer in maintenance of some degree of composure.
3. Politeness and the Dark Side

The choice of the title 'the dark side' is drawn from the movie Star Wars, where there is a force for good which is taken and corrupted for the purposes of evil. The analogy is strong. Face attack is in fact a corruption of the principles of face preservation, and many of the strategies for the one can be co-opted for the other. What causes utterances to be interpreted on the dark side is the context in which they are produced. This crucially includes the hearer's assumptions about the speaker's values, opinions and intentions, as well as other discernible clues like the physical environment, visual and kinesic clues from the speaker or other audience and so on.

The similarity of the two strategic positions is advantageous to the individual engaged in face attack, because s/he can claim to have been operating in the 'light side' sphere, thus protecting vulnerability to charges of 'dark side' intent. As with Star Wars, it is all in the perception of intent.

4. Methodology

Interesting questions arise concerning the choice of methodology for this investigation, which aims both to refine and extend recent pragmatic theory, and to examine the application of such a theory in defined situations. The two approaches which immediately recommend themselves are the strictly theoretical approach, drawing on intuition; and conversational analysis, with its emphasis on empiricism. I propose to develop my theoretical approach in the former way, to show how the theory predicts the recovery of assumptions about social relations as part of the utterance interpretation process.

Holmes (1984a: 58-9, 1986: 6) highlights the need for a more functional analysis of language use in order to make generalisations about social relationships revealed by communicative styles. I see the formation of a theory of the interpretation of affective messages as being in conformity with a functional analysis, which is concerned more with the fact that certain phenomena occur, and the reason why this is so, than with the quantifying of occurrence. The counting of instances of a particular utterance is useful in presenting a picture of linguistic phenomena, but the actual social significance of their use can only be revealed by an in-depth examination of the assumptions which underlie them.

For instance, many of the claims made about the language used by society to and of women can be extended in other directions, or may even be falsified by a more functional analysis. The same
applies even more to the language used by women. An example of this would be the work Janet Holmes and others have done on the sorts of hedges identified by Robin Lakoff as denoting a female, powerless language style. Holmes has demonstrated that what has been seen as non-assertive, self-effacing language can be revealed by a functional analysis to be aimed at facilitating communicative flow; what Fishman (1977) calls shitwork.

The purpose of the present study is to apply pragmatic theory to the analysis of linguistic manipulation of status and group membership. The intention is not to establish the magnitude or extent of such phenomena, but to show that they occur and to demonstrate how best to explain them.

Working from the hypothesis that it is not possible to assign lexical items or syntactic forms to particular illocutionary acts in a principled and predictive way, I aim to show that there is another way to make the predictions; namely, via the contextual constraints. I have used mainly manufactured examples, adding some from personal or observed experience, and some from the work of others. In the context of the construction of a theory, inductive procedures can be put aside in favour of the process of setting up examples and testing the possibility of falsifying them. In fact, there is no possibility of providing raw data in a theory which involves the hypothesising of contextual features. Any context I have constructed is necessarily arbitrary because, by the definitions which are provided by the theory of utterance interpretation which I have adopted, one individual cannot accurately reproduce the context of another. Contexts exist in people's cognitive environments, and are therefore not observable. However, models of social behaviour are not vacuous, since they rely on native intuitions in just the same way as theories of syntax do.

This is not to say that observed data cannot be used in the application of the model to be developed here. I state in chapter five that the model can be used most successfully as an analytical tool in empirical investigation, and some of the data I have used here are drawn from actual interactional experiences of my own and others. I hope to apply the model in further research, using both raw data and the research of others. I argue, however, that the construction of context can never be totally accurate, since it involves hypotheses about the cognitive environment of others, which must be hypothetical if one decides to abandon the Mutual Knowledge Hypothesis. It is possible to construct a reasonably accurate context, however, and the degree of accuracy must be such that some valuable statements can be made about linguistic interactions and perceptions of those interactions by the participants and others.

I see a sociolinguistic application of the theory I have presented here, as a research tool for
situational analysis of powerful/powerless language, and status manipulations. The theory of face attack provides a strong conceptual framework within which to assess the facework that is occurring beside or beneath routine interaction. There is great potential for its use in situations where power asymmetries are known to exist, especially where these are both problematic and routinely denied.

A point should also be made here about the aims and scope of the present work with regard to Relevance Theory. I claim that Gricean analysis is not capable of illuminating the social facts underlying interaction, whether there is a polite motive or not. In particular, the 'dark side' model relies on complex social negotiation and status manipulation which speakers know as they interact. Therefore, a theory of utterance interpretation should account for and explain the process whereby interactants recover these social facts. Relevance Theory is very new at this point, and has been incompletely articulated, as are all theories at the early stages of their existence. There are problems with details of the theory, and there will no doubt be much debate about it in the literature of cognitive science and pragmatics. The goal of this work is to show how Relevance Theory is superior to previous theories of pragmatics in predicting the nature of face attention.

Grice's theory of implicature can be fitted to most of the analyses in following chapters in a retrospective manner, and this is one reason why it may seem that Relevance Theory adds little to the pragmatic literature to date. However, Gricean theory fits so well because it is vacuous, in that it makes no falsifiable predictions about the direction a given interaction will take. This is one of the major criticisms of Gricean theory made by Sperber and Wilson (1986), which will be discussed in chapter four. Relevance Theory, on the other hand, sets up predictions about utterance interpretation which rule out certain interpretive paths in a given process, because of the nature of the cognitive environment the individual brings to the interaction. It is the aim of the following chapters to show that it works better than Gricean theory in the explanation of the social content of interaction, especially that which is not socially cooperative. I follow the path of temperate rationality (Newton-Smith, 1981:4), in showing, not that Relevance Theory is perfect, but that it is better.

5. Terminology

Some terminology used in this work is at first sight somewhat confusing, and some clarification of the rationale behind the selection is in order. The use of S and H to denote the producer and the recipient of communications is somewhat arbitrary and is not necessarily
intended to refer to a symmetrical speaker/hearer dyad. The hearer may be one or more people, and is more than just a hearer. H is the intended recipient of the communication, who interprets and processes the information, and who has something at stake in the interaction. Other audience may include secondary recipients of the communicative act, or intended audience to the face attack. Thomas (1986), Bell (1984), Clark and Carlson (1982) deal with the multiplicity of roles in interaction, and Thomas rightly claims that role assignment is situational and negotiable rather than absolute. (Thomas 1986:86ff.).

The variables used in the assessment of face risks (P,D,R,x) are also the same as those used in Brown and Levinson (1978) although, as I shall explain in subsequent chapters, the computation of the factors may be subject to some revision.

The definitions of the terms face attack, FTAs and FAAs are given more fully in the context of the model. All three come under the general heading of face attention, and involve a threat to face. This will be either perceived as intentional, as in face attack, by the process of face attack acts (FAAs), or as unintentional/unavoidable as in face threatening acts (FTAs) which are usually subject to attempts at redress. FTAs are those acts which Brown and Levinson deal with, in their account of the mitigating strategies used to soften the threatening aspect. In FAAs, what can be seen in other contexts as mitigation is not an attempt to downgrade the face threat, rather it is a means of intensifying the threatening aspect of an interaction.

6. The Cooperative Principle

The term the Cooperative Principle (CP), coined by Grice in his work on conversational implicature (Grice, 1975) is one which has been used in pragmatic analysis since that time, and has caused some confusion in the literature. There are two interpretations of the Cooperative Principle, which Thomas (1986:28) defines as social goal-sharing and linguistic-goal sharing. The social goal-sharing interpretation requires that the mutual direction of the interaction should involve something like what we would usually assume to be meant by cooperation; that is, that there should be some mutuality of interests and needs in the behaviour which occurs during the interaction.

Linguistic goal-sharing, on the other hand, involves nothing more socially significant than that H should establish correctly S's illocutionary intent. If this interpretation is favoured, and it is the one chosen by Thomas herself, then there is nothing uncooperative about the interactions which will be classified here under the term face attack. However, it is the persistent confusion
in the literature which causes me to question the validity of the principle.

For instance, the maxims, which appear to be regarded as an expansion of the CP, do require that the communicator indulge in what appear to be cooperative acts in the social goal-sharing sense. Conformity with the maxims at some level is a cooperative and helpful activity. Therefore, the social goal-sharing sense of the term is never quite abolished, even if one adopts the more attractive option of linguistic goal-sharing.

Levinson (1983:121-122) adopts the linguistic goal-sharing approach when he describes a type of residual cooperation as 'some minimum essential to maintain talk', but then gives an extreme example of the suspension of the maxims as legal court cross-examination. It would seem that talk is maintained in such a situation; what then becomes of the Cooperative Principle?

Levinson (1983) quotes Gazdar as formulating the notion of implicature along these lines: 'if I use some linguistic expression that fails to commit me to some embedded proposition, in preference to another available stronger expression that would so commit me, then I may be taken to implicate that I am not in the (epistemic) position to make the stronger statement'. The example given (I believe John is away/I know John is away) is not convincing evidence in the presence of contextual information which states that the speaker is in a position to make the stronger statement, and the hearer is aware that the speaker is in that position, but for reasons of her own does not want to make the stronger statement. If the CP operates across the spectrum of interaction, and if the stronger statement must be taken to be unavailable to the speaker under the CP, then how do we account for the fact that the hearer can and often does know the real state of affairs? Reformulations of the type 'You mean you're not prepared to say whether John is away' are common in asymmetric power situations such as those discussed in Thomas (1985a), and rely on one interactant knowing that the other is communicating less information than she actually has at her disposal. Thomas notes that the assumptions underlying the Gricean model do not sit easily with asymmetric discourse:

It has been observed (by Grice _inter alia_) that conversational implicature relies on the assumption that the Speaker will make the strongest possible claim in the circumstances i.e. you do not say 'I think he's ill' if you know he's ill. In interpersonal pragmatics, the opposite principle seems to obtain: 'Do not make a stronger claim on your own behalf than is necessary'.


Bennett (1976) does not have a lot to say about the CP, since his work deals largely with
Grice's earlier work on meaning. However, the impression is gained that he holds a sort of linguistic goal-sharing position. He speaks of 'a Gricean practice of using regularities to express part of one's meaning and relying upon one's hearers to complete it by considering what one is likely to intend'. (Bennett 1976:241).

Clark (1982:124) defines the CP as encompassing 'only those contextual implications that the speaker "m-intended" as Grice put it. Grice is right to make this restriction, for hearers try to distinguish these implications from all others'. He goes on to distinguish between authorised and unauthorised inferences (which sound like Sperber and Wilson's explicatures and implicatures), and appears to suggest that there be two processes of utterance interpretation, comprehension\textsubscript{1} and comprehension\textsubscript{2}, the first dealing with what is authorised and the second with what is unauthorised. He suggests that these should be accounted for by two separate theories. This seems unmotivated, since H frequently engages in both processes at once, recognising what she can reasonably accurately take to be m-intentions, and then enriching that interpretation with unauthorised but equally plausible inferences. Also, if the Mutual Knowledge Hypothesis is rejected, as it is by Sperber and Wilson, then the recognition of m-intentions with any degree of certainty would appear to be by no means guaranteed in interaction.

Clark makes the mistake of assuming that Sperber and Wilson are trying to work within the CP, but this is not the case. Sperber and Wilson make this quite clear in their reply to his remarks: 'Clark is again correct in claiming that our principle of relevance "does not belong in Grice's cooperative principle". He is wrong in assuming that we intend it to. We believe that the principle of relevance should replace the cooperative principle and all the maxims in pragmatic theory'. (Sperber and Wilson 1982b:131)

The analysis of face attack which follows throws into question the status of the CP. This is partly because the effects which the speaker intends to communicate are often difficult to ascertain, and partly because I find the terminology particularly confusing in the light of the type of interaction I am examining. I am forced to talk about cooperativeness in both the Gricean and the non-Gricean sense, and this gives rise to some confusion throughout the work. I tend to the view that the replacement of the CP with some redefined relevance theory 'would make the theory more elegant and, more importantly as far as I am concerned, would do away with the misleading term "cooperation"'. (Thomas 1986:55)

The body of this work concerns the way in which Sperber and Wilson have redefined relevance as a theory of utterance interpretation. In chapter five, I will examine the CP again,
as it is defined by Grice, and interpreted by others. I will test the principle in the context of face attack theory, and show how it is unsustainable.
NOTES


2. My use of non-cooperative here is the non-Gricean use. I explain the problems caused by the confusion between the two usages later in the introduction (p.9).

3. Since the main part of this dissertation was written, it has come to my attention that Brown and Levinson have published their 1978 paper in book form, with an introduction updating some of the material. In my reading of this introduction, I have not found anything which alters my comment on their work to any significant degree. Where there are salient points which should be mentioned, I will discuss them either in text or in footnotes, but otherwise, I will be working from the 1978 paper. For an extended discussion of Brown and Levinson (1987), see Austin (forthcoming).

4. The idea of using this analogy comes from Kuiper (1988).

5. Holmes (1984a). Holmes draws attention to the role of negative stereotyping in evaluating 'women's language' forms as in some way weak or indecisive. She says (p.52) One woman's feeble hedging may well be perceived as another man's perspicacious qualification.

6. This is in line with the usage in Brown and Levinson (1978).
Chapter One

Face Attack

Profanations are to be expected, for every religious ceremony creates the possibility of a black mass.

Goffman (1967: 86)

1. Introductory remarks

In this chapter, I am going to examine the Brown and Levinson model, and to propose an extension of politeness theory to incorporate facts about impoliteness, and the way in which the two sides of the politeness coin can be used to manipulate social situations. The Brown and Levinson politeness model provides a tool for the analysis of interactional behaviour, covering only the cooperative side of the phenomenon of politeness. I will take non-cooperative behaviour as my starting point, and examine whether similar strategies and strategy choices can be found as in a politeness model. If so, this would suggest that a taxonomy of politeness phenomena would be incomplete without an account of impolite counterparts, especially if many of the realisations of the one are identical to the realisations of the other.

Here, I outline the extension of the model, and the sociological factors governing the choice of non-cooperative strategies. The concept of face and its place in interaction will be critically examined. I take Brown and Levinson’s categorisations as a basic structure for the examination of the converse, and I provide a taxonomy of impoliteness strategies by analogy. I will use the Brown and Levinson definition of face to begin with, but I will show that the definition will need to be extended in the context of non-cooperative communication.¹

Brown and Levinson (1978:60) claim that language usage is a crucial indicator of the nature and management of social relationships, and that the link between the two can be clearly established by the use of their communicative model in interpreting the conversational interactions in a given group. These claims are validated by their communicative model which
relies on the notion of cooperation. They assume that where politeness is the variable which determines the choice of interactional strategies, this politeness follows from the Co-operative Principle as established by Grice (1975). It appears that, in their model, the overriding criterion for strategy choice is the preservation of face, either positive or negative.

Their claims for communication as a social indicator can be extended to include interactions where politeness cannot be seen as the underlying motivation. There is a 'dark side' to politeness characterised by what I will call **Face Attack Acts** (FAAs). A distinction can be made between these and Brown and Levinson's FTAs, or Face Threatening Acts. FTAs are those acts which are regularly and unavoidably performed during routine interaction, which have the potential to infringe the rules of face-preservation. They are intrinsically face-threatening, and are mitigated by strategies of the kind outlined by Brown and Levinson. They are not intentional in the same way as FAAs.

FAAs are acts which are introduced in a situation which could have been avoided, but where their inclusion leads the hearer to the interpretation that they are intentional. This may or may not be true, as the speaker may just be being clumsy, but the perception of intentionality is readily accessible. FAAs threaten face, so we can say that there is a class of interactional phenomena known as Face Threatening Acts, of which there is a subset of Face Attack Acts. Some FTAs can be FAAs in a certain context, but all FAAs are FTAs. Brown and Levinson (1978:65) make the point that there are acts which 'intrinsically threaten face', and refer briefly to the class of acts which I refer to as FAAs. They say 'S will want to maintain H's face, unless he can get H to maintain S's without recompense, by coercion, trickery etc.' (Brown and Levinson 1978:65). What they are saying is that the intentionality lies in the decision whether or not to redress the FTA.

These intrinsically face threatening acts can be performed without the intention to attack face. They may be performed without the awareness of their face threatening nature. In this case they will not be mitigated, but they will not therefore be FAAs. Their effects may be felt as FAAs, but they do not meet the requirement on FAAs that they be intentional. There may, on the other hand, be an awareness that they are face threatening, but must be performed anyway. Where the speaker wishes to save face (i.e. be polite), there will be redressive strategies, but where the intention is to threaten face, and no redress is used, or redress is used inappropriately, then there will be an intentionality which makes those acts FAAs. As I will show, the distinction between the types of act is much clearer than that between their realisations.

2. A model of face attack
Let us now examine the nature of a model of FAAs. The Model Person (MP)\(^2\) within a model of interactional behaviour which accounts for FAAs will resemble the one described in Brown and Levinson (1978:64-65), in having both rationality and face wants. These face wants will be of the same sort, namely positive face, or the desire for approval and appreciation of one's own wants; and negative face, or the desire to remain free from imposition. Where the interactional model will differ, however, is in the assumption central to the Brown and Levinson model:

The whole exchange is heard as coherent only on the assumption that
S intended to cooperate, and rationally chose a means that would
achieve his cooperative end.


Here we see a confusion about the word 'cooperate'. It is unclear whether it is used in the Gricean or non-Gricean sense. If in the former, then the statement is valid, but if in the latter, we must qualify it to say that we assume that S intends to communicate, and rationally chooses a means to achieve his communicative end, but we cannot assume that what S wants to communicate is necessarily or always cooperative. Brown and Levinson's basic assumption is not in fact the only one used by rational face-bearing agents. There are many interactional situations where the basic assumption will be that S may not, and probably will not want to cooperate, and the hearer's perception will be conditioned by this assumption. The interpretation of utterances produced for the purpose of face attack will occur in one of two ways. One possibility is that the hearer will, on the basis of assumptions formed about the speaker's communicative intention, expect cooperative behaviour, and be forced by the marked nature of the utterance to look for other motivations. Alternatively, the hearer will start from the assumption of non-cooperative motives, and the utterance will be interpreted in this light. This can happen, as will be seen in chapter four, either at the level of what is said, or at the level of implicature.

What follows is based on the model outlined by Brown and Levinson (1978), but the concepts have been altered to suit a model of face attack.

2.1. Background assumptions

(i) The MP will have both positive and negative face needs, and will possess rational abilities. This will be mutually assumed among participants.

(ii) It is not necessarily mutual interest\(^3\) which governs the conduct of interaction, but can frequently be the interest of only one participant or group of participants. In a model of face attack, it cannot be assumed:
a) that S wants or needs to maintain face.
b) that H poses a threat to S's face.
c) that S cares what H does in retaliation.

The assumptions in (a)-(c), or their negations, may or may not be mutual. If they are, the relevance of the utterance as an FAA will be easily established. If not, the utterance is markedly incongruous in a context where H expects politeness, and further searching will be necessary to uncover the social facts motivating S's choice of utterance.

(iii) There are Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). This is a mutually assumed state of affairs. The nature of these acts as outlined by Brown and Levinson needs some further comment. In their model, the politeness strategies, both positive and negative, are produced in response to a known or perceived FTA. In fact, many of the examples they provide of positive politeness strategies are not actually concerned with attacks to positive face per se, but would only be produced in situations where other needs are perceived; i.e. the need to mitigate a threat to negative face (an imposition) or a need to establish intimacy (possibly in itself a negative face threat). The FTA which causes S to attempt to mitigate the threat may be linguistic or situational, and positive politeness strategies may be used to mitigate FTAs which operate on negative face needs, and vice versa. This calls into question the validity of Brown and Levinson's positive/negative distinction. In the subset of FAAs, I will show that the rigid division is untenable, and subsequently it will be seen that, because of the nature of attention to positive and negative face, an arbitrary distinction is lacking in explanatory value.

(iv) In accordance with (ii) above, it need not be assumed, as it is by Brown and Levinson, that S will want to minimize the threat of an FTA to H, nor that maximum efficiency is the only motivation that will override the choice of face saving strategies. At this point, the FTA moves into the category of a Face Attack Act. As I will show, the computation of the strength of face threat, which precedes strategy choice, will encode this rather larger set of motives. Also in accordance with (ii) above, S's choice of whether or not to adopt face saving strategies may or may not be mutually apparent.

(v) The more an act threatens S's or H's face, the more S will need to consider:
a) going off record.
b) doing the FTA with/without redressive action.
c) doing the FTA with redressive action where this is inappropriate.
In deciding on choice of strategy for face attack, the risk must be minimized to S. If S does the FTA in a greater risk area without employing minimization strategies, the reasons will be perceived
to be
a) S does not care about the risk either to S or H.
b) S feels in a position of power.
c) solidarity is strong enough that:
   (i) offence will be minimized.
   (ii) the FTA will be seen as a joke.
d) S has something to gain by performing the FTA in terms of:
   (i) maximising own face.
   (ii) minimising H's face.
   (iii) establishing group solidarity.
   (iv) establishing S's in-group status.
   (v) establishing H's out-group status.

2.2. The nature of Face

Brown and Levinson define the perception of face needs, after Goffman (1967). They say that, in general, people cooperate in maintaining face in interaction, and assume that others will do the same, because of the mutual vulnerability of face.

Although this probably describes the state of affairs in a large number of cases, the statement can be challenged on the grounds that its definition is too narrow. Firstly, cooperation may be the motivation underlying the majority of conversational interactions, but it is certainly not the only possibility. Secondly, mutual vulnerability cannot be assumed, since there are many situations where S is much less vulnerable than H; i.e. when S has greater power than H, or when S is a member of a solidary group to which H does not belong. In many cases, in fact, solidarity may actually rest on the necessity of destroying the face of another person or group.5

People will not always defend their face when threatened, since the consequences of this could be more damaging than the FAA in other areas such as job security, employment prospects, and physical safety. For instance, in the case of sexual harassment, a verbal approximation of the physical threat involved will be immensely face threatening on a continuum ranging from flirtatious remarks to blackmail or coercion. The recipient will have to balance the potential threat to face and her possible retribution against several very real alternative threats which may cause her to suffer the insult in silence.

Brown and Levinson suggest that mutual attention to society members' face is universal, as is the need to be aware and orient oneself to face needs in interaction. I would go further and say that face attention itself is an integral part of all interaction. Some weight is given to this claim
by the work of Piirainen-Marsh and Marsh (1987)\textsuperscript{6} on Brunei-English interactions, although the behaviour they observe is not absolutely predictable in the terms offered by Brown and Levinson.

Brown and Levinson do acknowledge that face respect is 'not an unequivocal right' (Brown and Levinson 1978:67) and that face is often ignored, or only addressed in a token fashion. However, the situations in which they say this happens cannot be defended within an extended notion of politeness. They rely on a very narrow definition of society, and social construction and breakdown, which does not always accord with the facts as presented in anthropological and interactional studies\textsuperscript{7}, nor in fact with observation of interactions in small social groups. The Brown and Levinson cases are as follows:

1. In situations where urgent cooperation is needed. This would be a case where considerations of face would be suspended without offence. Thus, if A was trapped in a burning building and B saw an escape route, it would be more appropriate for B to call (1) than (2).
   \begin{enumerate}
   \item (1) Quick! Jump out of that window!
   \item (2) Excuse me. I hate to bother you just now, but could I suggest that you might like to jump out of that window over there?
   \end{enumerate}

2. In situations where efficiency demands bald language. Once again, the need for efficiency would tend to excuse the lack of orientation to face needs. Note however, that in some situations, efficiency is used as a reason for aggressive, non-redressive language use, where it is not necessarily the best means of promoting efficiency. The actual motive (self-aggrandisement, or exclusion of H from in-group etc.) will be off record, and for this reason S will be relatively impervious to charges of face-threatening behaviour.

3. The situation of social breakdown (effrontery). Brown and Levinson's claims in this regard are the most problematic in their assessment of situational factors. Effrontery will no doubt occur in situations of social breakdown, but the notion that it can occur only then implies that society needs cooperation to survive intact. In fact, the smooth functioning of society in many cases rests on exactly the opposite state of affairs. We know in fact that there are groups within a society whose very existence depends to a greater or lesser extent on non-cooperative behaviour and effrontery.\textsuperscript{8} In such a case, the hypothesis that we are seeing social breakdown is false. We are instead seeing a form of social organisation which is not dependant on respect for face needs; in fact one which requires the reassessment of face needs, often to the detriment of the audience in an interaction. Examples of the maintenance of social structure by effrontery will appear below, in the description of the actual strategic model.
On a larger scale, we can predict that a higher social structure containing groups which maintain their coherence by coercive means would display features of this kind of management itself. We might then see this as evidence for claiming a degree of humiliation and coercion for the ethos of that society. Thus, two seemingly anti-social practices, coercion and humiliation, can be seen as strategies for societal construction rather than breakdown.

2.3. The face attack model

In this section, I will propose a model of face attack, and examine the sorts of threats face can encounter. There will necessarily be some repetition of the material in Brown and Levinson (1978), as many of the face threats they describe are also specialised tools for face attack. The difference between their model and this, in many cases, lies more in the computation of face risk, and the factors which combine to cause choice of strategy, than in the actual strategies used. This fact is of significance in looking at the validity of a model of face preservation or attack in just the way proposed by Brown and Levinson. Often, what they term face threatening acts and their resulting mitigating strategies are potentially attacks on face, and these can be performed in a manner which indicates cooperative intent. Where the utterance falls in the category of FTA, it will be seen as an attempt to preserve face, but where the context does not allow for such an interpretation, the utterance will be seen as an FAA. Note that the ambiguity between the two categories allows the speaker to claim, sincerely or otherwise, cooperative intent if challenged.

2.3.1. Attacks on positive face

These can work in two ways:

a) S recognises H's face, but does not orient to it, therefore performs the FAA baldly, without redress. The effect of this is to insult H or to appear to insult H.

b) S orients to H's positive face where circumstances render such orientation inappropriate. S goes off record (i.e. is indirect) where there is a genuine case for more direct, efficient communication. Any redress given by S is marked and gives rise to assumptions about the affective nature of the relationship. The effect of this is patronising and condescending or perceived to be intended that way.

Because of the loss of positive face to the recipient of such acts, both a) and b) are strategies for humiliation.
2.3.2. Attacks on negative face

These also work in two ways, similar to above:

a) S does not orient to H's negative face, although S recognises H's need. S impinges, makes impositions, without redress. This is directly coercive behaviour.

b) S orients to H's negative face where familiarity would be appropriate. This is distancing behaviour.

Both of these face attacks are coercive in that they constrain the behaviour of H, either directly or indirectly. Notice here that the term *coercion* is being used differently from the way Brown and Levinson use it. Here, coercion includes the effect on the future interactive behaviour of the hearer. When a speaker performs a face attack on a hearer, the secondary effect will often be that the hearer feels constrained for future interactions to perform differently. This is coercive in the sense that it restricts H's freedom to behave in the way she previously found acceptable and appropriate for that situation.

2.3.3. Co-occurrence of positive and negative face loss

The treatment of the positive and negative poles above gives rise to the notion that there is a distinct division between the two. This is in fact not the case. Insulting and patronising behaviour (humiliation) can be coercive in that it implies an assessment of H by S, which causes H to feel less confident and capable, at least in S's perception. The likelihood is that H will either perform less well in S's presence, or that H will feel constrained to overcompensate, to prove herself. Coercive behaviour can also be humiliating, in that it causes H to feel that her estimation of the affective nature of the relationship is incorrect (she underestimated their social distance, or the power relation between them).

The humiliation will increase, if the interaction is in a public situation (i.e. before an audience of others) because of the proportionate increase in face loss. An individual's perception of her acceptance by others is what constitutes positive face, so it follows that if face is lost, the degree of humiliation increases in direct proportion to the number of people who witness the face loss. Since the separation of positive and negative face is not possible, the same necessarily applies to the coercive aspect of face loss. The principle behind this can be formalised:

*Principle of maximisation of face loss*

An individual's face is vulnerable in direct proportion to the number of people to whom she presents that face in any given interaction.
This principle is of great significance, as the maximisation of a face attack can be achieved by ensuring a large audience to the interaction. Turnbull (1972) cites examples of arguments among the Ik tribespeople, where the exchange is undertaken publicly so that large numbers of people can witness the outcome, which always results in loss of face to one participant. Turnbull describes a dispute between members of a village in the following way:

Each litigant stands at his odok and hurls abuse at the other so that all can hear and judge......Nearly all those listening side with the aggressor. But after a while the two roles are reversed..........it is a sweet relief from hunger, and onlookers take time off to share a joke together before returning.............


In the cases where the sort of behaviour which would normally be used in the preservation of face is intended or perceived as a face attack, the context will supply the information which causes participants to interpret the utterance as either an attack or not. This context will comprise what Sperber and Wilson (1986) call the mutual cognitive environment of the participants. It will include information on the rules which guide social behaviour, and the range of strategic choices which will be outlined in the following chapter.

2.4. Examples of attacks on face

I now examine some prototypical examples of the four main types of attack outlined above.

2.4.1. Attacks on positive face

a) Insult.

(4) Company manager to clerk:

I think you should go back to primary school

The clerk’s interpretation of this utterance is likely to work as follows:

(4) a. I have completed secondary schooling.

b. Someone who has completed secondary schooling is unlikely to need to return to primary school.

c. She is implying that I have not learnt some of the skills taught at primary school.

d. These skills are reading, writing and basic arithmetic.

e. She is saying that I cannot read/write/add.

This is insulting and face damaging, but the clerk will need to be shamefaced and apologetic, or
amused at the manager’s little joke. The reason for this is the employee’s assessment of his power relative to that of the manager. Note that this constraint on the clerk’s reaction is the coercive element of the FAA.

b) Patronising.

A guest speaker from an electricity supply authority says:

(5) I was going to talk about (technical jargon) but I know you ladies aren’t interested in anything behind the switch on the wall, so....

The context in which he is speaking includes the following information:

(5) a. He is speaking to an audience of men and women, few of whom can be expected to have much technical knowledge.

b. There is no need to make exceptions ostensibly to include the women, as they cannot be judged to have any less knowledge than the rest of the audience.

c. By an overtly inclusive device (avoiding information that will not be understood by some), the speaker is excluding the women from the group of knowledgeable people.

2.4.2. Attacks on negative face

a) Coercion. A male executive says to an obviously busy female colleague:

(6) I know you won’t mind making the tea today while Mrs B. is away. You’ll be much quicker at it than me.

The interpretation of this utterance would progress as follows:

(6) a. He assumes that I will be happy to make the tea.

b. He assumes that I will be quicker at it than he.

b. There is no previous experience on which he can base either of these assumptions.

d. He is basing them on something he knows about me: i.e. that I am a woman.

e. He is implying that it is a woman’s job to make tea, no matter if she is busy with other work.

This is a multi-layered face attack, which involves pressure on H to conform to a stereotype of feminine behaviour, which may or may not be offensive to H. The ostensible redress action - the
compliment to H's tea-making efficiency - is patronising. This is an illustration of the co-occurrence of face attack on both positive and negative face.

b) Distancing. A male executive speaks to fellow drinkers (all colleagues) at a club:

(7) What will you have, John, Chris, Mrs Smith?

The interpretation is likely to be:

(7)  
a. He has used a formal address form to me.
b. He has used familiar address forms to the others.
c. There is no reason for him to differentiate, as we all work together and are of equal status.
d. The only factor which differentiates me is that I am a woman.
e. He is implying that I am not entitled to intimacy with the others because I am a woman.

Note that this overtly polite act (cf. also refraining from making a racy joke in front of a female colleague) is coercive in that, by showing the woman that she is not admitted to full membership of the group, it prevents her from interacting with ease, and as an equal. This phenomenon is more explicitly stated in a comment from a female lawyer:

A lawyer described her feelings in this way: "There was a camaraderie in the County (Law) Association - a terrific spirit.................They were prejudiced against admitting women but I think they were justified. It's not the same with a woman around. They aren't free to express themselves, to tell off-colour stories - they should have that."

Epstein (1970:977 fn.25)

A great deal of context has been supplied with the above examples. It is necessary to establish context in order to elucidate the function of utterances which may seem superficially not to be objectionable at all, although they are in fact. The complexity of a context mirrors the kind of cognitive and affective environment in which the utterances will be produced and interpreted. How this works will be explained below, and in the application of relevance theory to the specific model in later chapters.
2.5. A closer look at face attacks

2.5.1. Attacks on positive face

(i) Humiliation. S expresses disregard for H's face needs, or evaluates H's face as of negative worth.
   a) Expression of violent, unacceptable emotion.
   b) Irreverence, mention of taboo topics.
   c) Bringing bad news re H, good news re S.
   d) Raising dangerously emotive, divisive topics.
   e) Blatant conversational non-cooperation (interrupting, ignoring etc.).
   f) Use of address terms (luv, dear, status-marked terms).
   g) Use of sexuality-oriented expressions which highlight H's sexuality inappropriately.
   h) Unwilling promises - detracting from H's right to make demands.
   i) Over-familiarity.

(ii) Patronising. S expresses unwarranted regard for H's face needs, thus drawing attention to doing so, and inviting the question 'why'.
   a) Using hints, euphemisms in marked or selective manner.
   b) Effusive and marked complimenting.
   c) Use of address terms which indicate unwarranted respect or deference.
   d) Unnecessary and protracted explanations.
   e) Drawing attention to reasons for excessive face regard (implying that H has some inability to manage without).

2.5.2. Attacks on negative face

(i) Coercion. S puts pressure on H to do something that H would not otherwise do.
   a) Orders and bald requests (may be unreasonable).
   b) Suggestions and/or advice.
   c) Reminding.
   d) Threats, warnings, dares.
   e) Sexual harassment.
(ii) Distancing. S orients to H's negative face, where this is in contrast to S's behaviour to others, or where familiarity has been given by H, or is more appropriate.
   a) Use of address terms and status-marked identifications.
   b) Going off record unnecessarily - oblique requests etc.
   c) Interrupting flow of conversation ostensibly to avoid embarrassing H.
   d) Unnecessarily apologising for impingements.
   e) Ostensibly saving H trouble.
   f) Making excuses.

2.5.3. Speaker face versus hearer face

Brown and Levinson see threat to face as reflexive (i.e. the threat to one face may cause or be caused by a face threat to the other). They say this is a result of cooperation to maintain face, but it may work another way. In an asymmetric power situation, any threat to S's face may also be a threat to H's face, because of S's power for retribution which H does not share. Furthermore, S may not need to orient to H's face needs but H, being lower in power ranking than S, may need to work very hard to minimise the threat to S's face, or at least to minimise the results. Certainly, reflexivity is unlikely to work in this situation - the face attack decisions and risk assessment will be determined by the participant with greater power.

2.5.4. Threats to S's face

These are based on those enumerated by Brown and Levinson, with an added dimension caused by the different motivations attributable to S. The speaker will be perceived to intend maintenance of the asymmetry between speaker and hearer, so that threats to speaker face are important inasmuch as they result in a greater or further threat to the hearer.

(i) Offending S's positive face

   a) Apologies from S. S is unlikely to apologise unless in doing so there is a potential for drawing attention to some shortcoming in H.
   b) Acceptance of a compliment. S would be in a position to accept or ignore this.
   c) Breakdown of physical control. Whether S finds this threatening or not depends on the extent to which H finds it embarrassing. The important factor to S would be that H's
embarrassment is greater than S’s.

d) Self-humiliation is likely only in an ironic vein.
e) Confessions, and admissions of guilt/responsibility. S is more likely to transfer responsibility than to confess, unless the confession has a 'so what are you going to do about it?' tone.
f) Emotion leakage. In asymmetric power situations, this is likely to cause more discomfort to H than S.

(ii) Offending S’s negative face

a) Expressing thanks. S may not do so, or H may be anxious to forestall thanks.
b) Acceptance of H’s thanks or apology. S may invite apology or thanks even when not strictly necessary. S may minimise the debt/transgression in order to increase the sense of debt. S may not minimise debt/transgression.
c) Excuses. S is unlikely to make excuses, and has the choice whether or not to accept H’s excuses.
d) Acceptance of offers will not be a problem as long as S can maintain some kind of magnanimity in doing so.
e) Responses to H’s faux pas are optional. S may notice the faux pas in a way which draws attention to it, or does not acknowledge it when to do so would ease the situation.

In a model of face attack, threats to S’s face are an issue inasmuch as S will compute the weight of an FAA partly and crucially in terms of the potential retributive threat to S. The more vulnerable S is, the less likely she is to perform the FAA, or the more likely she is to move towards off-record strategies. Where there are unavoidable chinks in S’s armour, S may compensate for this by increasing the threat to H’s face, thus maintaining the weighting in her favour.

2.5.5. Strategies for performing FAAs

There is no automatic assumption of mutual vulnerability of face in a model of face attack, so we can expect that the rational agent will use one of the following options, when the choice of whether or not to perform an FAA arises.

The rational agent (S) will either:
a) perform the FAA.
b) Perform the FAA in such a way that H cannot definitely attribute Face Attack motivation to S, who can justify the FAA by claiming face-saving rather than face-attack behaviour. The choice of the above options will be made after a S has calculated whether to avoid threatening the hearer's face, and will be the result of the strength of one of a set of wants. These are:
a) the want to communicate the content of the FAA. In face attack, we assume that this want is a constant.
b) the want to be efficient/urgent. As we have seen, it will often be this want which is called upon as justification for performing the FAA, but the communication will be perceived to be an FAA because of the hearer's assumption of this calculation.
c) the want to maximise S's own face or the group's face.
d) the want to maintain H's face.
If a, b, c are greater than d, and we assume that they are, or at least some of them are, then S will not want to minimise the threat to H.

Attacking H's positive face indicates that H's positive face wants are of no concern to S, either because S fears no retribution, or S has some other motives for destroying H's face, or some other face/group of faces requires destruction of H's face in order to maintain their own. The implication is that S does not require H's friendship or liking, that S and H's wants are either very dissimilar or even inimical, and that S does not desire that H become/stay a member of S's group. In some situations, speakers may consider that it is in the interests of some group to destroy the face of individuals in certain groups, for what they consider to be the common good. For instance, the hierarchy of an army is reinforced in this way, and it is seen as a necessary part of the training of a soldier that s/he have no face needs which are more important than the needs of the group as a whole, or the national interest.

Attacking H's negative face is oriented towards impinging on H's territory, and disregarding H's territorial claims. Note that this has positive face consequences as well, because a result of negative politeness disregard could be to damage H's self-esteem. Thus, H may be coerced into disagreeable actions either with no 'out' or an 'out' which has profound implications over and above the immediate question of face. The other aspect of negative face attack is the distancing effect, which is coercive in that it bars H from certain actions associated with intimacy, but also humiliating, if the quality of the relationship between S and H indicated by the distancing behaviour is different from H's previous perception of it. It is particularly humiliating if S publicly alters H's declared perception of distance between them.
2.5.6. Hearer perception

This notion will be explored more fully below, when the mechanisms of utterance interpretation are investigated. At this point, however, it is important to note that hearer perception is more important than speaker intention, in the effects that it can have on subsequent interactive and other behaviour. Many face attacks of the kind introduced above are made unconsciously, as a result of some assumptions held by the speaker, so that speaker notions of what the hearer may find offensive are often inaccurate. In other cases, the speaker is aware of holding assumptions, but sees them in a very different light than does the hearer. Face-attack behaviour is ultimately coercive in that it can shape the recipient's subsequent self image and/or behaviour, therefore it follows that the most important factor in this part of the process is the hearer's perception of what is being said. If a highly competent female private secretary is called 'girlie' often enough, it is likely that she will not see herself as the most likely person to apply for a senior management position for which she may in many ways be most suited. The people who have been calling her 'girlie' may think they are being friendly, and may resent charges of paternalism or belittlement. The effect will, however, still have been felt.

Hearer perception can be a very useful tool for a speaker engaged in face attack. If a hearer has very strongly-held views, particularly views that are widely known, then those views can be used to humiliate or discomfort the hearer. Particularly, a perceived face attack can be dismissed as just occurring in the hearer's imagination, because that is the way the hearer can be expected to view anything that is said. Of course there are occasions on which this charge is well-founded, particularly the case of paranoid interpretations, where the hearer cannot ignore certain assumptions she holds when interpreting utterances produced by a speaker or class of speakers about whom she holds certain prejudices. This point is made in greater detail in chapter four.

2.6. Hierarchies of risk

The payoffs for face attack behaviour are likely to be part of the decision of which sort of verbal behaviour to employ. In a model of face attack, where the damage can be great, and retribution severe, S must carefully estimate H's power or group membership, and make a decision by comparing the possible cost with the likely payoff.

a) On record attacks. S can enlist personal support from the group, can reinforce personal in-group membership at the expense of H's out-group status, or can affect H's ability to challenge S in the situation. S can win points for cleverness, courage or outspokenness, and can reinforce S's
own or others' perception of the relative merits of H/S, or the groups that they represent.

b) Off record attacks. S can be seen to be tactful, caring and/or democratic, while ensuring that at least H and probably others will know exactly what is meant. S can get credit for being witty, clever, adept at putting people in their place subtly. Very importantly, S can avoid charges of discrimination by imputing all the face-threatening nature of the act to the (wrong) perceptions of H. In some cases this may be true, or at least very convincing.

Brown and Levinson (1978:78ff.) note that there is a hierarchy within which certain strategies carry with them more risk, either to S or H. The same applies to the face attack model, but the estimation of risk within the hierarchy applies to the speaker only, as it is speaker face that is important in this model. However, they equate riskiness with impoliteness, saying that an off-record FTA is less risky to the hearer's face, and therefore more polite. It is clear that, in a model of face attack, the decrease in riskiness does not necessarily equate with an increase in politeness. In fact, often the more off-record a face attack, the more it attacks the hearer's face.

In this section, each of the five main strategies will be examined with regard to both their payoffs and their risks. It will be seen that there is a clearly perceived order of riskiness here too. Figure 1, on page 31, shows the hierarchy of risk to S as the determinant of strategies chosen.

1. On record without redress to positive face
This has the payoff of damaging H's self esteem, and presumably reinforcing S's power rating at the same time. In group situations, it reinforces S's place in the group, and possibly status also, and firmly establishes that H is, to some extent, a member of an out-group.

However, this is a high risk activity, as it is potentially rude, arrogant and insensitive in the perception of a wider audience who may or may not share S's views. The smaller or more well-known an audience is, the easier it is for S to estimate the risk. In general, this strategy is more likely to be used in situations where S's solidarity with the audience group is strong, or when there is no audience, so that the risk to S's face is small, and the regard for H's face slight.

2. On record without redress to H's negative face
The payoff of this strategy is that it reinforces the speaker's social distance from H and avoids familiarity. It increases power asymmetry through keeping H at a distance which H may not enjoy. It is also much more cost-efficient in terms of effort and thought, and minimises danger of imposition of H on S. Note that such a strategy will be welcomed by H if it reinforces certain
assumptions H holds about S. This will be developed in chapter four in the discussion of assumption-strengthening.

(2) is a less risky strategy than (1) because negative politeness behaviour as defined by Brown and Levinson is often seen with some approval as 'polite' behaviour, and can be perceived to be more justifiable by the exigencies of time and efficiency. It may be judged to evoke an atmosphere of extreme formality, coldness and authoritarianism, but this may be more readily accepted, especially by people who accept notions of power. However, it is still potentially face threatening to S because of the lack of an 'out' when the wider audience disapproves. Often a mismatch occurs in the definition of intentions: what the speaker may see as courtesy to women, for instance, the hearer might see as an implication that they are weaker or less able. (Witness the controversies which often occur about men opening doors for women.)

3. On record with inappropriate redress to positive face
Here the payoff is that S can insult H by assuming her/his inability to accept a balder statement. S can efficiently get across the intended message, some of which may be off record, but certainly clearly understood by H. S can draw attention to the fact that extra regard needs to be paid to H’s face, and because of the markedness of the ostensible face saving strategy, invite questions as to why it is needed. This in turn leads to the further, off record face attack. S can claim the 'out' of using the strategy from motives of kindliness, friendliness etc, and can claim that over-familiarity arose from a misinterpretation of the level of intimacy.

Because S can always claim pure and generous motives for such a strategy, and can use 'mistaken' hearer perception as an excuse, this is a much less risky strategy than (1) and (2).

4. On record with inappropriate redress to negative face
The payoff here is that, much more than in strategy (2), S can claim to be being polite without much chance of being proved wrong. S can maintain in-group status for self, and out-group status for H, and can constrain H to certain modes of behaviour because of the lack of free interchange. Because of certain accepted notions in Western society that politeness (in the negative politeness sense) to people of inferior status is a mark of good manners, this strategy is quite low risk in most cases in that society. It may be that much of the linguistic behaviour which causes women not to feel fully part of a mixed-gender group comes under this heading.

5. Off record
The payoffs here combine those in both (3) and (4) above, but because they rely on implicatures, there is always the ability to disclaim the meaning perceived. Because people of low power perceive themselves often to be at a disadvantage, such a disclaimer may in many cases be right.
At any event, it is incontrovertible, and confident disclaimers are common with this sort of off record face attack.

Higher

off record

negative
face

on record with
inappropriate
redress to

positive
face

Estimation of
risk to S

negative
face

on record
without
redress to

positive
face

Lower

Fig. 1. Hierarchy of strategies according to risk to S

It is interesting to note here that off record utterances rely on implicatures for their meaning to be fully understood, yet they do not necessarily comply with the conditions laid down by Grice for the triggering of implicatures. In many cases, the statements encoding off record face attacks will ostensibly obey the Gricean maxims, and the need for recovery of implicatures will lie in the cognitive and affective context in which H is interpreting what is said. Thus the form of the utterance may give rise to implicatures, not because the proposition expressed is not relevant, or sufficient, but because of what it indicates about the relationship of S and H.

An example of this would be where a male employer has previously shown sexual interest in a female employee, and says to her:

(8) I would like you to stay back for a few hours tonight and take care of some things for me.

It is hard to see how such a statement violates the maxim of manner, since the phrase 'some things' need not necessarily be vague in the work context. (cf. academic to departmental secretary 'I'll bring some things down for you to type'). In the context of the work situation, the utterance should only require the enrichment at the level of what is said, reliant on the secretary's expectation of the things she usually types for her employer. In fact, in such a situation it might be said that to specify more fully might violate the maxim of Quantity by being overly prolix. Other maxims aren't violated by the utterance, and it certainly obeys the maxim of relevance,
because whether the employer's interest is well known or not, what he is saying will be maximally relevant, either at the level of what is said or by implicature. H will be aware of the ambiguity of possible readings, which will make her unwilling to challenge the utterance overtly, since she knows that S is likely to claim a more straightforward reading. The fact that he has chosen such an off-record form of utterance indicates to her that he is opting for the safety of the ambiguity. The actual interpretation of this strategy will be dealt with in detail in a later chapter.

Brown and Levinson make the point that positive face threat is more dangerous than negative face threat. They give as their reason the fact that positive politeness assumes a small distance on the intimacy scale, which is intrinsically more threatening than assuming a greater distance. Such a ranking applies to both FTAs and FAAs. Although attacks on negative face can be immensely threatening, within the grouping positive/negative, they can be seen as allowing a greater amount of face to be saved than attacks on positive face will do. This certainly applies to those attacks which involve inappropriate redress, probably less so to those which involve no redress at all. The point must be made here that this is a culturally restricted definition of politeness, and the perceptions of which sort of behaviour are more threatening cannot be given as a universal. Cultural differences are relevant at all stages in the computation of the face threat and its likely consequences, since different cultures have different perceptions of concepts such as intimacy, power and politeness. In this work, the notions are explicitly Western ones, and more specifically drawn from cultures of British origin.

Therefore, there are culture-specific refinements which can be made to this distinction, depending on whether a culture has what Brown and Levinson call a positive or negative politeness 'ethos'. There is also a situational dimension to the amount of threat inherent in a particular coercion. It may be that, where an individual has come to expect and accept coercive behaviour, such behaviour is no longer as coercive as it would have been if the recipient had been expecting more cooperative behaviour. In the wider, social sense, however, the coercive effect lies in the fact that no change in the situation is being provided for.

In general, S will choose a strategy which offers as much face risk to H as is necessary, but probably not more, 10 and only that strategy which at the same time minimises face risk to S, compatible with the task at hand.

2.6.1. Weighing the risk

The calculation for the seriousness of the FAA involves the same sociological variables as
Brown and Levinson use, but their computation is different. More detail than Brown and Levinson provide is also needed in describing the actual variables, as they are very complex. This complexity is due to the contextual factors which are integral to the interpretation of the specific utterances.

The variables are:

1. Social distance (D) of S and H. (symmetric relation).
2. Relative power (P) of S and H (asymmetric relation).\textsuperscript{11}
3. Absolute ranking (R) of impositions (culture-specific).

1. Distance. This variable takes into account the closeness or intimacy which obtains between S and H for the purposes of the interaction. It is a mobile factor, and can change at any time during the interaction. For the purposes of face attack, there is an overlap between distance and power, in that distance is able to be ignored/manipulated by the interactant in the situation of greater power, therefore it is unlikely that these variables will be involved separately in most calculations of face risk.

2. Power. This is an asymmetric relation, based on S's ability to impose her will or needs on H, depending on the degree of physical or other status superiority which S possesses. The power variable is tied to S in a model of face attack, whereas it is tied to H in the face redress model. In estimating the risk of a face threat where face preservation is not the desired end, S will need to be assured of her power to perform the FAA without risk of retribution, and this requires that S should be more powerful than H for the purposes of the interaction. It is unlikely that a person of less power will perform a deliberate and direct face attack on a person who has power over her. In effect then, the power variable will be a constant in a model of face attack, in that S will need to be in a position of greater power in order to contemplate performing the threatening behaviour. Variation within the power variable will therefore be a matter of degree rather than presence or absence.

Another aspect of the P variable which needs further explanation is the distinction made by Brown and Levinson (1978:79-80) between perceived power and actual power. It follows from the importance of hearer perception that there will not necessarily be a distinction between real and perceived power. For an utterance to have an effect on the perceptions and/or subsequent actions of the hearer, it is only necessary that the degree of power accorded to the speaker be mutually manifest. In a face attack situation, perceived and actual power will often amount to the same thing, as it will often be the experience of actual power, often tied to classes of interactants historically, which gives rise to the confidence which S possesses to act in a particular way in a
given situation. This experience will be reinforced by the speaker's consistent perception of the
absence of retribution for previous such actions.\textsuperscript{12}

Often, hearer perception of speaker power will not accord with speaker perception, as this is
an asymmetric and non-mutual situation. Hearer perception will then need to undergo rapid
readjustment in order for H to respond appropriately. This is important in the way institutional
power is wielded. In such situations, interactants are often continuously shifting ground on the
power axis. For instance, in a doctor/patient interaction, the patient may start with a feeling of
personal power (assertiveness, power in the world outside the doctor's surgery). However,
situational factors like fear about the nature of an illness, or something in the doctor's
interactional style (patronising, use of unfamiliar terminology), or a personal embarrassment
factor like being without one's clothes, may shift the balance of power between them. The same
is true of power tied to the membership of social groups (majority ethnic groups, gender groups,
socio-economically advantaged groups), where power is often negotiated between interactants on
the basis of these sociological factors. Labov's (1972) work on ritual insults among blacks in
groups in New York is a case in point here. The individuals engage in two types of ritual insult;
ritual sounding and applied sounding. The former is quite formulaic, and can be compared to the
interactions of rugby team members (Kuiper (forthcoming)). The latter involves the use of ritual
insult to negotiate group membership and status within groups, and involves a great degree of
verbal and mental agility. The individual's sounding ability is a major factor in his status
within the group.

Power assessment must be tied to the immediate situation, as actual power in any given
combination of interactants is not constant. A description of the variables which give rise to an
estimation of P must be wide-ranging, as it includes some which will override others in certain
situations. A student will have less power than the school principal within the educational
setting, unless the principal is walking the grounds at night and the student appears as a member
of a violent group of would-be burglars. Likewise, a man might be of inferior status to a woman in
their professional environment, but if she were to walk into a room where he was in a solitary
group of sexist men, he may estimate that the risk of retribution is small, and speak in
patronising or humiliating terms. It can be seen, then, that the estimation of power involves the
estimation of risk of retribution rather than any constant set of S/H attributes. Brown and
Levinson recognise this aspect of power:

'Other situational sources of power may contribute to or adjust or
entirely override such stable social valuations. Momentary
weaknesses in bargaining power, strength of character, or alliances
may all play a role in the assessment of P.'

Brown and Levinson (1978:84)

3. Ranking of impositions. This is a culturally determined variable. What is offensive in one culture is not necessarily so in another. Furthermore, there are groups within society which determine the acceptability of particular actions. An order (bald on record) from a sergeant to a private in the army is regarded as quite acceptable, whereas an order from a shop assistant to a customer is quite face threatening, and must be mitigated by other factors (urgency etc.) or face redress strategies. In the same way, there are sections of a given society which have varying acceptability judgements of such interactional behaviour as orders/insults between married couples, or business colleagues. The role of R in the computation of \( W_X \) must be a matter of the immediate context in which the utterance is contemplated.

R is involved in the calculation of face attack behaviour in two ways. First, the risk to H's face of the particular act must be assessed, as it has already been established that S will employ that behaviour which is most effective for the purpose of face attack. This will depend on the particular face needs of H. Secondly, and more importantly, the risk to S's face will be estimated. This will comprise H's power of retribution, and the risk of S's miscalculation of her own status in the interaction. S may perform a face-attack in the presence of an audience which S believes shares her values and assessment of the importance of H's face needs etc. If S miscalculates on this, the risk is great: loss of face within the group, the humiliation of being criticised in front of H, and even possible loss of inclusion within the audience-group.

Brown and Levinson note that certain impositions can be lessened by mitigating factors such as the obligation for S to perform the FTA and the enjoyment S gets from performing such an act. It follows from the qualifications I have imposed on the calculation of R-weighting that risk can be mitigated in a case of face attack by the factors listed above, such as risk of retribution, and calculation of context.

The three variables are subject to overlap, and must be assessed within each particular instance of face attack, because there are idiosyncratic features involving individual sensitivities and effect of personal ideologies. For this reason, it is not possible to tie any of the variables closely to any set of power/distance/cultural risk features. This 'sensibility factor' is often used by S to justify a face attack, when the possibility of retribution is found to be stronger than the calculation allowed for. Thus, S can say 'But you would take offence at anything a [X] said'. (Where X=an identifiable group against which H could be said to have prejudices or stereotyped notions.)
In the Brown and Levinson model, 'A person who is skilled at assessing such rankings, and the circumstances in which they vary, is considered to be graced with 'tact', 'charm' or 'poise'. (Brown and Levinson 1978:83). The judgement of the abilities of such a person, of course, depends largely on the point of view of (a) the recipient of the output strategy and (b) any further audience. In a model of face attack, the assessment of S's abilities will most likely be a matter of group membership, whether that be a power group or an in-group. For a hearer whose personal interests are not served or are damaged by the attack, the judgment will be negative, with possibly a grudging admiration for the skill which S displays. For a member of a group or class whose status is enhanced or consolidated, the judgment will be positive, but will not necessarily include such attributes as 'tact' or 'charm'.

The weightiness of any of these variables will be on a scale of small to great, (or 1-n as in the Brown and Levinson model), and the higher assessment of one variable will be added to the weight given to the others. In a model of face attack, it is a complex additive relation which holds between these variables. In fact, the assessment of face is most likely crucially to involve P, with other variables being computed after that variable strength has been assessed. The D-weighting will necessarily only be calculable after the assessment of P, as the relative P of S and H frequently determines the amount of social distance between them, and the amount of face-risk which needs to be considered in choice of strategy.

The weight of a face attack may then be calculated by a process such as that illustrated below.

P: for S=8 For H=2
D: for S,H = 10
R: for S=1. For H=10.
PERFORM THE FACE ATTACK.

In face attack, the variable with the major weighting is the P variable, in that if S has high P, the risk to her face will be minimised in almost all situations, and the D variable will either be of minor importance, or able to be manipulated by S. Certain factors in a particular context may bring D into focus, such as the assertiveness of H, the aggressiveness of S. However, in a model of face attack, we assume that S has sufficient power and aggressiveness to want to perform the FAA in the first place. The actual form in which the FAA is encoded will depend on the weighting of the other two variables.

Brown and Levinson note that the compounding of the variables into one index (Wx) leads to
ambiguity as to which variable is influencing the choice of strategy. S may call H *luv*, and receive a negative response. S may then claim to have been working on the assumption of low R because *luv* is a well-known endearment, and not generally seen as offensive. H is objecting to the endearment because it minimises D to an unacceptable extent. If high risk utterances can be justified by such variable manipulation, they may be chosen over lower risk strategies, and the success of the justification will depend on contextual features such as the interactants' previous knowledge of each others' values.

An interesting point which arises from the computation of Wx as a compound of estimates of P,D, and R is that an analysis or disambiguation of the relative weightings of the variables predicts some very interesting sociological facts, which are recoverable by the H of the interaction. As a function of the utterance interpretation process, H will recover the computation step by step and discover the relative weightings which she perceives S to have given them. H's knowledge of the approximate weightings will lead to an assessment of the nature of the S/H relationship.

An example of such a disambiguation process would occur on a building site, where male workers are watching a woman walking nearby. The interaction proceeds as follows:

1. The men whistle and make remarks about the woman's physical attributes.
2. The woman shows her displeasure by kinesic or verbal means.
3. The men repeat or enlarge on previous comments, with added remarks about her sexual orientation.

As part of the interpretation process, the woman assesses the relative weightings of P,D,R thus:

1. D is high, as she has never seen them before.
2. R may have been perceived as low by the men in the first step of the interaction, but after her reaction it is obvious that that is not her perception. For them to continue, and add the further remarks, they must see
3. P as very high in their favour.

In the above example, the power may lie in the fact that the men are part of a solidary group, and H is alone, and part of a group traditionally opposed to the S group in a variety of ways. The traditional power of males to make comment on the physical attributes of females may well be another factor. In this way, the sociological facts about the relationship between at least one group of males and the female gender in general can be illuminated in a principled way on the basis of linguistic phenomena.
On a more general level, I suggest, and will claim more strongly later, that the ethos of a society can be illustrated in much the same way. This is a point made by Brown and Levinson in describing a society in terms of politeness or abruptness. I go further and suggest that more specific facts about the ethos of a society can be deduced from the fact of significant recourse to face attack strategies.

3. Concluding remarks

I have shown in this chapter that a model of impoliteness, which I call the 'Dark Side' of politeness, can be constructed by analogy with the Brown and Levinson model. I have shown that the same sociological variables apply in calculation of strategy risk, but that they are weighted and considered differently from the ways claimed by Brown and Levinson. I have examined the strategic choices in some depth, and have shown how they are both similar to and different from the politeness strategies. In the course of the chapter, some problems have arisen with definitions and claims made by Brown and Levinson.

In the following chapter, the 'Dark Side' model will be examined in more detail, and some of those problems which have been evident will become more clearly marked. I will show that the distinction between positive and negative face is much more difficult to maintain, when the actual realisations of strategies are considered.
NOTES

1. They base their definition on the one developed by Goffman (1967). A more detailed definition has been given in the introduction.

2. Taken from Brown and Levinson (1978).

3. This is Brown and Levinson's term (p.65), and it is unclear whether they regard it as a substitute for cooperative or not. I would certainly claim that where there was an absence of mutual interest, there is the potential for non-cooperative language use in the face attacking sense, but this potential will only be realised if the furthering of S's interest necessitates an attack on H's interest.

4. This question has been addressed in Brown and Levinson (1987), but not, I feel, answered. See Austin (forthcoming) for a discussion of this point.

5. See Kuiper (forthcoming) for a description of the methods for inducing cohesion in Rugby teams. These can be immensely face-threatening, and the ability to withstand the face-threat; i.e. to treat it as a joke, is a marker of group membership.

6. The Piirainen-Marsh and Marsh paper deals with face-preserving behaviour in cross-cultural interactions among differing tribes in Brunei-Darussalam. The interactions are role plays, and show a marked uniformity of face-saving behaviour, although the strategies differ. However, the results might be questioned on the grounds of the unequivocal acceptance of the Brown and Levinson framework, which leads to the possibility that realisations of strategies may have been somewhat arbitrarily assigned.

7. See Kuiper (forthcoming) and Goffman (1962) for some examples.

8. The Ik tribesmen discussed in Turnbull (1972) make an interesting case study in this regard. They are an endangered group, their manner of living and providing food having been destroyed by government policies which led to the establishment of wildlife preservation areas. These people are frequently close to starvation and are forced to maintain a semi-nomadic existence in order to scratch a living. These constraints have resulted in a new social arrangement which relies on outwitting and
out-maneuvering other tribe members, and grouping together out of the need to watch other's movements in order to find likely sources of food. It cannot be said that they are not a society, but neither can it be said that the form of social cohesion they use is cooperative. See also Goffman (1962) for an analysis of social cohesion in a 'total institution'.

9. It is possible to predict quite confidently that groups such as the rugby clubs studied in Kuiper (forthcoming) would strenuously deny vicious or face-attacking motives for their behaviour. They would claim that such behaviour was just camaraderie, and accepted as such. A claim of that nature would ignore the fact that it is the face-threat offered by such behaviour which gives rise to the solidarity of the group.

10. It has been pointed out to me (Kon Kuiper, pers. comm.) that some sadistic speakers would not consider an upper limit for face risk. While it is true that the upper limit for some S would be much higher than for other S, the strategy chosen would encode the fact that the speaker had chosen the strategy which met S's perceived needs, and no more.

11. Note that, as D is a symmetric relation, there will be no converse relation between S and H. Note however, that H's perception of D may well be different from S's, and that S's power may be the variable which decides at what weighting of D the interaction will proceed.

12. Susan Ervin-Tripp (1979) claims that there is a difference between what she calls effective power and esteem. (pp.117-118). I would argue that there is no motivated distinction between these, as the possession of effective power results correspondingly in the ability to exact compliance, which is what Ervin-Tripp calls esteem. There is also a causal relation in the opposite direction. See Chapter 5 for a discussion of power and face.
Chapter Two

The Dark Side - The Model

The flicker of an unkind smile, returned: the sly look, amusingly exchanged, and more travels between two people than you might suppose; the very devil floating, as you might say, on the beam of interpersonal communication.

Weldon (1976: 50)

1. Introductory remarks

In this chapter I will discuss the actual strategies involved in a model of face attack. I will compile a taxonomy of these strategies in the same way that Brown and Levinson do for politeness, and will provide examples of output strategies (realisations of strategies). In doing so, I will show that there are some adjustments necessary to accommodate facts about both politeness and impoliteness.

An important fact emerges as a consequence of the applicability of many of the Brown and Levinson strategies and outputs to the face attack model. It is that face attention exists on a continuum rather than there being a categorical difference between politeness and impoliteness. There are FTAs, some of which are mitigated and some of which are not. This latter category includes those which are not mitigated because the speaker is not aware of the threatening nature of the act, and those which are intentional face attacks. Furthermore, the difference between positive and negative face, while a categorical distinction in theory, appears frequently to be blurred to the point of being inseparable in communicative behaviour.

A preliminary remark must be made about the definition of the word strategy. Brown and Levinson say

We do not mean to imply that what we dub 'strategies' are necessarily conscious. For the most part they do not seem to be, but when interactional mistakes occur, or actors try to manipulate others,
they may very well emerge into awareness.


In face attack, the same applies. Although often the MP in such a model will have an awareness of strategies and manipulative devices, this will not always be so. In fact, while face attack strategies will frequently be claimed to be unconscious (falsely), there will be times when that claim is true. Much face attack behaviour is a result of prejudices, stereotypes and traditions, which are cultural artefacts. As such they are so deeply ingrained that S performs attacks on face without awareness of the likely interpretation or effects of the behaviour. This is not to say that the face attack is not perceived, or that it cannot be included in a face attack theory. Hearer interpretation is central to such a theory, and if the hearer perceives a face attack, and is humiliated or constrained by the behaviour, the attack stands even if, in particular social groups, such behaviour is the norm.

Much face attack behaviour will be automatic, and will often make use of linguistic formulas,1 lexicalised syntactic fragments, with their pragmatics indexed and probably part of the mutual cognitive environment of the interactants. The pragmatic index will include information on the acceptability of such a formula in certain situations, so the information about the risk of using the formula will be highly accessible, but because it is produced automatically, there may be little or no regard paid to the information stored there. Alternatively, the indications that it is face-threatening behaviour may be overridden by information resulting from S's strongly held assumptions, and S will use the formula with the belief that no-one would be offended. Formulaic FAAs will be discussed in greater depth in the examination of conventionalised indirectness below.

It is likely that a distinction can be drawn between impoliteness (in the general sense) and inconsiderateness. The first is usually an unmitigated bald on record face attack, while the second can be either an unintentional FTA which is unmitigated because the intrinsic face threat is not recognised, or a deliberate face attack, where S knows that a certain act will be offensive to H, but does not care enough about H's face wants to mitigate the threat.

2. The process of strategy choice

S wishes to attack H's face to some degree, as a rational means either to maintain asymmetric power relations between them, or to maintain an in-group, out-group distinction. S may or may not wish to minimise the overt FAA in order to satisfy the requirements of a covert FAA.

There is a distinction here between communicative intent and communicative behaviour. In
any model of face behaviour, a distinction between the two is necessary. While it is possible that communicative behaviour will mirror communicative intent, it is not a necessary condition. Only in cases of explicit communication can an audience make a reasonably accurate assessment of the speaker's communicative intention. There will be occasions when the speaker wishes to communicate a FAA, but will, for reasons of personal safety, not wish to make that intention overt. The communicative behaviour indulged in will convey the FAA by implicatural means, thus placing responsibility on the hearer for recovery of the underlying intention.

In face attack, S will use appropriate communicative behaviour to ensure that the intent is clearly conveyed commensurate with minimising the risk of retribution to self. In some cases, as we have seen, speaker intent will be different from the intent perceived by the hearer. In these cases, the hearer must accept responsibility for the interpretation, and takes a risk if she decides to challenge the speaker on the basis of her interpretation. It is for this reason that it is advantageous for a speaker who wishes to convey a FAA safely to phrase it in such a way that the communicative intent is manifest to the hearer, but that the hearer cannot safely impute that intent to the speaker.

The speaker's communicative behaviour may lead the hearer to recover information about the speaker's communicative intent which may be inaccurate. This could be because the speaker is unaware of the message being conveyed by the form she has chosen, such as when she is unaware of certain values held by the hearer, and so unaware of the damage to the hearer's face caused by her utterance. In these cases, the speaker will unconsciously perform acts which are humiliating and coercive to the hearer, but it is not necessarily manifest to the hearer that these are not intentional FAAs.

An obvious example here is provided by those men who speak and act towards women in a way sanctioned by their social education as polite and chivalrous. They may use formal address terms, open doors and make frequent concessions to women in their conversation. They may go further and, while showing extreme courtesy to women, demonstrate in their interaction an assumption of an inferior intellectual and social status for women. These acts have the effect of FAAs, even though they are not intentional, nor are they necessarily perceived as intentional. They have humiliating and coercive effects, in that the female recipients will not only feel the implicit insult in such behaviour, but will feel even more powerless to challenge the acts than if they were more overtly intentional. They face the double threat of hurting the feelings of an seemingly genuine person, and of appearing over-sensitive and aggressive.

Some hearers will respond aggressively, because their immediate context for interpreting
such acts is that of the deep-seated social facts underlying such behaviour. This is the tradition of belief in the weakness and inferiory of women, which demands that they be treated specially and differentially from men, in situations where such treatment is not relevant. Thus, the behaviour of the man will be seen as failing to challenge the stereotypes which the woman knows to be outdated and insulting. Other hearers will respond positively to such acts, because their context for interpreting them is the same as the conscious one in which the speaker is operating.

These acts are FTAs, because they are intrinsically destructive of face. They often occur in situations where there are differences in cultural definition, and can be attributed to differential perceptions of face needs, and what constitutes face attention. In this way, they can be seen as cross-cultural miscommunications, in the sense that the interactants are working from a position of differential acculturation. This can occur across cultures, but also across specific social groups within one cultural tradition. The interpretation of these acts is explainable by the theory of face attack.

We now return to the process of rational strategy choice. S decides which strategy to use, either performing the FAA or not, and then moves to a choice of the output strategy which most economically (i.e. with maximal relevance) achieves the goals. Having chosen the strategy for effective application of the FAA, S then rationally chooses the linguistic/extra-linguistic means to satisfy the communicative end.

3. Realisations of face-attack strategies in language

Brown and Levinson claim that 'what links these strategies to their verbal expressions is... means-ends reasoning' (Brown and Levinson, 1978:96). In other words the rational S will choose the means to convey the face attack most efficiently, including those which redress or mitigate the attack if necessary. Redressive actions need not be verbal, and in face attack behaviour, they may often be suprasegmental or kinesic (intimate/warning tones; winks, leers). The link between first strategy choice and linguistic output, then, is in the form of a means-ends logical progression through from super strategy to output strategy, via 'the practical-reasoning consequence relations holding between them' (Brown and Levinson, 1978:97).

The more effort S expends in face-saving strategies, in a face-saving framework, the more S communicates the desire to satisfy H's face wants. This is not true of face attack behaviour, where the use of ostensible face-saving strategies inappropriately is interpreted as a face attack, where S is trying to draw attention the the face-threatening aspects of the interaction, and to
reinforce them in an indirect manner.

4. The Strategies

4.1. Bald on record

This is the strategy which pays minimal attention to H's face wants. It is less common in face-saving behaviour than in face-attack, but even in the latter model, there are likely to be more effective ways of attacking face than bald on record attacks, which are the most likely of all the strategies to be seen as rude. They will appear only in situations where the risk to S's face in the event of miscalculated situational variables is very small. However, they do occur, especially in asymmetric power groupings.

Brown and Levinson define bald on record usage as speaking in accordance with Grice's Maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance and Manner. These may be necessary conditions but they are not sufficient, since the Maxims, especially relevance, will be used in other strategies as well. The redefined notion of relevance as used by Sperber and Wilson (1986) takes this a step further, and relevance becomes the principle underlying all linguistic interaction which will be seen, in chapter four, to be the most natural way to characterise both face attack and face saving behaviour.

The bald on record strategy will usually be chosen when other considerations override the need for face redress. This will happen in a lot in occupational settings, where efficiency is the major factor, or in relationships where there is sufficient intimacy to forestall threat to the face of participants. In a model of face attack, however, these are not significant, as we are concerned with situations where there is an acknowledged face threat, but for various reasons, this threat does not need to be minimised. If S has power over H, and does not fear retribution, or if S is part of a group which gains much of its solidarity by baldly attacking an H from some out-group, bald strategies will be used. Here, the need to minimise face threat will be seen as less important than the need to reinforce certain affective aspects of the interaction.

Another set of bald on record cases recognised by Brown and Levinson is susceptible to two interpretations. This is the set of warnings and advice, where the content is assumed to be so much in H's interest that this motive overrides the need for redress. This behaviour in fact can be very threatening - both humiliating and coercive - especially when it is perceived by one or both of the participants to be unnecessary, or where mutually perceived and culturally determined rules of privacy are not respected. S can, by using this strategy, assume greater power or influence over H than is acceptable to H, and can readjust both the P and D aspects of their relationship to
the advantage of S. Crucial social facts will be communicated about S's perception of H's place in this and future interactions. This will be ultimately coercive, as H will be constrained to either accept the redefinition imposed by S, or challenge it, or avoid S in the future if this is possible.

4.1.1. Bald on record threats to positive face

(a) Express violent emotion.

S will express anger, scorn, or extreme disapproval. Such strategies may include expletives and threatening gestures. This is both humiliating and coercive, as it has the effect often of diminishing H's self-confidence, but also may frighten H into compliance or flight.

(1) You stupid clot! You wouldn't know your arse from your elbow!

(b) Be irreverent, talk on taboo topics

Here we include reference to sexual characteristics (especially derogatory references to H's sexual characteristics). Bodily functions may be referred to, or beliefs and values which H is known to hold may be introduced in a derogatory way. Derogation is not an essential aspect of this strategy, as often the mere mention of some of the above may be sufficiently threatening to H.

(2) You're so pure, I bet your farts don't even smell.

There is a violation of the maxims here, in the sense that neither the speaker nor the hearer believes that this is true. In fact, what we have here is a formula which carries extremely derogatory pragmatic information with it. Because it is formulaic, the question of its conforming to the maxims seems somehow to be suspended, since the pragmatic information associated with its interpretation is lexicalised with it. Its use is socially significant, and the interpretive process will extend to this via Relevance Theory, which specifically provides for the fact that, while the actual words used provide much of the embarrassment to H, the fact that they are said invites H to make some judgement on the S/H relationship. Brown and Levinson implicitly support the notion of relevance in this search for reasons why people say what they say. An assessment of why a certain remark was made is an integral part of the Brown and Levinson process, after which the hearer usually comes up with a perception of politeness.

The central point to be made about the Gricean-based analysis central to the Brown and Levinson model is that, while it might take H some way along the interpretive line, and may even lead H to an interpretation of non-cooperative behaviour, it is insufficient in terms of leading H through to the social facts underlying communication in a motivated way. H must be led to an interpretation which involves H's distaste for the word fart, H's embarrassment at the mention of bodily functions, and the lack of respect that S holds for the type of person described.
The question of whether S knows about H's feelings is in one sense immaterial, but the effect will be heightened if the participants both know that H's values are being taken into account.

(c) Bring bad news re H, good news re S

In a model of face attack, this can be seen as self-aggrandisement, particularly at H's expense. This is likely to occur when the power relation is not defined in a way which appeals to S, and S is trying to redefine this variable. This may take the form of a public comparison of examination marks, or a report, or may specify some activity open to the group to which S belongs, but H does not. Notice that bringing good news re S is not a face attack strategy in itself, unless that good news is known to be at the expense of H. Likewise, bringing bad news re H is not necessarily a face attack, unless some comparison between S and H is foregrounded intentionally.

(3) The class is going to a film, but you two can't come - it's R18.

(d) Raise dangerously emotive or divisive topics

This is a similar strategy to (b), but deals with H's adherence to some value system, or set of beliefs. S will refer to religion, political doctrines, racial differences, in such a way as to openly invite H to retaliate. H may be in a low P or high D situation, with a reluctance to enter into a discussion and risk returning the offence. A topical illustration of this strategy is the reference to feminism in the presence of a woman, especially if the woman is known to espouse some feminist views.

(4) Women should stick to the things they are good at, like housework and making themselves beautiful.

An utterance like this works on two levels. The statement itself is provocative, but the fact that it has been uttered communicates S's intention to start an argument. Once again, we see that the utterance has two levels of impact, both in its propositional content and in the context which H accesses on hearing it.

(e) Be blatantly conversationally non-cooperative

S will interrupt, contradict, monopolise speaking time, pay little or no attention to H's opinions or statements. The effect of this is to assume the high P role, whether it is intrinsically justified or not. Recent work on male/female language cites this as a characteristic of men's talk - that they use these strategies in mixed-gender groups.\(^3\) Such behaviour allows the speaker to assume real or apparent dominance in interactions with the 'other group' (in this case, women). Another realisation of this strategy is code-switching, which is used as a signal of group membership, and if used in the presence of an out-group H, it reinforces the division between groups. It can range from switching to another language, to adopting an in-group variety which excludes some H.
(5) I like the way A speaks, don't you? All those intervocalic glottals. (Spoken in A's presence).

(f) Use of address terms.

The use of address terms appears in various strategies within this model, but here the terms will be those which are openly and mutually accepted as insulting. Such terms will often refer to characteristics of which H is self-conscious or afraid. The example below can be used by men to refer to another man who is not conforming to expected behaviour for the group.

(6) '... didn't quite catch the name. Girl's blouse, was it?'

In example (6), it is unlikely that the interactants will suppose that the utterance is intended to compliment H on his dress sense, or flair for originality. In effect, such attacks often rely on a further, implied attack on some other group X which H would not want to be identified with.

These groups are often low-status ones, or groups known to be held in contempt by S's group. This aspect of face attack will be developed in connection with example (6) in chapter four.

(g) Use of status-marked identifications

The term employed will typically mark H as a member of a group seen by S as inferior or odd, or as having characteristics which are in some way contentious.

(7) Well, if it isn't Ms Brown.

If S employs a status identification for a higher-ranked group, it will be ironic, or intended to draw attention to some perceived notion that H has pretensions to such a group.

(8) Watch out! Here comes the Prime Minister. (Referring to someone who expresses parliamentary aspirations).

(h) Use of sexually oriented expressions

S will employ, as a mode of address, or as a description, expressions which refer to sexuality in one of two ways.

(i) Reference to sexual orientation, e.g. lezzie, lesbo, poof, fairy.

(ii) Reference to sexual characteristics, e.g. legs almighty, big tits.

These references may be to H directly, or to someone for whom H would feel the insult (a close friend, relative etc.) The reference may be to someone else where H is someone belonging to the referent's group, and the effect of the insult would be indirectly felt by H. This latter reference will be covered in (j) below, in the discussion of deflected FAAs.
(i) Over-familiarity

There is some overlap here between the bald on record strategy, and the positive politeness attack which involves inappropriate redress. In the bald on record strategy, there is no real or superficial attention paid to any wants of H, either for appreciation of H's wants, or for privacy. This strategy includes such things as

(a) verbal sexual harassment of the obvious sort:

   (9) Why don't you bring your beautiful ass over to my knee?

(b) use of given name or diminutive where this is inappropriate and/or offensive:

   (10) Hi, Johnnie!

(j) Deflected FAAs

This strategy is difficult to define in terms of on-recordness. It works on two levels, as the overt FAA may be on record to one H, but may not be intended as an insult to that H. The real insult is intended for another H who is not overtly referred to.

   (11) God, you're an old woman, Bert!

In this example, a male is speaking to another male, in the presence of a woman known for her feminist opinions. Depending on the D relationship between S and the overt hearer, the FAA may not be an insult to H_1. There may be a history of joking insults between them, and possibly shared jokes about the H_2 in the interaction. In this case the intention is to perform an FAA against H_2.

The interesting thing about this strategy is that, while ostensibly a bald on record attack on one H, it is in fact a very low risk off record attack on the other H. If H_2 challenges the remark, she is at risk from the obvious solidarity of the other two participants, and can be taken to task for interrupting a private conversation. This phenomenon is noted in Bell (1984), where the importance of other audience to an interaction is described:

   It is not hard to recall situations where the third person auditor is more salient to the speaker than the ostensible second person addressee.

   Bell (1984:175).

Thomas (1986) highlights the safety factor in this strategy:

   .. conventionally, overhearers have no "right of reply", so a speaker may obtain considerable advantage by casting the real target of a speech act in the role of "overhearer" rather than that of "addressee".

   Thomas (1986:91).
(k) Draw attention to faux pas

Where a situational faux pas has been made by someone other than S, and is seemingly unnoticed by others in the group, S may draw attention to it in an overly familiar way, thus causing the performer of the faux pas unnecessary embarrassment.

(12) Woops! Forgotten the chairman's name again, have we?
There are other ways of dealing with faux pas in a face-threatening way, which will be dealt with in the discussion of further strategies.

(l) State H's lack of knowledge

In other strategies, H's lack of knowledge can be hinted at, with a corresponding decrease in risk to S. Where the risk of retribution is low, or there are overriding motivations for performing the FA boldly (the desire to redefine the group membership of S and H, or redefine the P variable), S will go on record, without redress.

(13) Oh there's no use discussing this with you - logic never was your strong point.

4.1.2. Bald on record threats to negative face

(a) Unwilling promises

S maximises H's debt, if S agrees to the imposition requested by H. S ensures that H knows S is promising/agreeing under duress, and S's lack of will to cooperate is on record. Such a strategy can also incorporate the warning to H not to make the imposition/request again.

(14) Oh, alright then, I'll do it - but just this once.

(b) Non-minimisation of H's transgressions

S ensures that H is aware of the indebtedness she owes to S. This strategy involves contradicting H's implicit expectation that D is sufficiently low between them that the imposition will not be seen as great.

(15) You're damned right, you shouldn't have done it.

(c) Orders and requests

These will be open and direct, and leave no room for H to ignore, refuse or decline. Such a strategy places the maximum imposition on H and, if reinforced by S's higher P, it is totally constraining. Note here that the face attack lies in the absence of any other extenuating factors such as urgency, efficiency etc., and places the motivation for the order/request within the variables P and D. The face threat is obviously ranked low or irrelevant in S's terms, or some redress would have been given.

(16) I want you to lend me three thousand dollars by tomorrow
morning.

(d) Suggestions and advice

S makes suggestions or gives advice where the possibility of H's being offended is high. S constrains H to accept the advice/suggestion without the potential to salvage some face, or to refuse and so appear churlish in rejecting S's 'well-meaning' approach. In the case of a naturally tactless S, the approach is probably genuinely helpful, but the miscalculation of the imposition which is the basis of tactless behaviour causes a negative perception to result.

(17) You know, Tom, if I were you I'd wear more casual clothing to a party like this.

(e) Reminders

Here S can impose in two ways:

(1) S can remind H of a task to be done which S could have done instead, but S is not prepared to make the effort. H may be obviously busy, but constrained by the reminder of a previous undertaking.

(18) It's your turn to go to the bank.

(2) S can remind H of past events/promises etc. which S knows H to have very good reasons for forgetting. H may then be constrained to live up to some historical set of criteria, or risk losing face, or have past embarrassments revived. If H may have given offence to someone else by forgetting, or habitually forgets, this is a humiliating strategy as well.

(19) Julia's a great one for forgetting birthdays, aren't you, Julia?

(g) Threats

Threats are a very obvious form of coercive linguistic behaviour. They can take the form of threats of physical danger, or removal of rights/privileges. If H feels there is cause to fear S's ability to carry out the threats, there is almost incontrovertible reason for H to act to avoid threatened consequences.

(20) Have the money in my hand by Friday or your children will suffer.

There are off-record threats, which are dealt with in discussion of off-record strategies. Warnings can also be included in this strategy, including some warnings which are ostensibly in H's interests. These warnings often carry an implied 'or else...' clause.

(21) You'd better not touch my car again.
(h) Dares
These typically constrain H to the action named if enough of the following conditions are met:
(1) The dare is an initiation test for a group which H sufficiently wants to join.
(2) S has enough power that refusal to comply will bring retribution on H.
(3) S has power and the dare actually consists of a warning not to perform the action specified.
This is another strategy where there are two face attacks, one on-record and one off-record.

(i) Sexual harassment
This face attack strategy, like others, appears in different places in the model, because of the variety of methods available for achieving the same goal. This particular strategy is used only when S has power sufficient to minimise the risk of retribution. The constraints placed on H vary, depending on the nature of the harassment.
(1) If the utterance involves a threat, overt or implicit, H’s choice of responses is limited.
(2) Your future could depend on the way you behave tonight.
(2) If there is no threat uttered, H may refuse, and accept whatever consequences result from S’s P- rating. On the other hand, H may find the alternatives more threatening than the threat carried in the sexual harassment, in which case, the possible courses of action for H are limited.

A close examination of the above strategies will show that there is no rigid distinction between the effects of bald on record threats to positive face and those to negative face. All attacks on positive face (humiliation) have a secondary effect of coercion, as a humiliated hearer can be constrained to a small range of options for further behaviour.
(1) H can ignore the attack, and attempt further interactions from the same starting point as before the attack, thus risking further attacks.
(2) H can accept a redefined role in relation to S for all further interactions, or until S redefines the relationship again, thus surrendering the leading role completely to S.
(3) H can avoid interactions with S, thus possibly sacrificing other rewards from the situations in which S is likely to be present.

Attacks on negative face (coercion) involve humiliation, since they cause H to lose at least some measure of self esteem as a result of having to accept the attack without the possibility of retribution. In many cases the negative attack makes known to at least H and possibly an audience that H has miscalculated P,D, or R. Otherwise the attack will make public the real definition of P,D,R for S, and if H does not retaliate, this makes public the fact that H accepts S’s definition of the variables. The chart in the Appendix illustrates the cross-category effect for the bald on record strategies. From the relationships represented there, a general interdependence can be extrapolated.
interdependence can be extrapolated.

We can formulate the interdependence of positive and negative face into a principle:

*The principle of bivalence of face loss.*

Loss of positive face (humiliation) always involves a loss of negative face (coercion) and vice versa.

Consider a situation where a male employer and his female employee have begun an affair. The following day, the woman greets the man in an obviously affectionate and intimate manner. She has placed her estimate of their relative positions on the power and distance axes publicly on record. The man responds with a cool, impersonal greeting, as would be appropriate if there were no other relationship between them. This has a distancing effect, and is coercive in that it redefines the type of interaction the man expects in public. The amount of humiliation the woman will experience depends on such factors as her perception of her rights, and the extent to which she needs the man's good opinion. Other situational factors, such as the composition of other audience, and their knowledge of the message being conveyed, may increase the level of humiliation.

Conversely, let us look at an attack on positive face. S is a schoolboy of some status, who is approached by H, who wishes to be friendly. S calls H fato, upon which other boys laugh. This is humiliating, and causes H to feel diffident in approaching S in future (coercion). The more humiliating the insult, the more likely H is to feel constrained in S's presence. Once again, the presence or absence of an audience, and their reaction, have the potential to increase the coercive effect.

4. 2. On record face attacks - inappropriate redress

Here, S uses repressive strategies, ostensibly to save H's face in some way. However, the nature of the interaction, or the nature of the relationship between S and H should ordinarily preclude the need for such redress. This is a doubly face attacking strategy, in that it not only causes H to feel a decrease in self esteem, but also invites conjecture as to the reason for S's perceived concessions to H's face. This points to facts about the social relationship between S and H which are obviously different from those perceived by H, and H's possible misinterpretation of the nature of that relationship can in itself be humiliating and/or coercive.

4. 2.1. On record with inappropriate redress to positive face

This strategy involves the use of an ostensibly polite hedge or qualification to a face attack
which should not have needed any redress. In one sense, this is an off record strategy, because there is a level of meaning at which the redress should be seen as a non-attacking strategy. However, some of the attacking nature of the utterance is recoverable at the level of what is said, i.e. it does not rely on the recovery of implicatures, and for that reason we will treat the strategy as on record.

The attack on face lies in the fact that H is aware that no redress is needed, and is usually able to assume that S knows this too. If S uses redressive strategies, H will interpret such behaviour in one of the following ways:

1. S has different ideas from H about appropriate behaviour - no offence.
2. S thinks that H is not capable of withstanding bald on record utterances.
3. S is trying to redefine P, D, R, in a way which is harmful to H's interests.

The result of H's interpretation in (2) and (3) will be some loss in self esteem or self image, and as with the bald on record strategies, this will modify H's future behaviour with regard to S, thus having a coercive side-effect.

(a) Draw attention to irrelevant distinguishing characteristics of H/H's group
   (1) Effusive complimenting
       S comments admiringly on H's appearance/abilities/character etc where these are either already known or are irrelevant to the discourse in hand.

       (23) Male Councillor to female chairperson:
           "You have been a capable and decorative chairman."

(2) Sexual harassment
   S makes pointed reference to H's physical attributes, often accompanied by intrusive kinesics. S refers to possible sexual habits, abilities or attributes of H in an insinuating manner. Here, the risk to S is quite low, because H is often charged with over-reacting, if the FA is challenged. This can cause further humiliation.

   (24) Let's ask this lovely lady-guide over here the way to the scenic path.

(3) Mention of characteristics which set H apart
   S refers to H's gender, race, beliefs in a complimentary manner, where H is known or shows self to be unhappy with such references.

   (25) A male member of parliament refers to a female colleague:
'I do not share the pessimism of the lady member for Avon.'
Hansard (1981:362)

Once again this strategy can be defended as a move to include the person, pay respect to them etc.

(b) Be over-familiar

(1) Using endearments
S addresses H with such endearments as love, dear, my dear etc. These are most commonly used to women or young people. An equivalent to men might be my boy or mate, but these intuitively are less objectionable when used inappropriately than the female terms. The tendency for the endearments to be used both for women and young people gives rise to the common perception of paternalistic language use.

(2) Using contrastive address terms
S uses a familiar address term to H (given name, an endearment as above), while addressing others by honorifics, titles etc. The effect is to remove H from the group of people who command respect by virtue of some intrinsic characteristic or some achievement/status.

(26) Are we ready to start then, Dr X? Dr Y? Professor Z? Susan?
(Where Susan is the holder of a doctorate.)

Note that this example illustrates the complexity of the allocation of strategies in terms of their attention to positive or negative face. On the one hand, it can be seen as an overly familiar naming technique. Susan wishes her status to be salient in the interaction, and S is using her given name, thus increasing the degree of intimacy in an unacceptable manner. On the other hand, where the use of Susan's status-oriented title indicates her membership of the group of people who are being addressed (i.e. the group of academic people), the use of her given name puts her outside that group (i.e. distances her). Here the distinction between positive and negative politeness is untenable, as the effect is distancing and humiliating, while the strategy is a positive politeness one, in Brown and Levinson's terms.

(3) Use of diminutives and 'cute' language
This is an ironic strategy in its echoic effect. S uses words with diminutive suffixes (fishie, horsie), or particular lexical items (teeny-weeny, wee), which are usually associated with children's, and by extension women's language. This has the effect of diminishing H's status by implying that H typically uses such vocabulary.
(c) Impute lack of understanding to H

(1) Over-explain
S gives unnecessary detail and explanation of concepts/situations to H, often in front of an audience. Often, S will summarise a previously given explanation, repeating what has been said in simpler terms. The example and analysis in (25) illustrate the strategy.

(27) A concise and quite accessible technical report is read to a committee of people experienced in the area covered. The chairman of the committee then repeats the main points, simplifying certain terminology.

(27) a. The group should have grasped the original report.
   b. The chairman has no more specialised knowledge than the main body of the committee
   c. The chairman wishes to (i) emphasise own understanding (ii) point out others' possible inability to do so.

(2) Define terms unnecessarily
S gives simple paraphrases or synonyms for terms which H can be reasonably expected to know. This has the effect of minimising H's knowledge, and thereby decreasing H's self-esteem. There is also a coercive element, because if H wishes to salvage some self image, H will have to assert knowledge or prove it in some way.

(28) It's a sedative - you know, puts people to sleep.
(Where H has demonstrated previously some knowledge of medical terminology.)

(3) State conviction of H's lack of knowledge with ostensible redress
S will apologise for using terms/discussing something that H does not know about. In a politeness model, this will be genuine, and used where H is obviously feeling left out of a conversation, with subsequent attempts being made to draw H in to the interaction. In this model, the strategy is used in order to emphasise H's possible or real lack of knowledge, and the effect is to reinforce any out-group feelings which may have been engendered in H.

(29) The morphemic analysis - sorry about all this jargon, Bill, but it's difficult to find a simple way of putting it.

(d) Exaggerate care for H's self esteem
(1) Ignore a faux pas

Here, what is ostensibly a politeness strategy can be just the opposite when \( H \) is aware, and probably \( S \) also, that an acknowledgement of the faux pas, either humorous or otherwise, would ease the situation. The FA can be intensified if \( S \) makes a visible/audible effort to cover up for or ignore the faux pas, i.e. \( S \) pauses then hurries on in a slightly louder voice.

(2) Correct own wrong statements

\( S \) makes an inappropiate or unacceptable statement, and then ostentatiously corrects self. Often this is ironic, in its pre-empting of a protest \( H \) might be tempted to make, whether or not \( H \) would do so.

(30) Let's hear it from Mr, oops Doctor Marx.

The interpretation of such a remark might involve a choice between taking it as genuine, or as implying some disrespect/disdain for \( H \)'s status/beliefs etc. As well as being potentially embarrassing to \( H \), it constrains \( H \)'s further behaviour by pre-empting a possible protest and inviting a denial of offence from \( H \).

(3) Insult and apologise

\( S \) makes a derogatory or insulting remark, then apologises, often in an exaggerated way. This is a similar strategy to (2), and provokes a similar reaction.

(31) You're a bit of a poof, Jim - oops, no offence.

Often this strategy can be used to make off record comments about \( H \) which place \( S \)'s opinion of \( H \) on record in a low risk manner.

4.2.2. On record with inappropriate redress to negative face

Once again, this strategy has an off record element, in that the ostensible politeness can be interpreted as genuine, especially as the features of negative politeness, as noted by Brown and Levinson for some societies, are those most typically associated with the social notion of 'politeness' as a whole.

As a face attack strategy, it is typically used in situations where \( H \) has good reason to believe that there is a sufficient level of intimacy, or a small enough power asymmetry that a more casual, friendly style could have been expected. In other words, \( S \) is redefining the D variable in particular, but as a consequence, also the P and R variables. \( S \) is intimating, for instance, that although \( H \) has good reason to assess D as low, for some reason, possibly a situational increase in P for \( S \), or a miscalculation of R, \( S \) needs to make a greater distance between them. This is coercive to \( H \), in that it is a warning that \( H \) must adjust behaviour in order to meet the social
requirements of the situation. It is also humiliating, because H has publicly calculated P,D,R,
and has been publicly shown that the calculation is wrong.

(a) Imply an increase in distance

(1) Use of address terms

S may use a formal address term in reply to H's more intimate term. This may involve
switching from given name to honorific/family name, or from an informal to a formal style.

(32)  A: Morning, Jim. Did you enjoy the show last night?
       B: Oh were you there, Mr Jones. Yes it was very pleasant.

Use of the formal/informal distinction in this way can also be a device for contrasting
in-group/out-group membership. S can use contrastive styles or terms to two different people or
groups, in order to publicise S's perceptions of their group status.

(2) Use of marked status-differentiating terms

S will use address terms or stylistic features in a contrastive way in order to emphasize or
even create differences in the status of those addressed. Again this often involves the contrast
between formal or informal styles, or between high-status and low-status terms.

(33)  A: All you men and girls of the club are welcome.

This type of differentiation is common in sexist language which has the perceived effect of
reducing women to an implied non-adult status.

(3) Minimise debt/transgression inappropriately

S is over-generous in excusing H's debt/transgression, thus implying that S is making
allowances for H, or protecting H from the consequences of her/his own behaviour. The
redefinition of D lies in S's perceived intention to use excessively polite strategies to H, where H
would have considered them unnecessary, because of an overestimated degree of intimacy, or a
higher estimation of the weight of the R variable.

(34)  A: Oh no really, it's quite alright. It's an old vase anyway.

(35)  No, no, really - I'm not busy. Sit down.
       (Where S is patently very busy).

(b) Reinforce H's out-group status

Much of the work done on style-shift and grammatical differentiation according to hearer
status in the group comes into this category. (Douglas-Cowie, 1978; Brown and Gilman, 1960;
(1) Interrupt flow of conversation
S interrupts the flow of conversation or ostentatiously changes the subject, when H enters the area thus fostering the belief that H was the subject of the conversation. This is a widely observed interactional strategy. Bell (1984) notes the practice in his work on the effect of a wider audience on speaker/hearer interaction:

...some of the linguistic variables reflect a male identity, shifting when a wife joins the group, while others change in response to an outsider.


(2) Refer to H's inhibiting qualities.
S breaks off halfway through a story/joke/conversation, indicating either verbally or kinesically that H should not/may not want to hear what follows.

   (36)   A: Keep it clean while ladies are present.
   or
   (37)   A: I'll tell you later. Not for others' ears.

(3) Make excuses for H's group
S refers to the group to which H belongs in such a way as to indicate that S does not hold that group in high regard, although ostensibly S is making excuses on behalf of H's group for some transgression or omission.

   (38)   They'll be here soon. They work on Maori time.

(c) Imply that H should not be impinged on

(1) Apologise unnecessarily
S makes an apology or qualification of previous utterances or behaviour where, by doing so, S draws attention to an offence which might well have been missed otherwise.

   (39)   'I probably should be more broad-minded - no pun intended - in exploring the possibilities of women as managers.'
       Regional personnel director, consumer goods manufacturer.
       Quoted in Bowman et al. (1965:14)

Here, the fact that the man denied an intended pun draws attention to the possible pun in his words, and makes the point he is ostensibly trying to avoid making.

(2) Emphasise need to save H trouble
S may be exaggeratedly helpful, or make elaborate concessions to H in the course of an
interaction. H may be annoyed by the inappropriateness of such actions, but will definitely seem
curlyish if s/he refuses the proffered help. H may feel humiliated or embarrassed by this
coercive action.

(40) I hope you don’t mind, but I’d really like it if you could spare some time to work
on this report for me.

Where it is obvious that H does not want to be interrupted, but cannot refuse in the face of such
derecense.

(d) Don’t assume (make a point of not assuming)

(1) Be indirect (i.e. be conventionally indirect)

This strategy is a resolution of the conflict between wanting to be indirect and wanting to get
the intended message across. It differs from off record strategies in that the meaning of the form
in which the message is encoded is so accessible that, while avoiding bald on record face attack,
it nevertheless ensures that there can be no misinterpretation of the intended meaning.

The most obvious case of conventional indirectness is found in the use of formulas or idioms.
These lexicalised syntactic fragments carry with their lexical entry not only a semantic reading
but also a pragmatic index. In this index is stored information about appropriate places, times
and recipients for use of the formula/idiom. To illustrate, we can look at the formula

(41) *I don’t suppose I could ask you* to wash these dishes now.
The pragmatic index for this formula will include information about the implicit request in such a
statement, and the indirectness as a result of apprehension about H’s likely reaction. This can be
cocive to H as a result of the need to dispel S’s indirectly expressed fears about her willingness.
On the other hand, some H will use the negative phrasing of the request as a lead to refuse to
cooperate. It depends on the assertiveness, or power of H.

The function of the pragmatic index then is to make accessible, to most speakers who share
the same dialect, information about appropriate conditions for use, and inferential meaning for
the formula. This information can then be usefully exploited in realising the conventional
indirectness strategy. S can use a formula like the following:

(42) *Come on, X, don’t be a girl’s blouse.*

H has immediate access to such inferences as (1) anything pertaining to the female sex implies
weakness (2) men can’t be seen to be associated with female things, (3) the speaker intends an
insult, albeit possibly a friendly one.8 Such a formula also contains information about the
consequences of failing to interpret the formula in the way defined by the context, which will be
discussed in chapter four.
It is interesting to note that conventionalised indirectness offers an opportunity for deflecting the FAA. To call a man girl's blouse is to offer an FAA whose degree of seriousness relies largely on the nature of the D variable between them. In a case where D is low, the FAA may be intended to be a joke, or to be deflected on to some other H who is likely to be offended by the analogy.

4.3. Off Record

Off record face attacks rely on the hearer's ability to recover implicatures from what is said. The actual face attack is not recoverable from just the utterance itself, but relies heavily on the context, and the participants' mutual experience. In fact, there is no clear cut-off point between on-record and off-record face attacks, because even in on-record strategies, there are elements recovered from the context which determine whether or not H will interpret them as attacks or not. This problem with the Brown and Levinson model will be outlined more extensively in the next chapter, and a solution will be offered in chapter four. I will, however, outline below the types of utterance which can be subsumed under the heading 'off record'.

(a) Hints, allusions

Here, the hints will draw attention to some fact or set of opinions/values about which H is known to have strong opinions. The focussing of attention on these facts will be motivated by the desire to attack H's face in some public or private way.

(43) No danger of paternity suits now, huh?
(Where H is known to want to keep his recent vasectomy a secret).

(b) Irony

Some examples of this strategy have already been given. Because of its echoic nature, irony is often expressed in a form which, if used sincerely, would be perfectly non-ironic. This gives a possible 'out' to S.

(44) No, no - go ahead. The carpet was boring and the red spots really improve it.
(Where the carpet is new).

(c) Double-edged compliments

These are strategies well-used in comedies where characters are being ostensibly friendly, but implying an unpleasantness.

(45) You suit the middle-aged spread, John - makes you look
prosperous.

(d) Oblique requests
Here, the obliqueness can be seen as ostensibly polite, while actually making H look foolish.

(46) Can you hear that alright?
(Where H has some music playing at an extremely loud volume)

(e) Euphemisms
While euphemisms have the function of relieving embarrassment in situations where the term which has been replaced has some features which are socially unacceptable, their use in other situations can be humiliating in implying that a certain H can't 'call a spade a spade'.

(47) (Doctor to adult male patient)
Now then, could I have a look at your 'willy' please?

(f) Puns
Puns can allude to things which H wants kept secret or known only to a few, and can be threatening in two ways: firstly in bringing the conversation close to a point where others may realise what is being alluded to, and secondly in warning H that S might be going to break the confidentiality requirement between them. For instance, S may say to the man who has recently had a vasectomy:

(48) You're a cut above the rest, now, aren't you, Bill!

In the preceding illustrations of the re-application of a model of politeness, it becomes clear that Brown and Levinson's strategies can be used equally well to illustrate the FAA strategies which form part of this model. This fact can be formalised, and I shall propose a hypothesis which will be confirmed in the following chapters:

The principle of the context-dependence of face behaviour.

(i) Face attention is assigned to motives of politeness or impoliteness on the basis of the context within which it is interpreted.

(ii) There are no uniquely positive or negative face-strategies. There are positive and negative face categories, and strategies will be assigned to them according to information derived from the context.

Cooperation cannot be a principle constantly underlying interaction. Rather it is one of a number of assumptions to which a hearer has access in determining the social implications of her
interactions with others. As we shall discover in chapter four, in determining a theory of interpretation for such language, hearer perception and the context are the elements which have predictive power in assessments of politeness and impoliteness.

5. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have examined 'dark side' strategies in some detail, giving examples of realisations of these, and showing how what may ostensibly be a politeness strategy can easily be seen as something quite opposite in a suitable context. I have introduced a principle which states that effects on positive and negative face are overlapping, and have hypothesized that it is the context which provides interpretations of which social facts are being transmitted.

In chapter three, I will examine the Brown and Levinson strategies in detail, showing their application to a theory of face attack. The problems which are inherent in the taxonomic approach will be exemplified, and I will show that it is necessary to abandon such an approach in favour of a more general principle which underlies the whole of utterance interpretation.
NOTES

1. For further discussion of the definition of formulas, see Haggo and Kuiper (1983).


4. I am indebted to Kon Kuiper for this example, which will be analysed in detail in chapter four.

5. But note the use of 'dear boy', in situations where there is no intimacy between the interactants to justify its inclusion. It is very similar to its counterparts used to women, in that it carries pragmatic information which would suggest that it is appropriately used either to intimates, or to young men/boys. The use of it in, for instance, a business discussion between non-intimate colleagues of identical status would give rise to interpretations of condescension.

6. For the definition of irony as echoic, see Sperber and Wilson (1986:237 ff.)

7. Sapir (1951:206-12) says 'the reduced female forms constitute a conventionalised symbolism of the less considered or ceremonious status of women in the community.'

8. See Kuiper (forthcoming).
Chapter Three

The Validity of the Politeness Model

'What a lot of things you do use *good morning* for!' said Gandalf. 'Now you mean that you want to get rid of me, and that it won't be good until I move off.'

Tolkien (1966:5)

1. Introductory remarks

I have shown that it is possible to provide a model of face attack on similar principles to the Brown and Levinson model. It therefore follows that an account of attention to face should include both the 'dark side' and 'light side' elements. Face attention operates across a continuum from face saving to face attack. Face work itself appears to be a general phenomenon, operating in interactions at all times. Even the most phatic of communications involves at least perfunctory attention to face. It is in the gregarious nature of the species that this should be so, even if the underlying motivation is not face-preservation, but the systematic destruction of face.¹

I will now show that there are fundamental errors underlying the approach adopted by Brown and Levinson. The first of these is the assigning of output realisations to particular strategies. In many cases, what is said is multi-functional, in that it is equally appropriate for face attack or face saving, the difference lying in the context in which it is interpreted. It is this fact which is of such importance in a model of face attack, since the presence of alternative interpretations is available for use as a defence against accusations of non-cooperative intentions. Therefore, the usefulness of such a concept as that of face does not lie just in providing inventories of strategies and their outputs, but rather in a characterisation of the role of the knowledge of these social facts in interpreting utterances. A theory which fails to capture this generalisation is inadequate.

A further problem lies in the multi-layered nature of utterances which can be used either for face attack or face saving, or performing the attack while ostensibly intending the opposite. Utterances may work on more levels than one, with a certain interpretation being made
inevitable for one H, and other interpretations being available to other H. There may be both on-record and off-record interpretations available, with the off-record element often making manifest certain social and affective messages to the audience. Brown and Levinson's theory does not take account of this, and tries to make distinctions where there are none.

The gap, often large, between speaker-intention and hearer-perception is another factor which must be accounted for in a theory of face. I have made the point that hearers will impute motives to speakers which may be denied, and sometimes genuinely. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that no communication has occurred. The assumptions made available by the form of utterance chosen by the speaker may not be immediately manifest to the speaker, but may exist at some less accessible level of consciousness, or may be simply cultural or societal constructs of which S is unaware. In any case, these will be communicated, and will often have a major effect on the hearer. This is a significant effect in terms of future interactional behaviour, which is where ascertaining S's true communicative intent becomes even more important, and proportionately more likely. Brown and Levinson concentrate very much on speaker intention, but it is necessary for a theory of face to pay attention to the processes which give rise to hearer perception, which can be manipulated by speakers, or be unknown to them.

So how do interactants, then, assign particular utterances to the categories of face attack or face saving, and within those categories to the subcategories of positive face or negative face? How do they draw a clear distinction between on-record and off-record strategies? Of what significance is the difference between speaker-intention and hearer perception?

In the following sections, I will examine examples from Brown and Levinson's work, showing how they illustrate the problems outlined above. The strategies will be quoted from that paper, and I will give page references for them. Unless otherwise stated, the strategies will be taken from Brown and Levinson (1978), and actual examples will be mine.

2. Multi-functional strategies - face saved or face attacked?

While form can be a reliable indicator of the interpretive direction of an utterance, there are contextual factors which can overcome the clues given by the form of the utterance. Thomas (1985b.) formalises the complex effect of some utterances under the labels ambivalent, bivalent and multivalent. Her bivalent and multivalent utterances correspond to my multi-functional and multi-layered strategies. Because of the existence of these phenomena, many of the realisations of Brown and Levinson's politeness strategies are equally used in face attack. Many utterances have more than one function. They may function at one level as polite, and at another as a face attack.
Pragmatic theory has long held that much of the meaning of communication is recoverable at a level which has less to do with the form and propositional content than with the context and relationship of the parties to the situation of utterance. Levinson (1983:98) makes this point of the semantic content of an utterance:

...the gap between what is literally said...and what is conveyed..is so substantial that we cannot expect a semantic theory to provide more than a small part of an account of how we communicate using language. The notion of implicature promises to bridge the gap.

The role of form is considered by Sperber and Wilson (1979:179-80) to be one of provision of linguistic cues:

It seems that there are a number of overt linguistic cues which speakers may use to guide the hearer towards the intended interpretation.

Within their relevance theory definition of context, form could be seen as part of the physical environment. If it is not overridden by some other item of the context, such as encyclopaedic knowledge about the speaker or hearer and their relationship, or encyclopaedic information about the social rules governing the particular interaction, or clues from the immediately preceding interpretive process, then the indicators provided by form will be important factors in the interpretation. In other situations, an unusual or marked form will give rise to a search for underlying implicatures. I discuss the special role of conventional uses and formulas in chapter four. As will be seen in chapters four and five, linguistic form is crucial in the interpretive process, since clues from the propositional form of the utterance usually direct the first steps of the interpretation. This follows from the presumption of optimal relevance which governs communication under relevance theory, and which will be explained in chapter four. Briefly, the speaker is required by the theory to choose the most relevant form of utterance possible in the context.

2.1. Claim common ground
(p.108)

Strategy 2: Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with H)
(p.109)

On the face of it, this strategy looks quite straightforward. Certainly, it must often be used with face saving or friendly motives. However, if it is used in an ironic way, either mimicking something H might have said, or drawing attention to the person/thing commented on in order to make fun of it, it can be embarrassing. If it draws attention to something H would sooner not have pointed out, it is potentially humiliating.
Strategy 3: Intensify interest to H
(p.111)
In connection with this strategy, Brown and Levinson note that the vivid present tense, which is an output, is stereotypically associated with lower class females. I would suggest adding males from the same class, and point out that any stylistic feature which is associated with one social group in this way is consequently easily exploited for face attack purposes.

(2) And I says to him I says 'I'm not that kinda person'.
Where S does not habitually speak that way, and the subject is known to speak that way, and the subject is a member of H's group.

Strategy 4: Use in-group identity markers
(p.112)
(a) Address form: Brown and Levinson’s examples of intimate address terms, which they see as a softening device, can be equally validly seen as realisations of face attack. Such terms as mate, buddy, honey, dear, love, babe, cutie, sweetheart, etc. can be perceived as demeaning, offensively familiar, patronising, and even threatening.3

(3) Listen mate, you are in my parking space.
(4) C'mon cutie, sit over here.
(5) Are you the new supervisor, dear?
All of these examples can be seen as both politeness and face attack strategies.

Example (3) can be interpreted in at least two ways:

(3) a. S is calling me mate.
   b. This is an expression of friendship.
   c. S is not really annoyed about my parking here.

or

(3') a. S is calling me mate.
   b. This is an expression of friendship.
   c. However, S has a reputation for hitting people who park in his place.
   d. Therefore S is unlikely to be expressing
c. friendship towards me.
   e. Perhaps S is threatening me.

Example (5) is also at least two ways ambiguous:

(5) a. S is asking me if I am the new supervisor.
   b. S is one of the people under my authority.
c. S is being friendly.
d. S is trying to make me feel welcome.

or

(5')
a. S is asking me if I am the new supervisor.
b. S is one of the people under my authority.
c. It is not common for employees to call their supervisor 'dear'.
d. S is trying to undermine my authority.

Some interpretations may go further:

(5')
e. S would not say 'dear' to a man.
f. S is undermining my authority because I am a woman.

(b) Use of in-group language or dialect:

If this strategy is adopted in the presence of an out-group H, it can serve to reinforce H's outgroup status, and more immediately, prevent H from joining in the conversation. Another way to use this strategy for face attack is to switch to a pseudo-stereotype parody of H's language - i.e. women's language or Maori language. This can be highly offensive, and insulting to H or H's group.

(6) Oh, look at that gorgeous wee car Susie's got.

Contrasting in-group ellipsis and contraction with a more elaborate style is another distancing device. Brown and Levinson say, in referring to contraction, 'It seems that to contract is to endear, perhaps because of the association with smallness, perhaps partly because of the contrast with negative politeness where one tries to increase the metaphorical size of H.' (Brown and Levinson 1978:117) This is only one use of contraction, because the association with smallness is also used to diminish H's importance, or the importance of some belonging/task of H.

(7) How are you getting on with that little project of yours?

The interpretation of (7), instead of classifying the epithet 'little' as engendering closeness between S and H, could go as follows:

(7)
a. S is asking about my project.
b. My project involves researching the number of children in the city who have not been immunised.
c. This could hardly be seen as a little project.
d. S is belittling my project.
e. S disapproves of/is jealous of my project.
Strategy 5: Seek agreement
(p.116)

Repetition.

This can be an ironic strategy, and attack H’s positive face, by indicating S’s low opinion of what has been said. If H has made a mistake in the previous utterance, there is great scope for using repetition to highlight the error and express disdain.

(8)  
A: I’m just not orientated to city life.
B: Oh you’ll become orientated in no time.

In (8), the repetition, often with exaggerated stress, but sometimes just with gentle irony, points to a mistake made by A, of which A was presumably unaware before. This makes A feel ignorant, and nervous about further attempts at conversation with B. The use of stress is a pointer offered by S to aid H in picking up the irony. If H is unaware of the error, this strategy will cause some confusion, because H will know that something is being parodied, but not how to remedy the error.

Strategy 6: Avoid disagreement
(p.118)

(a) Displace agreement

There is a reverse counterpart to Sacks’ (1973) ‘Rule of Contiguity’ in face attack theory. Instead of disagreement-answers following questions but displaced to soften the disagreement, this model would have agreement-answers following questions but displaced to detract from agreement.

(9)  
A: Would you please check this for me?
B: I’m very busy. I’ve got a tight schedule. Alright, I’ll do it.

This is a type of unwilling avoidance of disagreement, where the unwillingness is stressed to maximise H’s obligation.

(b) Pseudo-agreement

This strategy, ostensibly oriented to positive face, has a coercive effect if, in referring to a ‘fake prior agreement’ (Brown and Levinson 1978:120), it causes H to feel an obligation to concur, or appear to deny the past agreement, or deny it overtly.

(10)  
So, when are you coming round to go over your essay?

Strategy 7: Presuppose/raise/assert common ground
(p.122)

(a) Draw attention to H’s lack of common ground with S

For the purposes of face attack, this strategy can be used where no common ground exists in fact. S then has the opportunity to draw attention to the fact that H does not know, and
apologise falsely. H's lack of in-group status is therefore highlighted.

(11) A: But we decided that at our lunch meeting at the club.
    B: I wasn't there.
    A: Oh sorry, that's right. You can't go there, can you.

(b) Point of view operations

The operation which Brown and Levinson call 'personal centre switch' (Brown and Levinson 1978:124) is the one where S speaks in such a way as to identify H with S, or to switch point of
view with H. There are two versions of this operation identifiable as face attack strategies:

(1) Tag questions with falling intonation.

(12) I've got your cooperation on this one, 'haven't I.

This can be a coercive device, where S is not sure of H's cooperation, but knows that when
challenged, H will feel constrained to agree.

(2) Inclusive 'we'

(13) We've got a little problem coping with this, 'haven't we?

Such an utterance will be both patronising and coercive, the latter in that it constrains H to
change the behaviour commented upon, and patronising in the association of that inclusive 'we'
device with adult/child interaction. The interpretation of this can be expected to follow the
pattern:

(13) a. We haven't got a problem; I have.
    b. S is using the we in the way one would to a child.
    c. I am not a child.
    d. S is being patronising.

Strategy 8: Joke

(p.129)

Brown and Levinson consider jokes to be based on mutual knowledge/values/history, and as
such to be strategies for reinforcing that shared environment. In fact the effect of jokes must
depend on the amount of affective and cognitive environment shared by S and H. The nature of
most jokes, that they require laughter at the expense of some person, institution, values or object,
means that they are potentially dangerous and highly exploitable for face attack purposes. Two
major types of exploitation are possible:

a) The joke refers to knowledge/values shared by some but not all H, so that one or more H
will be mystified/offended and therefore humiliated, distanced or embarrassed.

b) The joke may be against the values/group etc. that H represents, or has loyalty to, and can
therefore be a direct or indirect attack.

The attractive thing about jokes for face attack is that they are able to be defended with the
assertion that they were meant to be friendly, and they carry the potential for the secondary attack of accusing H of not being able to 'take a joke'. Because jokes are supposed to be matey, non-acceptance of them can be seen to be rejection of mateship at one level. In this case mateship is offered at a price, and the offer is therefore coercive and potentially humiliating.

Strategy 12: Include both S and H in the activity
(p.132)

Using an inclusive we or let's form can be coercive in the cases where H does not have sufficient power to opt out of the activity or opinion being suggested.

(14) We're all ready to jump out of the plane, aren't we?

Such a statement assumes absolute cooperation and group unity. For H to deny the proposition expressed in any circumstances would be to opt out of the solidary group in some way, but if S was superior in P (e.g. an airforce commander), H would be even more unwilling to deny it. The strategy can also be patronising, in the association of the inclusive form with the language used to children or infirm people.

(15) We'll just have a little talk about these mistakes, shall we?

In a situation where the working relationship between S and H would usually demand a more brisk and egalitarian style, such an utterance would stand out as condescending.

The implication of this strategy that S has the mutual benefit of S and H in mind can extended to include the assumptions 'Nobody else can be trusted to have the common good at heart' or 'I know what's good for you, even if you don't'.

2.2. Don't presume/assume
(p.149)

Brown and Levinson define this strategy as 'keeping ritual distance from H' (Brown and Levinson 1978:149). This is an obvious face attack strategy, when it involves a distancing process which is at odds with H's estimation of the D-level, or completely consistent with H's pessimistic estimation of D, so reinforcing H's inability to assume any intimacy within the relationship.

Strategy 2: Question/hedge
(p.150)

This strategy is an output of the derivative want 'Don't coerce H' in Brown and Levinson's terms. In a model of face attack, such a strategy can be seen as exactly, the opposite, when the coercive results of distancing H are examined. H may feel rebuked for an over-optimistic
assessment of D, or may be further convinced of the impenetrability of S’s defences, and will in either case be constrained to accept S’s definition of D.

Brown and Levinson mention several types of hedge in this context. The first is the hedge on illocutionary force, or the performative hedge. One realisation of this strategy is the tag question. In face attack, tag questions can be used ironically, with intonational assistance.

(16) You'll 'try to do it, 'won't you. (falling tone).

Words, particles and formulae which encode performative hedges can also be used in face attack. Really, surely, sincerely, only, can be used in the same way.

(a) Adverbial clause hedges: Quite frankly is a formula which frequently signals a forthcoming ‘unpleasant truth’ or uncooperative statement.

(17) Quite frankly, I don’t think you’ll ever make it.

(18) Quite frankly I don’t care what you think.

(b) ‘If’ clauses - If you like, if you want - are used particularly in suggesting S’s lack of willingness to cooperate. If you don’t mind, if you’ll allow me, if we’re all ready can be very threatening. Consider

(19) If you don’t mind, I’d like to get some work done.

You’re interrupting me - go away, whether you want to or not.

(20) If you’ll forgive my asking, how do you manage to make so many mistakes?

I’m asking anyway, and I don’t really care about your feelings.

(21) If you’ll allow me, I’ll just return to the business in hand.

You aren’t in a position to allow or not, so I’m drawing attention to the fact that you’re overstepping the mark.

(22) If we’re all ready (meaningfully directed glance).

You’re not ready, and I’m drawing attention to the fact.

(c) Hedges addressed to Grice’s maxims:

These are hedges which either reinforce notions of cooperativeness, following Grice (1975), or call these notions into question in some way. In calling into question such maxims as quality, quantity, relevance etc., S may well distance her/himself from H, who may have already assessed the interactional relationship as one in which no question should arise on these matters.
Many formulaic hedges are used in the realisation of this strategy, and often these are clearly recognisable as having non-cooperative motivations. The political preamble in the following example is common in prefacing political obfuscation.

(23) I think I can say with complete honesty
For many H, this is an indicator of S's intention to say what is politically expedient, leaving the 'out' of the hedge 'I think ' to forestall later criticism.

Examples (24) - (26) often preface a disagreeable truth about something/someone, or can be used to assert a mutual knowledge which S knows does not exist, and therefore it identifies H as outgroup.

(24) As you know...
(25) As is well known...
(26) As you and I both know...

There are various ways in which 'quantity hedges' can be used in face attack, and in most cases their main function is not as a hedge on quantity, as defined by Brown and Levinson, but generally has the function of being a contextual indicator, which points to some off record affective message,

(27) In short, you are not suitable.
   a. To sum up (Quantity).
   b. The judge's decision is final - no more argument.

(28) You're basically a very nice person.
   a. Niceness is your basic quality (Quantity).
   b. There is a basic niceness, but....

(29) You're taking the broad view, so to speak.
   a. The broad view is more or less what you're taking (Quantity).
   b. So to speak ' is a pun indicator.

(30) I can't tell you any more than that it's a great breakthrough.
   a. I am unable to tell you more......(Quantity).
   b. I possess information you don't possess - I am part of the in-group.

In the examples above, once again the readings given are chosen from among a range of
possible interpretations which are dependent on the immediate context for their validity. A full description of possible interpretations would involve recourse to lengthy descriptions of context, which would still be limited by the fact that they belong to the cognitive environment of one individual. How do we account for such variation in a principled way?

The Brown and Levinson account devotes some attention to the sort of hedges which 'function directly as notices of violations of face wants' (Brown and Levinson 1978:176). These include the following examples:

(31) Frankly....
(32) To be honest....
(33) I hate to have to say this, but....
(34) I must say....

Brown and Levinson concede that they are indicators that what is about to be said violates the rules for mitigation of face threat, but they do not explain why they are said, when equally efficient ways exist within much less threatening strategies to say the same thing. These hedges actually perform the opposite function to the one they ostensibly perform, i.e. they draw attention to the face threat, and thereby heighten it, rather than mitigating its effect. Therefore they communicate three separate face attacks:

a) There is an unpleasant fact to be communicated.

b) S knows it is face-threatening to H.

c) S is going to say it anyway.

2.3. Don't Coerce H

(p.177)

Strategy 3: Be pessimistic

(p. 178)

Where S is pessimistic about H's willingness or ability to perform an action, in a situation where H's willingness or ability should be taken as read, this is coercive. The effect is to make H feel an obligation to prove that the pessimism was unfounded.

Strategy 4: Minimize the imposition $R_x$ (p.181)

Brown and Levinson see this strategy as one of deference.

One way of defusing the FTA is to indicate that $R_x$, the intrinsic seriousness of the imposition, is not in itself great, leaving only D and P as possible weighty factors. So indirectly this may pay H
deference.


Their examples, quoted below, show that, although their interpretation is valid, there is an equally plausible reading which exemplifies face attack.

(35) I just want to ask you if you could lend me a tiny bit of paper.

(36) I just dropped by for a minute to ask if you…. (Brown and Levinson 1978:182, e.g., s 253,254)

By lessening the weight of the imposition $R_X$ when it may in fact be considerable, S does not always pay H deference. The strategy may convey various messages about the relation between S and H.

a) H's possible indignation does not worry S.
b) H's power is relatively low, therefore most impositions would be small.
c) S is mimicking H's manner of speech.
d) S is challenging H on the D axis (i.e. 'if you want to be my friend, you will do this for me').

Note that c) above is an attack on positive rather than negative face, the drawing of an absolute line between the two being very difficult.

3. Multi-layered strategies - a matter of interpretation

Thomas (1985b.) discusses those utterances which convey an insult at one level and a compliment at another. These are known as backhanded compliments. Here, two illocutionary forces can be present at the same time. Thomas recognises the off-record element of such utterances:

For the backhanded compliment to succeed, it is necessary for the hearer to respond to (or at least to register) both forces, though once again, as in the case of the ambivalent utterance, the speaker leaves him/herself the possibility of disclaiming any offensive intention.

Thomas (1985b:13)

The strategies which follow are of this type. They encode one kind of speaker intention at one level, but have a readily accessible layer of meaning for which the hearer must take some
responsibility in assigning intentions to the speaker, so that the face attack communicated is low risk for the speaker.

3.1. Convey that S and H are cooperators  
(p.130)

Strategy 10: Offer/promise  
(p.130)

Brown and Levinson (1978:130) say, of offers/promises, 'even if they are false ("I'll drop by sometime next week") they demonstrate S's good intentions in satisfying H's positive face wants'. In fact, there are other motivations for making false offers/promises, not the least of which being convenience or face saving to S. They do not always demonstrate good intentions. Even the type of promise which is offered in good faith will only meet the politeness criteria if its performance is typically followed by fulfilment. If S establishes a pattern of promise/fail to deliver, this can become an off-record insult (i.e. S does not consider H's good opinion as sufficiently important to warrant the effort of living up to H's expectations).

Sometimes the good intentions are communicated overtly, while implicatures are invited, suggesting intentions are far from good. Implicatures may be triggered by wording (what is said) or by omission (what is not said) or by accompanying kinesis or intonation.

(37) I'll make sure you get overtime (leering employer to female clerk).

(38) I'll make sure you get plenty of evening overtime  
(where relevance establishes that the promise should not be and is not expected by that employee).

(39) I'll make you a nice fashionable jumper if you like.

False promises and offers are also typically an attempt to mislead.

(40) I'll be home by midnight (S means 'by midnight in three weeks' time').

Strategy 11: Be optimistic  
(p.131)

This strategy relies on the assumption of mutuality of wants between S and H. It is coercive in that it sets up a degree of cooperation to which H may not want to conform but may feel constrained, because of relative P and D, to maintain. The humiliative aspect of such a strategy would become apparent in a situation where the non-compatibility of S's and H's wants is known to these and other participants in the situation.

(41) 'You'll make the tea, won't you? (to female
colleague).

Stress assignment and intonation will be important in this strategy in putting the underlying face attack on record.

(42) Look, I'm sure you won't mind if I tell you you've got soup on your tie.

This statement can lose a lot of its cooperative import when stress is placed on you for someone known to be offended by such remarks, or with confidential tone which suggests the possible embarrassment of H, which might otherwise not have been an issue. The strategy minimises the size of \( W_X \) and this can be a positive means of denoting intimacy, by intimating that \( P, D \) are of sufficient smallness that there is little risk between the participants. However, where at least one of the participants is aware that \( W_X \) is large, and that \( D \) is not a valid factor influencing S's weighting of \( W_X \), the variable which is being brought into play is \( P \), and the asymmetry is reinforced.

3.2. Fulfil H's want for some X

(p.134)

Such a strategy can be used to set up future indebtedness in H, in order to constrain H to some future course of action. It can also humiliate by implying H's need of goods as charity or advance payment, which H feels is unjustified.

Strategy 15: Give gifts to H (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation)

(p.134)

Where praise (in the wider interpretation of 'goods') is given to H, S may constrain H to future similar behaviour, as when a parent says to a child

(43) I do love taking you to the movies when you're so well behaved.

Praise can also be humiliating when it is given to H for achievements which are patently inferior in quality to those for which S is admired.

Sympathy can be face threatening when it draws attention to a problem which H does not want publicised, or when the context supplies the information that S is not sincere. Likewise, understanding can be used in a patronising and coercive way, where it points to some inadequacy of H, and thereby constrains H to prove greater ability in this area.

(44) I know you're afraid of machines, so I'll drill the hole for you.
4. Overtness - on record or off record?

4.1. Be direct
(p.135)

In general, the negatively polite face threat is not issued directly, but in situations where relative power sufficiently favours S, a direct face attack will be low risk enough to be a valid option. H will need to accept the face attack by virtue either of an acceptance of the low status implicitly assigned to her by the strategy, or of the lack of retributive power which she has. S will therefore feel quite confident in issuing the negative face attack directly, and any departure from doing so will either be from a desire to be 'polite' in the general social sense, or from other motives which may be less honourable.

Strategy 1: Be conventionally indirect
(p. 137)

In describing this strategy, Brown and Levinson speak about the 'opposing tensions: the desire to give H an 'out' by being indirect, and the desire to go on record' (p.137). In their model, conventional indirectness is a negative politeness strategy. Conventional indirectness for them involves the use of words and phrases which have 'contextually unambiguous meanings' (p.137), such meanings having been acquired by a process of conventionalisation, and having become different from their literal meanings. This definition in fact places conventionally indirect utterances into the category of formulaic language, specifically, idiomatic language.

I extend their definition to include all formulaic language, so that conventional indirectness can include those words and phrases whose literal meanings are still recoverable, but which are lexicalised as having a specific, different meaning in different situations. In a model of face attack, we expect S to use formulas for going on record, plus saving face, but in this case it is S's own face which is of paramount importance. The use of formulas offers S strong protection from retribution, while at the same time guaranteeing that H, who shares the same context, or at least a context sufficiently like S's to guarantee relevance, will not mistake the meaning. As with off-record devices, and those which are potentially ambiguous between face attack and face saving readings, S can stave off retributive attacks with a claim for the non-formulaic and therefore non-threatening meaning. Idiomatic language, however, will not offer S the same freedom from challenge. There is no ambiguity between literal and non-literal readings with idioms, so their use will put the speaker's communicative intention more on record than off. Conventional indirectness must also be seen as an attack on positive face in this model, as there
are formulas which have the function of attacking self esteem as well as asserting S-superiority.

It is not surprising that Brown and Levinson's treatment of this strategy involves extensive recourse to Speech Act theory, and that heavy emphasis is placed on the structure within which S works in employing the strategies. The implication is that the speaker and hearer must make some classification of intent, before the strategies which will meet the ends required are chosen or interpreted. Relevance theory renders such classificatory mechanisms unnecessary; they are in fact not part of the production or interpretation of utterances. The examples Brown and Levinson cite of indirect speech acts are open to the same kind of analysis as that which Sperber and Wilson (1986) apply to Speech Act theory in showing how classification of speech acts is at best arbitrary.

Brown and Levinson state that 'please' makes a question unambiguously a request.

\[(45) \quad \text{Can you please pass the salt}\]

Brown and Levinson (1978:138,e.g,1)

The interpretation of such utterances always involves recourse to the description of context. The above example is readily interpretable as an order with an implied threat, if the speaker is a person in authority, the utterance has been repeated several times with increasingly angry intonation clues, and if there is relevant context that punishment always follows failure to obey this speaker. In fact, there is no need for that primary classification, because in context the maximally relevant interpretation will be given to what is said, even if the interpretation involves accessing further contextual clues.

As I have stated, formulas used in the conventionalised indirectness strategy will be of two kinds. The subset of formulas, known as idioms, which have no possible literal meaning (i.e. no ambiguity between literal and non-literal meaning) will be more on-record than the class of formulas which are ambiguous between two readings. In the latter case, the context will need to be examined for disambiguation purposes. Brown and Levinson (1978:139) note the distinction when they remark that 'the point here is that 'on record' and 'off record' are categories that do not precisely coincide with categories of linguistic forms, but only with linguistic forms in context.' The logical extension of this argument is that there is no principled way to assign forms to the categories, and that the reliance on context suggests, for these and other categories, that there is merit in approaching the whole process from the other direction. It is this fact which suggests the necessity to reject the Brown and Levinson theory, and to substitute a theory of the context-dependence of face-attention. This argument is crucial to the theory of interpretation of face attack which will be developed in the next chapter.

A further interesting theoretical point is raised by Brown and Levinson's statement that 'the
major motivation for being indirect at all is politeness' (Brown and Levinson 1978:144). It is not at all clear to me that this is the case. The use of indirect forms, which rely heavily on a correct assessment of the hearer's most accessible contexts, is motivated by many factors, among them the desire to beironical/satirical, the desire to provide an 'out' for S in the event of a challenge, and the desire to make H appear unable to cope with direct statements. In the following examples, the variation in effect of indirect utterances can be seen.

(46) Please feel free to ignore what I'm saying.
   a. S is telling me to ignore him.
   b. S would not be talking if he did not want me to listen.
   c. It is my employer who is speaking.
   d. S has noticed that I'm not listening.
   e. S hates to be ignored.
   f. S really means that I shouldn't ignore him.
   g. Why did S put it in that ironical manner?
   h. S is implying that I don't know my place. This is embarrassing for me.

(47) Are you by any chance able to post this letter for me?
   a. S is asking if I can post the letter.
   b. S knows I am going to the post now.
   c. S knows I get annoyed because he doesn't take his turn at going to the post.
   d. S is drawing attention to my reluctance.

(48) I wonder if it's possible to get this typing finished this week?
   a. S knows that there is only a small amount of typing to be done.
   b. S often makes references to the fact that I am a slow typist.
   c. S is being sarcastic.

In (46), there is a reading which indicates a desire on the part of S to tie the benefits accruing from the action to H, as a function of the formula 'feel free'. However, this formula has another reading which approximates to 'don't mind me' or 'just go ahead, don't care about me', which indicates that the ignoring of S will be offensive. On this reading, an ironic one in the echoic sense of Sperber and Wilson (1986)^5, S is clearly challenging H, and if S's power is sufficient, S may even be threatening H. The crucial part played by context here can be illustrated by looking at an interpretation of the same utterance in a different context, one where S is either not in power, or is
powerful but is aware that some of the audience is uninterested in the topic of the discourse, and
invites them to ignore what is being said, in a perfectly genuine way. The important factor in
determining the import of the utterance is H's knowledge of such factors as S's status relative to H,
S's attitude to the audience, particularly H, and S's need to be attended to.

In examples (47) and (48), similar ambiguity between polite and non-polite readings is possible.
In (47) the elaborate consultation of H's abilities and/or desires may be just the sort of process
described by Brown and Levinson, where S desires to leave H room to refuse the request without
giving offence. On the other hand it may be a sarcasm resulting from the fact that it is known that
H is unwilling to perform this task. If a challenge were possible in relative status terms, S could
counter that it was a genuine desire not to impose which had motivated the request.

A similar motive could underlie the seemingly innocuous example (48), where the relative
status between S and H dictates that the typing must be done, and that S does not need to use such
politeness strategies - indeed S usually does not use them. The exaggerated use of forms associated
with politeness will therefore have quite the opposite effect.

4.2. Redress other wants of H's
(p.214)

Included in the strategies for satisfying this derivative want are two strategies, giving
defereance, and strategy 10 below.

Strategy 10: Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H
(p.215)

The markers of this strategy can be used ironically to suggest that it takes a great deal of
persuasion to get H to cooperate, or to downplay S's cooperation.

(49) I'd be eternally grateful if you would ...
(50) I'll never be able to repay you if you ...
(51) I could easily do it for you.
(52) It wouldn't be any trouble; I have to go
right by there anyway.

Brown and Levinson (1978:215, e.g.s 425-428)

Examples (51) and (52) are particularly open to use as face attack strategies, firstly when
agreeing to do something which is patentlly troublesome to S, and secondly when urging a 'favour'
on someone who will be made uncomfortable by becoming indebted to S, as in example (53).

(53) I can easily pop into your place to drop it off
tonight. It’s not much out of my way.

An ostensibly polite utterance like the above can be immensely threatening if S is an intrusive male who has been making unwelcome advances to H. In this strategy, the desirability of the action is being attributed to H’s perception, when in fact it is S who wants to perform the favour. This allocation of desirability explains a common perception that persistent sexual harassment involves implied belief in the ready acquiescence of the victim.

The problem with the Brown and Levinson analysis throughout is the assumption that context within the model has cooperation as its most consistent feature. If it were seen in the homogeneous context of politeness they are working in, this would be a valid assumption. However, there is no homogeneous context, and the variation which can be expected is proportionate to the number of individuals who interact. Contextual features are rarely completely constant, and the complexity of the sort of social relations which form the basis of any analysis of face-work must be accounted for. This being the case, it is necessary to look for an explanation of the way in which contexts are accessed and used in utterance interpretation, and the way in which the concept of face is integrated into that process.

5. Positive or negative face - which is hurting?

5.1. Give deference

(p.183)

The manipulation of the various realisations of deference can be very useful in face attack. Mock deference can be used to attack positive face, in that it can draw attention to H’s lack of status, rather than the opposite. In terms of attacks on negative face, differential honorifics can be used to establish inequalities of group membership. Following Fillmore’s (1975) suggestion that honorifics are delictic in that they refer to the social standing of participants in an interaction, the following examples show the status-differential marking properties of a simple switch in honorifics.

(54) I have Dr. X’s agreement, and that of Drs. Y, Z and A. Where do you stand on this issue, Sue? (Where Sue holds a PhD).

(55) What will you have, Jim, Bruce, Mrs Smith?

Such honorific manipulation can be seen as a marker of intimacy between S and H as opposed to the other interactants, but also, where H is a newcomer, or of less P, differentiation can place H securely in an out-group position.
Similarly, the contrasting use of formal and informal terminology or vocabulary can be seen as a method of downgrading one person/piece of work relative to another. Where the person/work referred to is intimately connected with H, this can be both insulting (anti-positive face), but also coercive (placing H in an out-group position).

A severe rebuke can be issued to H, whose assumption of intimacy is seen by S as presumptuous. Where H has used an intimacy marker such as given name or nickname, S can reply with a much more formal address, thus implying the reassessment of D. Here the constraint placed on H to alter further interactional behaviour towards S also carries a humiliating element - the indication that H is much less part of the group than s/he previously thought.

5.2. Communicate S’s want not to impinge on H
(p.192)

If S communicates a desire not to impinge where this is inappropriate, the implication is that S estimates H’s intention to cooperate as less than the situation warrants. Not only is H constrained to insist on doing whatever S is showing reluctance about, but H is humiliated by the knowledge that S thinks her/him so reluctant.

Strategy 6: Apologize
(p.192)

Admitting impingement, indicating reluctance to impinge, giving overwhelming reasons and begging forgiveness can all be coercive, in that they require H to expend some effort in compensating, and asserting willingness to cooperate. At the same time they are insulting, in that they cast doubt on a cooperative element in the interaction which H previously assumed to be understood.

Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H
(p.195)

There are various impersonalisation devices as outlined in Brown and Levinson (1978). Most of these, having a formalising effect, are distancing, and where they redefine D, they can be both insulting and coercive, in the ways discussed in Strategy 6 above.

The pluralisation of the first person pronoun is an interesting example of the process. There are two kinds of ‘we’ identifiable here. The first is the business ‘we’, which indicates that S has an authoritative backing for the ensuing utterance.

(56) We require payment of this account within seven days.
The effect is to depersonalise S, and place her within a more formidable coercive framework than she would appear as an individual.

The second is the in-group 'we' which includes S and excludes H.

(57) We don't really do that sort of thing here.

The use of reference terms as avoidance of the personal pronoun also has a distancing effect. Where Brown and Levinson see this as a device for dissociating S from the threat, in this model it would be seen as an alignment of S with an office in order to maximise the coercion.

(58) The doctor can't see you just now.

In a situation where there was some friendship between H and the doctor, and H had been presuming somewhat on this fact, (56) must be seen as more intimidating than

(58') Jim can't see you just now.

H would be humiliated by the public perception of her/him as presuming on the relationship with the doctor.

Point-of-view distancing is a device for distancing S from H. This can involve the manipulation of tense. Compare the following pair:

(59) Might you consider this option?
(59') Will you consider this option?

Consider the use of distal demonstratives to indicate social distance, anger or avoidance:

(60) That PR woman - we might use her. (distance)
(60') The PR woman - we might use her.
(61) Get that secretary in here. (anger)
(61') Get the secretary in here.
(62) It's an invitation to lunch with that rep. (avoidance).
(62') It's an invitation to lunch with the rep.

The first utterance in each pair is more insulting than the second, as well as being less friendly.

Strategy 8: State the FTA as a general rule
(p.211)

This strategy is not always aimed at defusing the FTA. It can be used often to emphasise H's out-group status by pointing out H's lack of knowledge of group rules.

(63) Smoking is not permitted in these rooms.

H is dealt the double face attack of embarrassment at not knowing the rule and having to be told; and the coercion implicit in the rule itself. Brown and Levinson's example below has more than one interpretation.
(64) We don't sit on tables, we sit on chairs, Johnny

Brown and Levinson (1978:212: e.g. 414)

The application of this strategy by adults in dealing with children makes it a potent face attack strategy, when used to intensify a P asymmetry. The form of the utterance is both distancing and belittling, and therefore constitutes an attack on both positive and negative face.

Strategy 9: Nominalize

(p 212)

Brown and Levinson (1978:212) express the intuition that an increase in what they call 'Nouniness' corresponds with an increase in negative politeness, by removing S further from the action. This accords with notions of style, where nominalisation is seen as a marker of formality. In face attack, nominalisation will work as a distancing device in two ways:

a) by its association with notions of formality.

b) by emphasising some intellectual or academic in-group/out-group distinction.

Nominalisations are intuitively more academic as well as more formal. Both aspects can contribute to a loss in self-esteem for H, so are also humiliating.

6. Speaker intention versus hearer perception

Off record strategies are of great importance in face attack, as they offer the maximum of protection to S in terms of challenge or retribution. We expect that individuals who have face wants may want to challenge a speaker who fails to take those wants into account, or who inadvertently fails to fulfil the speaker's needs. Further, a speaker who ignores face wants can expect retribution from the hearer. There are, however, cases when this will not happen. A hearer who has less power than the speaker, or who is not the member of an ingroup to which the speaker belongs, will be less able to satisfy her/his face requirements.6

However, where the possibility of challenge or retribution exists, off-record strategies always have the potential to allow S to disclaim responsibility for the FA, while increasing the FA by charging H with misinterpretation. Where the subject is sensitive, like sexual harassment or over-intimate behaviour, any charge of misinterpretation can cause embarrassment to H and prevent her/him from further challenging S at that time or any other.

The problem with fitting off-record strategies into the Brown and Levinson model, or more particularly into the face attack model, is that there does not seem to be a clear division between on-record and off-record strategies. As can be seen in 4 above, many on-record strategies which are polite at that level, have an off-record 'layer' at the level of implicature which performs the face attack. This is a situation of incomplete interpretation at the level of what is said, which
leads H into the implicatural process in order to recover the full import of the utterance. It is necessary to explain how this works, which Brown and Levinson do not do. An explanation of the process, and its implications for the theory of face attack, will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The strategies below are safe for the speaker, in that they demand a large degree of responsibility on the part of the hearer for the interpretation which is made. That is, the utterance will be phrased in such a way that the hearer cannot say for sure whether it is a polite utterance or not. The hearer will pick up clues to the effect that it is an attacking strategy, but these will be off-record enough that the hearer will have to be very sure of her ground if she intends to challenge the remark.

There is also the situation where, because of some assumptions which H already holds, a non-cooperative interpretation will be the most accessible. In this case, the speaker may or may not share those assumptions. If not, the hearer will access information about her relative status to the speaker, and about the speaker's intentions, which may not be accurate. The effect on the hearer will be the same however, either humiliating or coercive, and the real intentions of the speaker may not be recovered, because the hearer's perception of her powerlessness may cause her to suffer the imaginary attack in silence.

6.1. Invite conversational implicatures
(p.218)

When face attacking strategies are used, H may feel the need to ask 'why did S say that in that way?'. This may involve accessing more than one context, or may be very clear in the context of the P/D values operating. The significant factor is that the Gricean Maxims may not be violated in any significant way, but that implicatures will still be sought because of contextual clues that the simple recovery of the logical proposition is not enough.

Strategy 1: Give hints
(p.218)

Here, Brown and Levinson invoke violation of the Maxim of Relevance. The utterance will seem on the surface to be not quite relevant to the situation, and H will search for connections between the two.

(65) It's cold in here.
(66) This soup's a bit bland.

Brown and Levinson (1978:220, e.g.s 1,2)

Note that with any such examples, the context supplied will change the message conveyed by the utterance. Thus, (63) may be a request to (a) shut the window, (b) turn the heater on, (c) get
into bed, (d) snuggle up to S, or (e) discuss major alterations. In fact, either (63) or (64) can be quite relevant in the appropriate context, and we would often expect the interpretive process to stop there. However, both statements can be conveying another level of information, which would be hard to recover in Gricean terms. An explanation of this process will be given in the next chapter.

Indirect criticisms can be conveyed in an oblique but forceful way. Where S wants to criticise, factors from the mutual cognitive environment of S and H can be used in constructing a clue to the intended message.

(67) It is difficult to get good quality bow hair
    at the moment, isn't it.

Suppose with this example that the following contextual factors are given:

(67)  
  a. H has just played a violin piece to S.
  b. H is awaiting a verdict on the performance.
  c. The utterance is not a verdict, but is connected with violin playing in these ways:
  d. The quality of bow hair is crucial to the sound produced.
  e. The quality of H's bow hair is very high.
  f. If S knows the bow hair is of good quality, S is criticising the other variable - the playing.
  g. If S doesn't know anything about H's bow hair, there is still a criticism, but it is either unintentional, or intended, with an ostensible mitigating strategy.

The advantage of this strategy for S is that H cannot with certainty impute a face attack to S. Even if H is certain that S knows about the quality of the bow hair, S can claim that she was trying to avoid overt criticism from kindly motives. If H wants to avoid further unpleasant consequences of the criticism, pursuance of the matter is inadvisable. A masochistic H would, of course, pursue the matter, thus giving S further opportunities for face attack.

Strategy 2: Give association clues

(p.220)

In one sense, this strategy is employed in all utterances, inasmuch as S is obliged, when involved in communication, to do what is necessary to provide triggers to the recovery of the most relevant context in which H can interpret the utterance. In this strategy, however, the trigger is deliberately given to direct H to the context in which the seemingly innocuous statement will be seen as a face attack.
In the stereotyped sexual situation of eager male/reluctant female, the following utterance will be understood readily:

(68) I hope you haven't got a headache tonight.

In a context where both S and H know the joke associated with this type of situation, H will know exactly what S means, and will be coerced into either denying the presence of a headache and implying sexual availability, or claiming, possibly falsely, to have a headache, or putting the interaction on record by denying both the headache and the availability. Note that, once again the hearer is taking responsibility for interpreting that the speaker is not just concerned about her health.

Brown and Levinson put the use of euphemisms in this category, as they provide associational clues with the taboo terminology, and its referent. Euphemisms can also be used in face attack.

(69) The little girls' room.

The use of this term for the lavatory can attack face in at least three ways:

a. Its markedness as the introduction of a euphemism where none is necessary

b. Its use to an H who would resent the implied derogation of women
   (i) women equated with little girls
   (ii) connotations of immature behaviour
       within the room - giggling etc.

c. With exaggerated intonation, drawing attention to the fact that someone is going to the room, with the implication that the person wants to avoid recognition of that fact.

Because euphemisms are so commonly associated with politeness, H will feel unwilling, unless solidarity is strong to demand that S call the room a lavatory. S may have meant it politely, and H may then risk further embarrassment because of others' perception of her as pedantic, or over-sensitive.

Strategy 3: Presuppose

(p.222)

Here, the use of a lexical item or contrastive stress adds a level to what is said, by presupposing certain behaviour from H.

(70) 'I don't go around boasting about `my achievements."

Brown and Levinson (1978:222, e.g. 15)

Another use of this strategy involves presupposing some link between two concepts which has a derogatory effect to H.

(71) Oh God, she's suffering from another bout of
terminal feminism. The implication is that feminism is not an admirable ideology to espouse, but rather an incurable disease which H should get rid of if it were possible. H, being conscious of a lack of sympathy for feminism, may feel obliged to prove she can take this as a joke.

Strategy 4: Understate (p.222) In a model of face attack, understatement can be used with ironical effect to convey insult. S uses shared knowledge between herself and H, by understating (violating the maxim of quantity in Brown and Levinson's terms) and inviting H to supply the ellipsed material from their shared cognitive environment.

(72) Here comes my favourite 80 words per minutesecretary. In the environment described below, the above comment which, on the surface seems complimentary, would be resented by H.

(72) a. A good typist can produce 100 words per minute.
   b. H takes pride in being a good typist.
   c. H knows that S knows both of the above.
   d. S is belittling H's ability.

Once again the insult conveyed to H is twofold: the criticism implied in the utterance itself, and the fact that the phrasing of the utterance was meant to draw attention to the criticism.

Strategy 5: Overstate (p.224) S may use exaggeration in order to ironically parrot H's propensity to do that, hence example (71), which is a common joke.

(73) I've told you a million times not to exaggerate.

Ironical overestimation of H's performance/abilities can also be used in face attack, as in example (72).

(74) That's a wonderful sound.

(74) a. H has just sung a song out of tune.
   b. H is not aware of having done so.
   c. There is another audience which is aware of the bad quality.

Here, the face attack lies in the fact that H has not perceived the insult, but is aware from the reaction of other audience to the interaction that something has been said which is not all it seems on the surface.
The following example of exaggerated 'politeness' signals will be used ironically in the environment described.

(75) Oh no, Mr Smith, we never meant to cause you any trouble. Nothing could have been further from our minds. I can't imagine how you could come to that conclusion. It's out of the question.............

Brown and Levinson (1978:225, e.g. 39)

(75) a. Mr Smith is in some way out-group.
b. Mr Smith is known to be difficult and demanding.
c. S has another audience with whom she is solidary.

Although Brown and Levinson admit the possibility of insult, they are still inclined to call these politeness strategies in that they are intended to mitigate the insult. However, in the above example, it is hard to see how the proliferation of apologies could be more polite than a simple acknowledgement of imposition, with an apology. Sperber and Wilson (1986) make the point that, where the message can be conveyed economically and is not, H must search for reasons within the context which justify the departure from economy. H may well come up with the perception of politeness, but in many situations the opposite will be the case. Nevertheless, the polite form makes a challenge from H potentially churlish, and therefore very risky.

Strategy 6: Use tautologies

(p.225)

As the embodiment of conventional and often stereotyped notions, tautologies can be used to cause H unease. The examples below can be seen as challenges to H, where H is known either to disagree with the sentiments embodied in the tautology, or where the expression of the sentiments will be an attempt to coerce H as a member of the group referred to.

(76) Boys will be boys.
(77) Once a woman always a woman.
(78) You're the woman. 'You make the tea.

H is either insulted by the statement, or coerced into either accepting the sentiments expressed, or challenging them. Levinson (1983) states that tautologies violate the maxim of Quantity. Interestingly, Levinson seems to be aware of the importance of relevance in determining the appropriate implicatures in these cases.

Incidentally, exactly how the appropriate implicatures in these cases are to be predicted remains quite unclear, although the maxim of Relevance would presumably
play a crucial role.


Implicit in Levinson's statements about tautologies is the difficulty in assigning an utterance to either Quantity or Relevance in terms of assessing flout. Being uninformative is failing to make clear the relevance of the utterance; hence the confusion between the two maxims. With relevance theory, no maxim need be flouted, because the search for relevance is standard procedure, whether relevance is inherent in the propositional form of the utterance or contained within the implicatural process.

Strategy 7: Use contradictions (p.226)

In connection with this strategy, Brown and Levinson say 'No one could even learn a language in a society where there was an assumption that no one told the truth' (p.226). There is a claim here for a guarantee of truthfulness, which is valid on one level, but there can certainly be no guarantee that everyone will always tell the truth. What can be expected is a guarantee of relevance (see following chapter). Such a guarantee will take the form below:

The guarantee of relevance

S guarantees that the utterance will be as relevant as possible, consistent with the messages S wants to convey. In some cases, there will be an additional guarantee of factuality, but there will be times when the demands imposed by the need for relevance supersede other demands.

In considering this guarantee, two things must be remembered:

Non-binary guarantees.
There are degrees of factuality, relevance, fidelity etc., rather than a binary opposition.

Context-dependence of guarantees.
H's perception of S's adherence to the guarantee of relevance given may vary widely from S's perception, depending on the context which each brings to the interaction.

Contradictions can be a hedge on praise or criticism, or can be used as ironical devices.

(79) A: Do you like this colourscheme?
B: Well, I do and I don't.

(80) This is more or less correct.

(81) A: Has X fitted in well to the staff?
B: You might say that. (impl. then again you might not).

Strategy 8: Be ironic
(p.226)
Brown and Levinson define irony as saying the opposite to what is meant. I prefer the argument of Sperber and Wilson (1986) for the notion of irony as echoic. It can be seen in many of the off-record examples above that irony is used in a variety of ways, cross-cutting many of the categories already discussed.

Strategy 9: Use metaphor
(p.227)
This is often an on-record strategy, particularly if the cognitive environment is mutual enough for the meaning to be readily accessible to H. Where it is off-record in a model of face attack, it may be an in-group metaphor which an out-group H does not have access to, thus reinforcing H’s out-group status through lack of comprehension of S’s utterances.

Strategy 10: Use rhetorical questions
(p.228)
Brown and Levinson’s example
(82) How was I to know?

Brown and Levinson (1978:228,e.g, 64) shows how this strategy can be used to convey non-cooperation, defensiveness, or even lack of respect for H. In a model of face attack, many of these rhetorical questions are actually more on-record, because of their often unambiguously formulaic nature.

(83) What do I care?
I don’t care at all.

(84) What does she know?
She doesn’t know anything.

(85) Why should I do X?
I have no intention of doing X.

There are interpolations which can push these even further on record, such as just, even, ever.

6.2. Be vague or ambiguous: Violate Manner Maxim
(p.230)

In the Sperber and Wilson framework, when S is vague or ambiguous, s/he is not providing the requisite number of contextual clues to facilitate H’s interpretation of the utterance. Therefore, H
will continue to access contexts in which the utterance can achieve relevance. The context may be indicated by some kinesic or prosodic clue, or it may involve H accessing more encyclopaedic information about S in order to find likely motivation for failing on the relevance guarantee.

Strategy 11: Be ambiguous
(p.230)

There are obvious advantages in using ambiguity in face attack. Some of these have been mentioned above in the discussions of conventional indirectness and other marginal cases of off-recordness. Another is exemplified below.

(86) I value your cooperation. I would be even happier if you would cooperate more.

(86) a. S is male employer with hire/fire power over H.
    b. S is known in the office as being sexually suggestive to employees.
    c. H has cooperated to the fullest in job-related matters.

H will interpret S's utterance as introducing a sexual element into their relationship.

In another situation, that element may have already been introduced previously, and the sexual context will be immediately accessible to H, therefore the utterance will be maximally relevant, i.e. the context which allows for its interpretation will be the first one accessed.

H must assume S to have the same assessment of the context, and will extend the interpretation to evaluating S's weighting of variables such as P,D, and particularly S's assessment of the risk to himself. In the first context, the utterance is more off record, because more risky to S, since in the second context, S will have seen that retribution has not been necessary or possible for H in approaches made to date.

A further use of ambiguity is seen in the situation where there is an in-group knowledge which an out-group person does not share, so the interpretation accessed by one H is different from that of others. This is the classic dramatic irony situation.

(87) We consider your assets to be most desirable.

(87) a. S is a man and H is a woman.
    b. Other H in the interaction are men.
    c. H is physically very attractive.

In a context where there are no other clues, H will interpret this utterance straightforwardly as referring to her management skills/professional abilities. However, where the physical context includes some kinesic clues (leers, knowing looks etc.), H will know that this interpretation is in
includes some kinesic clues (leers, knowing looks etc.), H will know that this interpretation is in fact not the relevant one, but will be unable to challenge S because he can either deny it, or further humiliate her by claiming that she is more concerned with the physical attraction element than he is.

We can see that ambiguity underlies all off-record strategies, in that there is an ambiguity between the propositional and implicatural readings. There is in fact an element of situational ambiguity which comes into play in many face attack strategies. The safety which this affords to S, in precluding easy challenge makes it an attractive element in such strategies.

_Ambiguity of off-record strategies._

All off-record strategies are ambiguous between propositional and implicatural readings.

_Strategy 12: Be vague_  

(p.231)

Being vague inappropriately can be a barrier to effective communication. It also pays lip service to H’s face needs where this is patently unnecessary, and can be therefore quite insulting.  

(88) Jessie won’t be long, she’s just gone to the you-know where.

Example (88) gives an air of embarrassment and euphemism to a situation in which there would be less sensitivity if the reference were in straightforward terms.

_Strategy 13: Overgeneralise_  

(p. 231)

Brown and Levinson are referring here to rule instantiation where the intended message is stated as a general rule. One realisation of this strategy is the use of idioms, formulas or proverbs. In many cases the meaning of such utterances will be lexicalised or conventionalised to the extent where the strategy is quite on record. Often, it will be possible to ignore such utterances.

In one significant respect, however, there is a coercive/humiliating effect which can be observed. Brown and Levinson say

_Such generalized advice may, in context, serve as criticism; but as criticism with the weight of tradition, it is perhaps easier on face than other kinds of rule stating._


This softening effect is by no means certain to occur. Depending on what sort of tradition is being invoked, and whether or not both S and H share the beliefs inherent in such a tradition, the
adding of weight may be seen as an extra imposition.

(89) It's well known that women shouldn't do managerial jobs. They're not emotionally equipped for it.

(89) a. H is a woman who does not share this view.
    b. H is lower in status than S and cannot argue.
    c. H is known to aspire to a managerial position.

Because the form of the utterance implies that an accepted truth is being stated, rather than a personal opinion, it is more difficult to challenge.

Strategy 14: Displace H

(p.231)

Brown and Levinson describe this strategy:

S may go off record as to who the target for his FTA is, or he may pretend to address the FTA to someone whom it wouldn't threaten, and hope that the real target will see that the FTA is aimed at him.

Brown and Levinson (1978:231)

In a model of face attack, S may go off record as to target, but will ensure that context makes the real target clear. However, S cannot be charged with any actual FA. Consider the following example:

(90) It would have to be an incompetent fool who would fail to pass this course.

(90) a. H is unsure of her/his ability to pass.
    b. H knows that S knows about her/his grades.
    c. H knows that S is very likely to pass.

In this case, H knows that the comment is not on other (general) people's abilities, but on H's. H may feel constrained to remain quiet, because of unwillingness to place the criticism on record, or even if she does risk a challenge, S may reply in a manner similar to (89) below:

(91) Oh, I didn't mean 'you were likely to fail.

H face is doubly attacked, first by the original utterance, and then by the concession to her feelings. S retains a superior status.

In this strategy, which I will call the displaced FAA, S will not be hoping that the real target will comprehend; she will give sufficient contextual clues to ensure that H is under no illusion as to whose face is under threat.
Strategy 15: Be incomplete, use ellipsis

(p.232)

The common term for this strategy is innuendo, which often employs kinesic and/or prosodic contextual indicators. S leaves the FA only half stated, while ensuring that H will access a context which completes the message. This strategy is used effectively in sexual harassment.

(92) If you want to do well in your exams ...

This can be supplemented by ambiguous statements/puns like

(93) I'd be happy to be of service.

The important fact about off-recordness in strategies is that the more off-record S goes, the more responsibility H has for the accuracy of the interpretation. S is not giving any overt guarantees that interpretation X is more appropriate than any other, but will give clues to an appropriate reading, which H can pick up. However, if H picks up clues and opts for a face attack reading, there is no foolproof method of proving that the clues were left intentionally. It is this aspect of off-recordness which makes the strategy so attractive to S.

The fact that off-recordness is an element often present in strategies which in other ways seem to carry their face attack in a more overt way, and the fact that many ostensible face saving strategies have an off record face attack element, both need formalising in a theory of utterance interpretation. In fact, it is likely that no generalisations can be made which link the dyadic configuration, as seen in Brown and Levinson's model, firmly to a set of strategies, because of the complex effect of context on individual dyads and interactions. As we will see in Chapter 4, the generalisations arise from a different quarter altogether.

7. Concluding Remarks

I have examined the Brown and Levinson politeness strategies in terms of their applicability to a face attack model. In doing so, I have shown that there are no sustainable distinctions to be made between effect on positive and negative face or between on-recordness and off-recordness. I have demonstrated the centrality of hearer perception in assigning strategies to categories of face attention, and have shown that strategies for face-preservation are equally useful for face attack. The key element in interpretation of strategies is the context.

I have suggested some conditions on the nature of communication guarantees, namely that there will be a guarantee of relevance rather than a guarantee of truth or cooperation, and that this guarantee will not be subject to a binary categorisation. I have also suggested that off-recordness is caused by an ambiguity between propositional and implicatural readings.
In the following chapter, I will provide a framework for constraining the interpretation of utterances in the context of the 'dark side' and 'light side' of politeness. I will show that there is a theory which can predict the interpretations in a way which solves the problems highlighted in this chapter.
NOTES

1. See the face destruction undertaken by the Ik (Turnbull:1972). The important point to note here, is that, while operating in a most unsocial way (in the generally accepted definition of social), the Ik are still aware of face, especially the potential for manipulating vulnerability of face to their own ends. Here is an example of Ik tribespeople watching some goats destroy another's garden:
   Everyone sat around and watched the destruction, occasionally pointing out this goat or that, and finally they awakened Lomongin so that they could enjoy his discomfiture while the very last of the damage was being done, his hunger for another year assured, his starvation probable.
   Turnbull (1972:260)
   It is interesting to note here that the need to destroy the well-being of another individual supersedes the need to acquire food, assumed by Turnbull to be the driving need of the Ik.

2. Holmes (1984b:349) defines affective meaning as follows: 'The affective meaning of an utterance involves the speaker's attitude to the hearer in the context of utterance'.

3. It has been pointed out to me (Douglas Haggo, personal communication) that there are some cultural contexts where the use of endearments to strangers is quite acceptable. The Cockney English variety would be a case in point. For a discussion of situations where the use of endearments is offensive, see Wolfson and Manes (1980). They make the point that the use of endearments can be non-reciprocal which, in paralleling the situation between adults and children, is indicative of power asymmetry.

4. This is quoted in Brown and Levinson (1978:119)


6. Note that there will always be hearers whose face wants do not conform to the ones considered here. There are people who are more satisfied with lack of face respect than obvious attention to their face needs. There are certainly those who imagine that every statement is an affront; whose face is so 'fragile' that it would be hard to satisfy their face needs. They still of course have face needs - just different
ones, and certainly a speaker cannot be said to be engaged in face attack unless s/he is perceived to be aware of those needs, and manipulating them accordingly.

7. See Chapter four, for a more detailed treatment of this process.

8. This is based on Sperber and Wilson (1986).
Chapter Four

The Relevance of Relevance

Pooh went into a corner and tried saying "Aha!" in that sort of voice. Sometimes it seemed to him that it did mean what Rabbit said, and sometimes it seemed to him that it didn't. "I suppose it's just practice," he thought. "I wonder if Kanga will have to practise it too so as to understand it."
Milne (1930:55)

1. Introductory remarks

In the affective aspect of interaction, the notion of face is central. It is not the only factor which plays a part in interaction, but there are no communication situations in which face assessment does not play an integral part in utterance interpretation. In any interaction, there is a continual assessment and re-assessment of the status of the participants with regard to their face needs. It therefore follows that a theory of utterance interpretation must allow for centrality of face. In Relevance Theory, assumptions about face are part of the cognitive environment which an individual brings to the interpretation of utterances.

In the previous chapters, I have shown that a theory of face must be integrated, so that both face-saving and face-attack strategies can be accounted for by the same model. While face-saving and face-attack are qualitatively different in their effect, there is no difference in the way in which face assessment is processed in the interpretation of polite and non-polite utterances.

I have also shown that there is no empirical distinction between on-record and off-record strategies, nor between attention to positive and negative face. Once again, they both involve very similar processes, and the actual interpretation of specific utterances (output realisations in Brown and Levinson's terms) is the key to the assignment of motivation.

We therefore need a theory of utterance interpretation in which face plays a central role, and which makes the correct predictions about face work. The theory should predict that there are
no faceless situations, that there is no motivated distinction between face-saving and face-attack, and that there is no motivated distinction between off-record and on-record strategies. It should also account for the co-occurrence of positive and negative face attention. I will show that Relevance Theory makes just those predictions, and none of the predictions of Brown and Levinson’s theory which are falsified in previous chapters. Relevance Theory also makes other predictions which are corroborated by the analysis of data from earlier chapters.

2. Relevance Theory: a summary

The first two chapters of Sperber and Wilson’s book deal with the foundation of the theory in cognitive psychology rather than logic-based frameworks. The material presented is technical, with definitions being built up for concepts such as *manifestness*, *mutual cognitive environments*, *ostensive-inferential communication*, all of which are necessary aspects of the constraining nature of the principle of relevance.

2.1. Mutual cognitive environments

Using the following definitions, Sperber and Wilson introduce the concepts of manifestness and cognitive environments:

(39) A fact is *manifest* to an individual at a given time if and only if he is capable at that time of representing it mentally and accepting its representation as true or probably true.

(40) A *cognitive environment* of an individual is a set of facts that are manifest to him.


A shared cognitive environment is one in which the cognitive environments of more than one individual intersect. The point at which one individual’s cognitive environment intersects with another’s is a subset of her total cognitive environment. Sperber and Wilson go on to explain the notion of a mutual cognitive environment in this way:

Any shared cognitive environment in which it is manifest which people share it is what we will call a *mutual cognitive environment*.


Individuals’ cognitive environments intersect, but never wholly replicate each other. People who share a cognitive environment are capable of making the same assumptions, but can never be guaranteed to do so.
2.2. The mutual knowledge hypothesis and mutual manifestness.

Sperber and Wilson challenge the notion of mutual knowledge. They reject the notion that there is a failsafe mechanism for communication which is only interrupted by noise in the acoustic channel. Communication of the speaker’s communicative intention can only be regarded as probable under suitable conditions, but not guaranteed. Since the only way that consistently successful understanding of communicative intention can be guaranteed is if interactants share identical contexts, it follows that there can be no such guarantee. Mutual knowledge requires for its fulfilment an infinite proliferation of assumptions to be made, each referring to the previous assumption about the other speaker’s actual knowledge. Aside from the enormous processing effort required to engage in such assumption formation is the fact that it turns out to be fruitless processing, since an assumption of mutual knowledge always has the potential to be mistaken. The mutual knowledge hypothesis cannot then provide guarantees, and the authors argue that it is psychologically real for the communicative device to process only those stimuli and assumptions for which there will be a payoff commensurate with the effort involved.

If mutual knowledge is impossible to establish, it provides no guarantee for interactants of the probable success of the communication, therefore it does not justify the effort involved in trying to establish if it exists in relation to a given exchange. Sperber and Wilson see mutual knowledge as having no power to explain the interpretation process. If two people could be said to share an identical context (which can never be confirmed completely), there needs to be some principle by which they choose the interpretation from within the range permitted by the context they share. If the following is uttered:

(1) The door’s open.

Sperber and Wilson (1986:20, e.g.26).

there is no explanation of which referent they choose from within their mutually shared knowledge of such concepts as doors and openness.

Instead of mutual knowledge, Sperber and Wilson propose a notion of mutual manifestness. In a mutual cognitive environment, every assumption which is manifest is mutually manifest. Note that the concept of mutual manifestness is much weaker than that of mutual knowledge, but Sperber and Wilson argue that it is weak in just the right way. Mutual manifestness is not a strong enough concept to explain symmetrical coordination in code, context and therefore communication. But such a notion of symmetry is implausible. This accords with my work in non-cooperative language, where asymmetry is in fact a fundamental requirement for the success of certain communicative strategies. The imperfect nature of communication is nicely pinpointed by Sperber and Wilson in the following statement:
Human beings somehow manage to communicate in situations where a great deal can be assumed about what is manifest to others, a lot can be assumed about what is mutually manifest to themselves and others, but nothing can be assumed to be truly mutually known or assumed.

Sperber and Wilson (1986:45).

On the basis of what an individual can assume about the cognitive environment of another individual, someone who knows something about another's cognitive environment can make reasonably sound judgements on what assumptions that individual is likely to entertain. It is on this basis that a communicator can make relevance-based judgements on the best way to organise the form of the utterance to be produced.

2.3. Ostensive-inferential communication

When one individual's behaviour makes manifest to an audience that she wants to make some assumptions manifest to that audience, her behaviour is said to be ostensive. In other words, the individual is communicating an intention to make something manifest, and the audience is alerted to the fact that some information processing is expected of it. Because an individual cannot be expected to perform ostensive acts without intending to make manifest to others some assumption/s which she expects the audience to find in some way relevant, every act of ostension is accompanied by a 'tacit guarantee of relevance' (Sperber and Wilson 1986:49).

Sperber and Wilson make the claim that there is no cut-off point between the ostensive act of showing, where all the evidence is direct, and the ostensive act of saying that, where all the evidence is indirect. They are the two extremities of a continuum. They argue that there is no difference between ostensive communication and inferential communication, and propose the term ostensive-inferential communication. When an individual engages in ostensive-inferential communication, she fulfils two intentions, the informative intention and the communicative intention. The first involves the intention to make manifest to the audience a certain set of assumptions, while the second involves making it mutually manifest to audience and communicator that the communicator has the informative intention. An important point is made here by Sperber and Wilson, which I will develop in section 4.3. below:

Mutual manifestation may be of little cognitive importance, but it is of crucial social importance. A change in the mutual cognitive environment of two people is a change in their possibilities of interaction (and, in particular, in their possibilities of further communication).

It is this fact which underlies the social significance of non-cooperative communication.

2.4. Relevance

Relevance itself, as a technical concept, is defined in comparative terms. By the use of extent conditions, Sperber and Wilson characterise relevance in two ways: in terms of effect and effort. It is an inverse relation: the more contextual effects gained from the processing of an utterance, the more relevant it is, and the less effort expended in the processing, the more relevant.

Any act of ostensive (attention seeking) communication communicates a presumption of relevance, defined as follows:

(61) **Presumption of optimal relevance**

(a) The set of assumptions (I) which the communicator intends to make manifest to the addressee is relevant enough to make it worth the addressee's while to process the ostensive stimulus.

(b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one the communicator could have used to communicate (I).


In fact, there is no way of verifying part (b) of the presumption of optimal relevance, but as long as part (a) and part (b) are not falsified, there is sufficient confirmation for the hearer to proceed with the interpretation.

The principle of relevance itself is simply stated:

(62) **Principle of relevance**

Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.


The measurement of relevance cannot take place in absolute cost-counting terms, and Sperber and Wilson argue that it is psychologically implausible that it should do so. To capture the intuition that we see relevance in comparative terms rather than absolute terms, and that we have no way of comparing the relevance of different information in different environments, they claim that our assessment of relevance is analogous to that of the cost-benefit analysis of a business. We count the number of contextual effects gained from the utterance and weigh these against the cost of processing in terms of effort. The more the contextual effects outweigh the processing cost, the more relevant we will judge the stimulus to be.\(^1\)
2.5. The context

The context is not uniquely determined, as previously accepted in pragmatic theory, but chosen from within a range of available contexts. Each individual has at her disposal a set of assumptions, including new assumptions and those already stored in memory, the latter acting as a context to the former. This context can be extended, in directions determined by the search for relevance, in various ways.

The contexts available to an individual are partially ordered by an inclusion relation. The first and most accessible context is contained within a larger, slightly less accessible context, and so on through the range of contexts which become progressively less accessible. Sperber and Wilson do not attempt to provide an accurate account of conceptual information retrieval, but assume that contexts are accessed from four sources: the information present in the deductive device as a result of the immediately preceding deductive process, encyclopaedic entries associated with concepts present in the utterance to be processed, short-term memory stores, and the immediate physical environment. They contend that the process of accessing information from these sources is driven by the search for relevance, i.e. via the shortest route which will result in a compensatory number of contextual effects. As the object of information processing is to gain maximal contextual effect from minimal processing effort, the less accessible a context, the less relevant will be the utterance which requires accessing of that context in order to discover the information required, unless the contextual effects gained are sufficiently great to warrant the effort.

When newly presented information is processed in the context of old information already present in memory, this process is contextualisation, and any new conclusions yielded by the process are contextual implications. These have an effect on the context available to the individual. Other contextual effects noted by Sperber and Wilson are the strengthening of old assumptions and the contradiction or removal of old assumptions. These effects are discussed in some detail, including the manner in which strengthening and weakening are characterised; not in logical terms of absolute probability values, but in terms of comparative judgements, i.e. as a result of a contextual effect, some assumption or group of assumptions is either held more strongly, less strongly, or rejected altogether.

2.6. Explicatures and implicatures

Sperber and Wilson draw a distinction between an explication and an implicature, maintaining that, while an assumption which is communicated is either an explication or an
implicature, there are varying degrees of explicitness within the category *explication*. The less explicit an explication, the more it resembles an implicature, but it is nevertheless an explication.

Let us define the difference between explicatures and implicatures. An explication is an explicitly communicated assumption: i.e. it satisfies the following definition:

(12) **Explicitness**

An assumption communicated by an utterance *U* is *explicit* if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by *U*.


The claim is that utterances are never simply decoded, and that interpreting the explicit content of an utterance involves more than the simple recovery of a propositional form and a propositional attitude. Sperber and Wilson see the explicit aspect of communication as more inferential than previous pragmatic theories, in that the enrichment of the propositional form involves more than disambiguation and reference assignment, but this further enrichment does not involve implicatures. According to their notion of explication, any development of the logical form will qualify as operating in the explicit domain.²

2.7. Relevance Theory and Grice

Relevance Theory answers many of the questions raised by earlier theories of utterance interpretation. In particular, it tackles the problem of the lack of explanatory power inherent in the Gricean model. While Grice offers a detailed description of the inferential model,³ he does not make explicit how the process of implicature progresses, and indeed what criteria are used for assessing a maxim flout which is the starting point for the search for implicatures. Sperber and Wilson argue that the maxims are inadequately defined as measures to aid in hypothesis choice.

Essential concepts mentioned in the maxims are left entirely undefined. This is true of relevance, for instance: hence appeals to the 'maxim of relation' are no more than dressed-up appeals to intuition.


This weakness is a serious impediment in the analysis of non-cooperative communication. There are many cases where an utterance seems to be in line with all of the maxims, and yet invites recourse to recovery of implicatures. The Gricean process involves making gross intuitive judgements on quantity, relation, manner and so on, which do not conform to any psychologically well-motivated guidelines.
While many interpretations can be justified for an utterance in a retrospective manner within Gricean theory, Relevance Theory predicts how a given interaction will progress in a certain context. An example of this would be where a male employer has previously communicated sexual interest in a female employee, and says to her:

(2) I would like you to stay back for a few hours tonight and take care of some things for me.

Such a statement does not violate the maxims of truthfulness, quality, quantity etc., and it certainly obeys the maxim of relevance, because in the situation of the employer/employee relationship, such a request is relevant and unremarkable. Why then does H form the assumption that S wants her to do something which is not explicitly stated, but undoubtedly a potential implicature? Given that H's face needs will require that she makes the correct interpretation of S's utterance, she will be driven by the search for the most relevant interpretation in the context available to her. This context will include the following assumptions:

(2) a. He has asked me to stay late to take care of something for him.

There are two possible ways in which the unspecified element can be supplied. They are:

1. Something = something we do in our professional relationship.

2. Something = some other thing as yet unspecified.

A Gricean analysis would proceed on the basis that whatever was meant was recoverable on the application of the CP and the Maxims. Therefore, the analysis would proceed like this:

b. S would not be obeying the Maxim of Quantity unless some thing s referred to habitual matters we deal with together.

c. My job is to type S's reports.

d. S wants me to stay back and type today's reports.

If, as in Relevance Theory, we dispense with the CP and the Maxim checklist, the process becomes much more flexible in the general range of implicatures generated by such a remark, but tightly constrained as to the actual implicature recoverable by an individual in context.

In a Relevance Theory interpretation, the same two alternatives are available to start the process. However, H will immediately start to search the context available to her in accordance with the tacit guarantee of relevance which comes with the fact that S has ostensively communicated something to H. If there is nothing untoward in her knowledge of S, the immediately preceding interaction between S and H, or any physical or intonational clues from S, the interpretation will follow the same lines as that in the Gricean analysis.

If however, H has as part of her encyclopaedic entry for S some facts like:
(i) S is often making double-edged statements to me
(ii) S has a reputation for making advances to his women staff

Or if the previous interaction had included some clues like
(iii) S said this morning that he thought I'd know how to
take care of a man's needs

H's interpretation of S's remark would necessarily include assumptions like

b' S might be making an advance to me.

There are two possible interpretations available to H, the first one accessed in the immediate environment, and the second one in the environment of information from either a previously processed utterance, or from the encyclopaedic entry associated with S. Both these contexts are readily accessible to her, and if the assumptions (i), (ii), and/or (iii) are in her cognitive environment, the first interpretation will not be the most relevant one for her. She will be aware of the presence of the first interpretation, but only retrospectively, and she will entertain the conclusion in b' strongly, because of the contextual effects on the assumptions which she already holds. However, if she is forced to communicate a choice between the two interpretations, she will find it difficult to choose an appropriate response, because she is aware of S's ability to claim an intention to communicate the straightforward message in (2) d. It is this difficulty which underlies the safety of the off-record strategy.

Relevance Theory predicts that, given the context of H's previous assumptions about S's sexual interest, there is no chance that an interpretation will not include the possibility that this is sexual innuendo. In fact, if S also holds the assumptions which H holds, and has good reason to believe that H holds those assumptions, the onus is on S, in making the tacit guarantee of relevance, to phrase the statement in such a way as to avoid ambiguity. The fact that he has not done so provides strong clues that he intends H to interpret the utterance in the enriched context, but is unwilling to commit himself overtly to the sexual advance.

Relevance Theory requires of a communicator and an audience only that they have in common the desire to ascertain the communicator's informative intention; that is, the communicator's intention to modify the cognitive environment of the audience. Sperber and Wilson do not deny the existence of a mutually accepted direction in communication, but they do not see it as a necessary condition for communication. This is a particularly important aspect of Relevance Theory, allowing as it does far greater scope for explaining the interpretation of utterances which are not co-operative in any sense.

A more radical departure from the Gricean model is the way in which relevance is seen in relation to actual communication. While the Gricean maxims are a set of rules which both
communicator and audience must know in order to communicate successfully, the principle of relevance does not have this function. It is a principle which explains utterance interpretation, a generalisation about interpretation rather than a rule which communicators must know. They must act in accordance with the principle of relevance, and are not in a position to violate it, but it does not follow that they need to 'know' or 'observe' it in the Gricean sense.

Lastly, Relevance Theory differs from Grice in the explanatory account of explicit communication it offers. The Gricean model starts with a distinction between explicit and implicit communication, with explicit communication largely ignored. Sperber and Wilson show, as seen in 2.6., that there is a considerable amount of inferential enrichment at the propositional level, over and above the processes of reference assignment and disambiguation.

2.8. Relevance Theory and Speech Act Theory

Sperber and Wilson question Speech Act Theory mainly on the grounds that it is not necessary to classify the speaker's illocutionary intentions in order to interpret correctly the illocutionary import of an utterance. Relevance Theory offers an explanatory account of the various types of illocutionary force without recourse to arbitrary sets of labels which are not easily linked in any systematic way to particular syntactic forms.

With the principle, all that is required is that the properties of the ostensive stimulus should set the inferential process on the right track; to do this they need not represent or encode the communicator's informative intention in any great detail.


The generally accepted illocutionary-force indicators such as declarative mood, interrogative word order and others, are therefore seen not as classificatory labels, but as pointers to 'a rather abstract property of the speaker's informative intention: the direction in which the relevance of the utterance is to be sought.' (Sperber and Wilson 1986:254). In other words, while Relevance Theory explains the hearer's ability to ascertain the speaker's illocutionary intent, it shows that this is accomplished in the same way as the other aspects of utterance interpretation, by processing the utterance in the context of what is available in the hearer's cognitive environment. This will include information about the likely force of certain syntactic forms, but the assignment of illocutionary force to syntactic forms can be modified by other information which makes other interpretations more relevant. Thus labels like 'question', 'promise', 'statement' and 'command' are useful only inasmuch as they refer to social conventions whose nature and conditions of use are part of the cognitive environment of individuals.
Consider the example from Chapter three:

(3) Can you please pass the salt?

Brown and Levinson (1978:138:e.g.1)

Brown and Levinson contend that the word *please* makes the utterance unambiguously a request. However, there are situations where the main force of example (3) is more order or threat than request. The context below provides an exemplary situation:

(3) a. The speaker is the hearer's mother.
   b. This is the third time the speaker has uttered this request.
   c. We have a rule that after three repeats of a request, we are punished if we don't obey.
   d. The utterance is both a request and a threat.

The interpretation of such utterances always means recourse to the description of context. As the analysis shows, the above example is readily interpretable as an order with an implied threat, if the speaker is a person in authority, and if there is relevant context that punishment always follows failure to obey this speaker. In fact, there is no need for that primary classification, because in context the maximally relevant interpretation will be given to what is said even if the interpretation involves accessing further contextual clues.

If we accept the requirement that an utterance in the form of an apology is always polite, we would expect a proliferation of apologies in one utterance to be extremely polite. In some cases, this would be so, but not in the following example.

(4) I'm awfully sorry to put you to all this trouble. I wouldn't have asked `you, as I know you're busy, but I just can't avoid it, so I'll have to presume on your good nature, and I hope you'll forgive me......

In the Gricean framework, implicatures would be sought, because of the infringement of the Maxim of Quantity (avoid prolixity). H would follow this procedure:

(4) a. S is apologising to H.
   b. There are a lot of apologies in S's utterance.
   c. This infringes the Quantity Maxim, since one apology would have been enough.

Leech (1983) would say that the Quantity Maxim had been infringed in order to uphold the Maxim of Politeness, and it seems that this is the interpretation with which our Gricean H would be content.

Relevance Theory offers an alternative interpretation, because of the salient presence in H's
cognitive environment of facts about the S/H relationship.

(4') a'. S is H's employer.

and about the task which is being discussed:

b'. The task S wants performed is within the usual requirements of H's job.

These are strong assumptions in the context which is mutually available to S and H. This being the case, H must continue to search for the relevance of the remark, since S guarantees, in making the ostensive stimulus, that there is something in it relevant enough to make the processing worthwhile. Assumptions a' and b' rule out the politeness interpretation, since H's encyclopaedic entries for the relationship between employer and employee, and the nature of work requirements will yield assumptions about the inappropriateness of excessive, ingratiating politeness in such situations. H goes further in the process, accessing further encyclopaedic information about the relationship between S and H:

c'. S should not have to apologise to me at all.

d'. S is making it seem that apologies are necessary.

e'. They would only be necessary if the tasks were in fact too onerous.

Here, H would access encyclopaedic information about the tasks like:

f'. They are not onerous.

g'. Other people do them easily and quickly.

Here, the interpretive process has failed to yield sufficient contextual effects, but H has, as part of the encyclopaedic information about interaction, assumptions that inappropriate politeness forms are sometimes used for sarcastic purposes. This leads to the interpretation:

h'. H is not performing the tasks in the expected way.

i'. S is drawing attention to this and being sarcastic.

Sperber and Wilson make the point that, where the message can be conveyed economically and is not, H must search for reasons within the context which justify the departure from economy. Within Relevance Theory, the form of an utterance is seen as a pointer to the sort of interpretive path which the speaker expects the hearer to follow. In the case of a proliferation of apologies, S is seen to intend H to access encyclopaedic information about apologies, which will include the information that profuse apologies are not part of the expected behaviour from employer to employee. In other words, the lack of economy is a vital trigger in the interpretive process. In following that process, H may well come up with the perception of politeness, but in the above situation the opposite will be the case.

The relegation of taxonomies of labels to the status of conceptual addresses solves the problems encountered in Chapters 1-3 above, in ways which will be further explored below.

3. Relevance Theory and a characterisation of face
I will now show how Relevance Theory makes the correct predictions about the integration of face information into the utterance interpretation process. I will characterise the transmission of face information by describing the contextual effects achieved by utterances, both in terms of propositional content and of implicatural and social information. I will show how Relevance Theory offers an explanation of the fact that there is no faceless communication, through the integration of social information into the interpretive process.

The interpretation of the utterances inventoried above in chapters 1-3 is able to be accounted for by Relevance Theory in a way which does not draw any arbitrary distinctions between positive and negative face attention, nor between on- and off-recordness. The production and interpretation of all utterances is governed by the Principle of Relevance. The speaker will use the form of utterance which most economically and effectively communicates the propositional and affective message which is intended to be understood. In doing so, the speaker will have two major criteria to which the form of the utterance must conform, the maximisation of effect, and the minimisation of processing effort.

3.1. Maximisation of effect

S will want to communicate the message with maximal effect, so that the intended audience will recover not only the propositional content of the utterance, but also any facts about the nature of the relationship between S and the audience which are salient to the interaction. In many cases, the effect will not be achieved by the most straightforward possible form of the utterance.

The maximisation of effect in terms of Relevance Theory involves at least one of the following processes: the adding of new contextual effects to the mutual cognitive environment of S and H, the contradiction of old assumptions, the strengthening of old assumptions or the weakening of old assumptions. These processes are all important in a model of face, in that they can be used to communicate information about the speaker’s regard to the hearer’s face.

3.1.1. The adding of new contextual effects

Consider a situation where S and H are acquainted with each other, but are not close friends. S may want to communicate the desire to develop that friendship further. S may say:

(5) How about dinner at my place tonight?

This would be interpreted as a positive politeness strategy in this way:

(5) a. S has invited me to dinner at her/his place.

H would then access encyclopaedic information about invitations such as

b. Invitations to dinner are usually a sign that the inviter likes the other
person's company.
The conclusion would be:

c. S is indicating that s/he likes my company.

Note that, within a Gricean framework, there is no motivated explanation for H taking the interpretive process as far as that illustrated above. What maxim is being violated to lead the hearer to access information which can hardly be said to be part of the propositional form of the utterance? The only likely candidate is relevance, but the Gricean framework does not make clear how and why this maxim would be involved. In the framework provided by Relevance Theory, the accessibility of b. and c. is explained by the fact that H automatically accesses information about utterances where the utterance triggers off assumptions which are highly salient in H's cognitive environment. I argue that information about the social implications of such forms as invitations is highly salient in H's cognitive environment, given that the need for a reply is made manifest by the invitation.

There is certainly no explanation why, in certain contexts, further contextual effects could be gained by H accessing different encyclopaedic information which could cause the interpretation to follow a very different line in an environment such as that given below:

(5') a'. S has invited H to her/his place for dinner.

Given the situation below, the invitation would fail to be immediately relevant.

b'. There is nothing in the immediately preceding conversation to lead up to an invitation.

H would then search for clues from the encyclopaedic information about the S/H relationship in order to give direction to the interpretive process.

c'. There is nothing in the previous relationship between S and H which indicates that a dinner at home would be appropriate.

The conclusion may well be that this is an invitation which has come as a surprise, and H will leave it at that. The interpretive process will continue, however, if the assumption in d. is present in H's cognitive environment. Note that d. will be activated as soon as S mentions dinner, since these are two strong triggers for H in assessing the implicatures associated with an invitation which must be replied to.

d'. S is known for her/his intimate dinners with the opposite sex.

e'. S's intimate dinners usually end with pressure for sexual relations.

Given that the assumptions in d' and e' provide the only information accessed to date which sufficiently bears on the assumptions brought into prominence by the utterance, the conclusion in f will be the result.

f. S is implying a sexual advance.
Note that the motivation for accessing the information about dinners, invitations and their implications comes from the form of the utterance itself. It is the enrichment of the propositional form which starts the process, although of course the path which is followed departs from the propositional form, i.e. is implicatural once point d' is reached. Encyclopaedic information about dinners in a culture will include information about their role in courtship rituals, and the degree of intimacy usually expected of participants in dinners for two in a private setting. The additional information in d', which is part of H's cognitive environment, makes it not only a logical interpretive path to follow but, in terms of face safety, or possibly even its physical counterpart, it is necessary. The processing effort is richly rewarded by the contextual effects. These will play a part in deciding H's subsequent behaviour, whether she wishes to further the intimacy or not.

If the assumptions in d' and e' are strongly held by H, steps d', e' f will supersede steps b' and c'. Relevance Theory predicts, in fact, that if those assumptions are strongly held, there is no possibility that any other interpretive path will occur. If d' is salient in H's cognitive environment, the accessing of b and c will yield no benefit in terms of contextual effects. In terms of assumption strength, d' is likely to be strong, since it has the potential to yield significant contextual implications for H, particularly in such a sensitive area as this. Assumptions b and c would, if entertained, have to be rejected as having only weak contextual implications in the environment of d', and would be discarded in favour of e' and f'. H will be aware of their existence as possible readings, of course, which is why H will be disinclined to reply in a way which makes overt her conclusion in f'. However, they would not be entertained in that environment, because of the strength of d' and the potential for further strengthening d' which e' and f' have.

If we look at 5 again, and examine the cost-benefit analysis of each step, we see why this is so.

(5') a'. S has invited H to her/his place for dinner.

This is an utterance which is considered highly salient in our society, given that a reply is expected and certain social consequences flow on from the hearer's response. In a situation where S and H already enjoy a level of intimacy, and have socialised together before, the interpretive process will be straightforward, and will not require a search for implicatures. The propositional form will undergo reference assignment, and the response will be given according to H's wishes in this matter. In this situation, the form of the utterance implies that there is a level of intimacy which does not in fact exist between S and H. A more formal invitation like 'I wonder if you'd be free to have dinner with me this evening' would probably have a different effect on H since it makes a refusal a little more possible. However, the assumption of intimacy in (5) is more
coercive, in that it makes a refusal seem churlish and suspicious. A different form such as 'dinner tonight?' would be an unlikely choice for S to make since it implies a degree of intimacy which is so obviously different from that which actually exists, that S would run the risk of some loss of face to self.

If b' is present in H's cognitive environment:

b'. There is nothing in the immediately preceding conversation to lead up to an invitation.

the mismatch between utterance and context will cause a search for those contextual factors which will contribute to the relevance of the utterance. As the most salient aspect of the utterance is that it conveys a particular type of invitation, this is the area in which H will begin the search, and come up with some information about dinner invitations such as that described above. The information about the usual level of intimacy involved in such invitations will make the following readily accessible:

c'. There is nothing in the previous relationship between S and H which indicates that a dinner at home would be appropriate.

Here there are insufficient contextual effects to compensate for the processing effort, so H will continue, since H is working on the presumption of optimal relevance, and since the utterance has strong social implications. Given that the encyclopaedic information about the relationship between S and H is failing to yield effects, H will then examine the encyclopaedic information held about S.

d'. S is known for her/his intimate dinners with the opposite sex.

e'. S's intimate dinners usually end with pressure for sexual relations.

f'. S is implying a sexual advance.

The assumptions in d' and e' have strong contextual implications in the processing of the utterance, and H will find the cost of processing these far outweighed by the richness of the contextual effects gained thereby. Step f' is the point at which H will stop, given that the contextual effects gained are highly salient, and any further processing which might include assumptions like:

* g. S wants to make love on his famous white sheepskin rug.
  * h. S wants me to stay the night.

while contributing some contextual effects, are less salient in the light of the other information about invitations which H will already have accessed, namely that invitations require to be answered. H will therefore conclude the interpretive process at that point.

Here the search for relevance has led H to recover implicatures dictated, not so much by the form of the utterance, but by the fact that the utterance has been made. Sperber and Wilson make
the point that, while relevance may not lie in the actual proposition communicated by the utterance, the fact that the proposition has been communicated may be maximally relevant. This is a function of the two levels of intention in communication: informative intention and communicative intention. The propositional content is conveyed according to the informative intention, as are any implicatures which enrich the information being communicated. Assessment of the communicative intention takes place when H makes assumptions about why the information was conveyed.

Note that the two interpretations in (5) and (5') are equally plausible, but that the nature of H's cognitive environment will make only one of the interpretations possible in any one situation. H may be interpreting the utterance wrongly in (5'), imputing motives to S which are in fact inaccurate. In this case, H will be operating in a cognitive environment which is not intersecting with S's. The off-recordness of the sexual innuendo, reflected in the implicatural nature of the assumptions in (5') d-f, makes a misinterpretation possible, and a defence, either genuine or otherwise, potentially successful. This explains the safety of the off-record strategy noted in previous chapters.

3.1.2. The contradiction of old assumptions

(6) A: I'm just not orientatated to city life.

B: Oh you'll become orientated in no time.

In this example from Chapter 3, B is drawing attention to A's mispronunciation of the word, thereby contradicting A's previous assumption about the correct pronunciation. B uses irony in order to add an extra layer of humiliation to the face attack, in addition to the actual correction. The irony lies in the echoic nature of what is said. According to Sperber and Wilson, irony is echoic in that the speaker produces an utterance which, in another context, would be quite innocuous, but where the actual context of utterance renders a straightforward interpretation impossible. In this case, B repeats what A has said, in a context in which the utterance cannot be interpreted as genuine. In this case, the intonational overlay causes the utterance itself to provide the clue to the ironic interpretation. The added difficulty in interpretation occasioned by the need to search for implicatures increases A's discomfort.

(6) a. B has repeated the word orientated.

Here A will access information about interactions which includes the assumption that repetition of other speakers' utterances is generally a politeness strategy and reaches the conclusion:

b. B must be encouraging A.

However, the form of B's repetition of the utterance deviates from that of A's initial utterance, thus triggering a further interpretation.

c. B has stressed the syllables tated.
Here, A accesses information about stress assignment, and the functions of stressing portions of a word. Unusual stress can indicate approval ("simply delicious"), delight ("fantastic"), irony ("no kidding!") and correction ("mispronounced?"/ "mispro'nounced"). These assumptions yield the following conclusions under the following conditions:

If H's cognitive environment strongly holds assumptions like

d. A knows and has used that particular word many times.

then B's comment might be taken as simply a personal idiosyncracy, and will be perceived as an expression of solidarity. However, if H feels uncomfortable with such words, or in such company, other assumptions about words and speech will highly salient in A's cognitive environment like:

e. A doesn't always know to pronounce words.

or from H's knowledge about B like:

f. A considers B to be much more intelligent than A.

In this case, the conclusion drawn will be:

g. B is correcting A's pronunciation, in an ironic way.

The perception of face attack comes from the fact that B could have corrected the utterance by stressing the word in its correct form, but has chosen to repeat the deviant form instead. The echoic nature of this method contributes the irony. Note that although Sperber and Wilson define irony as conveying speaker attitude to the thought/opinion echoed, it seems that it is equally applicable to situations where S is ridiculing H's behaviour (cf. the Sperber and Wilson example of the driving behaviour of H (Sperber and Wilson 1986:240ff.)).

3.1.3. The strengthening of old assumptions

(7) I can easily pop into your place to drop it off tonight. It's not much out of my way.

In a context in which H is aware of S's propensity for making advances to female colleagues, this utterance will serve to strengthen the assumptions she already holds about S. Her interpretation would follow the pattern:

(7) a. S has offered to drop X off.

If H's context included information about the relative distances between the houses like

b. My house is a long way from S's house.

the second part of the utterance would be a violation of the maxim of quality (i.e. do not say that which you do not believe to be true). The statement in (7)a. is an untruth in the sense that the literal meaning of the proposition and the content of assumption (7) b. are contradictory. Such literal untruth is allowed where certain assumptions are held. For instance, where a person is particularly eager to help others and wishes them to feel under no obligation for the help they are to receive, such an untruth is to be seen as excessively obliging. However, if H adds (7) f., the interpretation of (7) purely as a politeness strategy is not possible. (7) f. will be added if it is
present in H's cognitive environment, since it provides a motivation with high payoff in terms of
H's sense of well-being, however she wishes the relationship with S to develop. Sperber and
Wilson do not require that the inferential path should be the shortest one possible; only that the
payoff all the way down the line should be sufficient to carry H on to a satisfactory conclusion in
terms of richness of contextual effects. However, processing costs will commonly lead to the
shortest distance between startpoint and endpoint being taken.

In the environment of assumptions about the reasons for the untruth expressed in (7), H would
then need to work through a set of premises and reach a conclusion like the following:

c. People who make light of the imposition have a strong reason for performing
the favour.

d. S wants to get to H's house, in spite of the inconvenience.

If the assumption in f. is not present in H's cognitive environment, the interpretation may well
be as follows:

e. S is very kind/ wants to help me out.

However, in the presence of the assumption in f.

f. S is known for calling in on females in the evenings, and making passes.

H can be expected to come to the conclusion in g.

g. S intends to make a pass at H.

Intuitively, we would expect H to get to the conclusion in g. much more directly, in the context
of knowing S's habit of making advances to females. In a relevance theory framework, we are not
troubled by violations of the maxims, and the route is, as we would expect, much simpler.

(7)  a'. S wants to bring something to H's house tonight.

The fact that it is this particular S who has spoken brings to the foreground of H's cognitive
environment assumptions like

b'. S has a reputation for making passes at female colleagues.

c'. His offer of help is really an attempt to make a pass at H.

Given H's knowledge of S, the interpretation in c' is the only possible one for H to make. In
terms of face attention, it is also the most useful one for H to make, in that it strengthens the
assumptions H holds about S's intentions, thus arming H against further interactions of the same
kind. The interpretive process can stop there, because the contextual effects are sufficiently rich
for H to consider further processing unnecessary. However, H is also aware that, without the
knowledge available in b', there would be an alternative, polite interpretation possible. This
causes difficulty when H can see that a reply to the message conveyed by c' is risky, because S can
claim to have been conveying the polite message.

There are two points which arise from this example of assumption strengthening, which also
apply to other examples of the process as well. The first is that, where H holds assumptions about S, remarks made by S will usually strengthen the assumptions, regardless of S's actual intentions. In other words, H's context contains strong assumptions about S's reputation, and S's behaviour will be seen within that context until there have been sufficiently strong contradictions to the assumptions to erase them from H's encyclopaedic memory. There are social reasons why this should be so. One is that in this particular case there is greater payoff in holding on to the encyclopaedic information in terms of its value not only for inferential processing but the practicality of living with S in the environment which they share. Mistakenly abandoning these assumptions could result in loss of face within that environment, and so H holds on to them perhaps even when it is not warranted, since the benefits of doing so outweigh the projected costs. Another is that humans believe the social world as well as the natural one to have certain long term stabilities.

For the most part, as I have already said, our construals regarding the appropriate conditions for observation achieve stability, become settled, and enter the corpus of established knowledge. Those that work and continue to work, we cannot but regard as correct and as capable of revealing the actual nature of the world.

Novitz (1987:68) It is possible that we use this tendency in order to make inferential processing easier, since to make use of social stabilities is easier than going into new and complex processes of assumption formation at every step of the interpretive process. This explains the tendency to prefer assumption strengthening over assumption weakening discussed above.

The second point is that Relevance Theory can explain the inability of some H to interpret anything a particular class of S will say in any other than one context. Consider the example of a woman who has, for various ideological and/or experiential reasons, formed very strong assumptions to the effect that all men are sexually 'on the make' at all times, and are not to be trusted. In the framework offered by Sperber and Wilson, we can say that her available context when interacting with men is constrained strongly, so that any utterance a man produces will be interpreted immediately within this context, whether or not there are indications that it is not an appropriate context. The mere fact that he is a man will trigger off the interpretation in (7) above, for instance, even if the specific encyclopaedic information contained in (7') b'. is not available. This would be true of all interactions where H holds stereotyped and inflexible assumptions about an individual S or a group of S. Some examples of an extreme position of inflexibility in assumption adjustment would be the views Nazis held about jews, those which IRA members hold about British soldiers, and those which British soldiers held about Argentinian soldiers in the Falklands war.
Notice also that an individual S can use that information as an 'out' when charged with a particular face attack by a member of a group known to hold such stereotyped views. S can in fact be intending the imposition in (7') c', but if H feels sufficiently assertive to charge him with making a pass, he can pretend innocence, and charge her with prejudice.

3.1.4. The weakening of old assumptions

The assumptions previously held by an individual can be weakened by successive assumptions introduced.

(8) A: Would you please check this for me?
    B: I'm very busy. I've got a tight schedule. Alright, I'll do it.

Here, A holds a set of assumptions about B, which include assumptions about B's willingness to help A. These assumptions are strong enough to lead A to make the request in the first place. Although B agrees to help, the utterances preceding the concurrence serve to weaken the willingness of B's reply, and therefore to weaken A's assumptions about B's attitude. The weakening occurs in this way:

(8)  a. B has said she will help, and B has made some comments about being busy, and not having much time.

The inherent contradiction in the two parts of B's utterance will make H search for the relevance of the first part, since that has been processed first, and is more relevant to the interaction in which they are engaged. Some assumptions about interaction will be accessed like:

   c. People who are busy and do not have much time find it hard to do extra things.
   d. I have asked B to do extra things.

The conclusion is then reached:

   e. B will do these things although it is hard for her to do them.

There will be an unwillingness on the part of H to ask favours of B in the future because of the weakening of the assumptions about B's willingness which led H to ask the favour. This is the assumption in A's encyclopaedic memory which indicates that asking B for help is acceptable. This assumption is not completely contradicted, since B has agreed to help, but it has been weakened to the extent that it now includes some information about B's reluctance.

The maximisation of effect involves using the principle of contextual effect in the most powerful way possible. S will need to be aware of assumptions which H holds or is most likely to hold, in order to provide a richness of contextual clues to guide H to the requisite interpretation. If this were the only constraint on S, the types of utterances which would be potentially effective
would be infinite, and the theory would have no predictive power. However, there is another constraint which, combined with 3.1., limits the class of potentially useful utterances even further. This is the requirement on S to minimise the processing load for H.

3.2. Minimisation of effort

All information processing involves effort. Newly presented information must be combined with information stored in short or long-term memory, and a synthesis of new and old information must take place before contextual effects can be obtained. S must therefore choose a form of utterance with sufficient clues to enable H to reach the required interpretation with the minimum of look-up and computational activity. This involves enabling H to access readily available material quickly, and providing information which links up with material S knows is mutually manifest, or part of S and H's mutual cognitive environment.

On H's part, there is the acceptance of the presumption of optimal relevance, which states that the stimulus used will be the most relevant one S could use. H is therefore required to access contexts progressively, using clues from the form of the utterance, until she finds information which provides rich enough contextual effects to offset the processing effort which S has set in motion. Because of the presumption of optimal relevance, we can expect H to recover any information from her cognitive environment which will increase the relevance of the interpretation. This may include the interpretation of kinesic clues, as well as accessing of assumptions based on previous knowledge of, or interactions with, S. In addition, H will often need to access encyclopaedic information on social relationships, particularly those involving herself and people of the same group as S. Crucially, facts about power and group membership, relative status and self-image will be involved in the interpretation. The way in which this happens will be discussed in 4.3. below.

3.3. The transmission of face information

We take face as meaning two things:

a. The need for an individual to know her standing in relation to others with whom she interacts. This includes assessments of others' opinion of the individual, and their relative status in terms defined by their specific cultural/social situation.

b. The need for an individual to have a clearly defined range of possible activities. This includes an assessment of freedom to perform actions or not to, depending on preference, responsibility, or constraints.
It follows from this that interactions will necessarily involve a constant monitoring of the individual's standing with regard to these needs. A hearer will look for clues which not only aid in the interpretation of utterances, but will make adjustments, of varying magnitude, to the social framework within which she sees herself as situated.

The context in which she interprets utterances will involve knowledge about face, and the effect of power and intimacy variables on it. We assume that the same applies to the speaker, and that a speaker can be expected to use that knowledge in formulating utterances in accordance with the principle of relevance. In other words, some of the information given in the taxonomies in Chapters 1-3 will be part of the mutual cognitive environment of any grouping of interactants. The amount and type of information shared will be culturally and socially determined, but we assume that, in situations where cross-cultural miscommunication is not a factor, sufficient amounts of information will be shared to facilitate communication of mutually manifest social facts.  

Consider the situation outlined in Chapter 1: Male workers are watching a woman walking nearby. The interaction proceeds as follows:

(9)  

a. The men whistle and make remarks about the woman's physical attributes.  
b. The woman shows her displeasure by verbal means.  
c. The men repeat or enlarge on previous comments, with added remarks about her sexual orientation.

As part of the interpretation process, the woman assesses the relative weightings of P,D,R thus:

(9)  

a. The men are making intimate remarks about my physical attributes.

For some H, such remarks will not cause any reaction, nor any triggering of the following process. However, for a woman who has a negative perception of such behaviour, it is not possible to stop at that point. The behaviour which the men have indulged in brings to the foreground of H's cognitive environment assumptions which have to do with social relationships:

b. This is an intimate way to behave.

In the context of c., there are few contextual effects to be gained:

c. The men are not intimates of mine - I have never seen them before.

Facts about social relationships also include assumptions like:

d. People breach intimacy rules if they think the imposition is small.

However, this assumption fails to yield contextual effects in the context:

e. I have indicated that I don't like their attentions by telling them to be quiet.

However, in the context in e., f. has some strong contextual implications in the environment g. which H already has as part of the specific rules of social interaction which have become salient in her
cognitive environment already. One of these rules is that, in our society, making collective public comments about people's physical attributes is frequently perceived as insulting.

  f. They are continuing and, furthermore, are being insulting.

Again, in the rules of social interaction is the following:

  g. People who fear retribution are generally not overtly rude.

This brings facts about her power of retribution to the foreground like:

  h. They feel safe either because there are ten of them and one of me, or because I am a woman and they are men, or because they are up on the building and I am down on the ground.

  i. These factors give them power over me.

A woman who is concerned about such aspects of male/female interaction will have these assumptions readily available for any interaction with men. These will become highly salient in the environment above, since there are strong implications for her in such an encounter, in terms of her freedom from unwanted imposition (negative face). Since, for such a woman, the freedom to walk along the street unaccosted is highly desirable, any interpretive process which allows her to make an assessment about the state of that freedom will be cost-effective.

Example (9) and its analysis show the way in which the sociological facts about the relationship between at least one group of males and the female gender in general can be illuminated in a principled way from linguistic phenomena. There are many contextual effects communicated: new contextual implications about the power relationship (humiliation), the strengthening of assumptions the woman has held previously about walking past building sites/men in general, and possibly the weakening of assumptions the woman has held about her freedom to walk around the area (coercion).

4. Some extensions of Relevance Theory

There are ways in which Relevance Theory can be extended to cover a wide range of interactional phenomena. The framework provided by Sperber and Wilson allows these extensions to be made, without ad hoc addition to the theory.

4.1. The safety of off-recordness explained

The problem with fitting off-record strategies into the Brown and Levinson model, or more particularly into the face attack model, is that there does not seem to be a clear division between on-record and off-record strategies. Many on-record strategies which are polite at that level, have an off-record 'layer' at the level of implicature which performs the face attack. This is a function of contextual indicators provided by S, which lead H into the implicature process in
order to recover the full import of the utterance. It is necessary to explain how this works, which Brown and Levinson do not do.

Brown and Levinson (1987:19) claim that 'there are good arguments for insisting that off-record strategies are generally more polite than on-record'. In the 'dark side' extension, those arguments are less convincing. In fact there is a good reason why off-record strategies are more threatening to H on the social level, even if they seem to be more polite on the surface. If H is being given the responsibility for assessing the purpose of an utterance, and is in a situation where challenge is difficult or even threatening, the fact that there is nothing overtly face-attacking in S's behaviour puts H in a very delicate situation. Overt rudeness is more risky to the speaker, in that she is open to charges of nastiness, coldness or uncooperative behaviour. In one sense, then, it is less threatening to the hearer if there is a good chance that the behaviour will cause others to sympathise with her, and challenge S. The situation is therefore a lot more complex than Brown and Levinson assess it to be.

In Relevance Theory, there is a continuum between those cases where the speaker provides sufficient explicit evidence of her communicative intentions to preclude other interpretations, and those cases where the speaker masks her intentions to the point where the hearer has to take complete responsibility for the interpretation. These are situations where H is not sure of the assumptions which S holds, and there are no unambiguous clues given which will allow H to claim an overt intention to point her to a 'dark side' interpretation. The only evidence H has to go on is in her cognitive environment, which she cannot be sure intersects with that of S in that area. At this time, the responsibility is entirely H's and S cannot be said to know where H's interpretation will go.

Of course, some S will use this fact to mask their true intentions, and will phrase their utterances skilfully, so that any non-cooperative interpretation H draws can be successfully denied. Where the possibility of challenge or retribution exists, there is an advantage to S in phrasing a face attack in such a way that it is likely that H will follow the possible extensions of context to the point where the attack is recovered, but that S can charge H with extending the context beyond the point which S had envisaged (It never even occurred to me that you would take it like that), or with having a restricted range of contexts where S is concerned (You always take me up the wrong way).

Similarly, for a relatively innocuous comment like

(10) It's cold in here.

The following potential conclusions are arranged in the order of reliability in which they can be
said to be manifest to the speaker and hearer.

(10)  
   a. S is expressing an opinion. (A standard condition on an assertion)
   In context b.
   b. The window is open/the heater isn’t on.
   The most salient interpretation would be
   c. S wants me to shut the window/turn the heater on.
   The next most salient interpretation would be
   d. S is implying that it would be warmer elsewhere.
   given that the remedies in c. are more accessible than that in d., unless the participants are doing
   something where location isn’t important, and a salient assumption in the mutual cognitive
   environment is that there is a nearby room with a roaring fire which would be as convenient to the
   activity in other respects. In this case, e. becomes feasible.
   e. S wants to go into the room with the fire on.
   However, unless S has supplied clues in previous interactions, or by the use of gesture or other
   paralinguistic methods, the following assumptions would be less likely to be accessed.
   f. S wants physical contact with me.
   g. S wants me to cuddle her.
   h. S wants to go to Fiji for a holiday.
   i. S wants to emigrate to Australia.
   The further H goes from the propositional content of an utterance, and the immediately accessible
   environment of previous utterances, or highly salient features of the physical environment, the
   more H takes responsibility for the interpretation. Of course, in the presence of some other, more
   specific information about the context, like the presence of travel brochures, or the relationship
   between the speaker and hearer, the order in (10) could be different. What is crucial is that, in a
   given context, where these features are specified, the element of choice disappears, and one line of
   interpretation becomes inevitable.
   For instance, in the environment
   (10)  
      a’. S doesn’t like living in New Zealand.
      b’. S hates the climate.
      c’. S was talking before about the job opportunities in Australia.
   H can assume that S takes some responsibility for H’s accessing of
   d’. S wants to emigrate to Australia
   as a likely interpretation.

   To take another example, in the environment in *a.,
   (10)  
      *a. S and H are strangers.
   H would be taking an enormous responsibility for the interpretation:
b. S wants physical contact with me.
c. S wants me to cuddle her.

and could rightly find himself in serious trouble if he acted upon that interpretation.

There are situations where off-recordness is not an indicator of S's lack of power or fear of retribution. Other motivations may override S's assessment of the power relation, like S's need to be seen as witty and adroit in communication. In fact, where S is part of a solidary group, her ability to perform off-record face attacks on H, thus confusing H and inhibiting her participation in the interaction, will increase S's power in that situation. Thus the off-recordness is used to prevent challenge or retribution, not because of S's lack of power, but because S wishes to increase her status within the group. Such a motivation would seem to contravene the requirement on a speaker who is aiming for relevance that effort be minimised. However, the type of off-recordness which is an attempt to be witty and adroit is typically used in the presence of a wider audience. If the underlying meaning is not sufficiently accessible to this wider audience, then the strategy will have failed. Therefore, while confusing the target H, S will be making the relevance of her remarks manifest to the wider audience, with whom she is solidary, and the target H will no doubt gain some effects from the obvious solidarity of that group in the face of her own confusion.

As I have shown, utterances which have both a polite and a non-polite reading are easy for S to defend, because S can claim to have been operating within politeness rules, while H may suspect that this is not the case. Therefore, often the very thing which is off-record is whether the utterance is polite or impolite.

4.2. The interpretation of discourse-based strategies

It has been noted that much of the literature on pragmatics tends to deal with single utterances, rather than operating over whole discourse chunks, or interactional episodes. It is crucial to an analysis of face in particular that pragmatic analysis does take account of large interactional segments, often covering successive episodes in the interactional relationship between two participants, and once again, Relevance Theory has the potential to deal with the problem in a principled way.

The key to cross-discourse analysis lies in the definitions of manifestness, mutual manifestness and mutual cognitive environments, together with the way in which these affect the context in which interpretations take place. The way in which an utterance will be interpreted will frequently depend on the previous experience which H has of interactions with
S. Either the hearer will assume cooperative designs, and be forced by the marked nature of the utterance to look for other motivations, or the hearer will start from the assumption of non-cooperative motives, and the utterance will be immediately relevant.

Consider the case of the hearer having her assumptions about the relationship between her and the speaker contradicted. The speaker meets the hearer and says:

(11) Hello. It's lovely to see you again so soon.

The hearer may interpret this in a straightforward way as follows:

(11) a. S is expressing an opinion.
    b. S is very pleased to see me.
    c. S finds my presence important.
    d. This is flattering.

On successive occasions, however, H might hear S say the same thing to everybody else, even those about whom S has expressed dislike in H's presence. Future instances of the utterance in (11) will receive a very different interpretation on the grounds of this interactional experience, which has enriched H's encyclopaedic information about S. Even if S is in fact sincere with respect to H, the establishment of the new context will preclude a positive reading, unless H is more concerned with S's ostensible good opinion than S's sincerity.

No adjustment of context will be needed in the case where H has personal experience, or has heard of certain facts about S's interactive style which direct her toward an interpretation inconsistent with the notion of cooperation. Consider the example in (12) below.

(12) Here's X. Now we can really have an intellectual discussion.

H holds assumptions about S in intellectual discussion which direct her to the interpretation in (12) d:

(12) a. By 'intellectual discussion', S means an exposition of her views.
    b. S always ridicules anyone else's views if they don't coincide with hers.
    c. X's views don't coincide with S's.
    d. S is going to ridicule X.

In this way, H's previous interactions with S enable her to access more quickly the context which will lead her to the non-polite interpretation.

4.3. The importance of hearer perception

Hearer perception is crucial in the interpretation of utterances according to Relevance Theory. The hearer, in accessing information which will help her in the search for relevance, must proceed in accordance with informed guesses as to the speaker's informative and communicative
intentions. She is unable to know what assumptions S is using in formulating the utterance, but she will have some assumptions to work from which may or may not be correct. These will include her assumptions about the speaker, including any encyclopaedic information about the speaker's values, beliefs, opinions etc. She may also have some previously processed utterances to work from, and some clues from the physical environment.

On the basis of the context she constructs from these assumptions, the hearer may arrive at an accurate interpretation of the utterance, or she may be totally or partially incorrect. Following from the presumption of optimal relevance, she will assume that the form of the utterance is the most relevant one the speaker could have chosen to communicate the set of assumptions, and she will expect the speaker to have formulated the utterance in such a way as to lead her to the correct interpretation. Where the interpretation is incorrect, it is not valid to say that there has been a complete breakdown in communication, or that nothing has been communicated. What has happened is that there has been a misinterpretation of what has been communicated, but in terms of modification of the hearer's cognitive environment, communication has occurred.

Consider for instance the situation where A has expressed interest in a job. She may speak to B, the potential employer, who may say:

(13) I am not in a position to notify my decision at this stage, but I am sure you will not be disappointed.

The speaker may be working from the environment

(13) a. A will not get the job she applied for.
    b. There is an aspect to the job which she would not be happy with.
    c. Therefore, any disappointment she may feel initially will be shortlived.

However, A will, unless she has some encyclopaedic information about B's evasiveness or lack of honesty, undoubtedly be working from the environment

(13') a'. I have asked about the job.
    b'. B has said that I will not be disappointed.

Because of the tendency, already discussed, for human beings to opt for readings which strengthen rather than weaken the assumptions they already hold, and since H believes the assumption in c'. to be part of the mutual cognitive environment of S and H, the most cost-efficient, and preferred interpretation will be d'. In addition to this, H has encyclopaedic information about the nature of such requests and answers, which leads her to the conclusion that, if S has said she will not be disappointed, this is likely to be a roundabout way of saying that she has got what she wants.

   c'. I will be disappointed if I do not get the job.
   d'. I must be going to get the job.

In this case, B has left out clues to the intended interpretation, either because B expects that A
will interpret the utterance in the manner shown in (13), or because B wants to mislead A in the meantime. The fact that the knowledge about the form of B's utterance which A has accessed above is likely to be mutually manifest means A is entitled to work from the premise that B would ensure that there were clues as to his actual intentions, unless he were intending to mislead.

If the speaker is aware of assumptions which the hearer holds which should be contradicted in order to guide the interpretation in the right direction, it is necessary to include some indication that the contradiction should take place, if the presumption of optimal relevance is to be upheld. If the speaker is unaware of such assumptions, then the responsibility for the incorrect interpretation rests with the hearer, although she may still be correct in her judgement. In the latter case, the speaker is justified in saying that there was nothing in the utterance to give rise to that interpretation, and can disclaim responsibility for any aspect of the interpretation which has been arrived at, over and above the information which the speaker intended to communicate.

Clearly, the hearer's context is of major importance in the interpretive process. Where face is concerned, the role of hearer perception is crucial. Where a hearer interprets an utterance as attacking her face, there are immediate effects on her subsequent interactions with the speaker. She may not be in a position to ask for a clarification of speaker intention, or may not want to do so. In this case, if her interpretation is incorrect, she will feel humiliated or coerced through no fault of the speaker. If the speaker has cooperative motives, it is in the best interests of both parties for S to ensure that no misinterpretation occurs.

4.4. Formulas and Idioms

Formulas are the set of lexicalised syntactic fragments which by definition carry with them a predictable meaning and a set pragmatic index. Because of these characteristics, it might be said that they meet the conditions necessary for Brown and Levinson's claim that certain forms are invariant in their pragmatic or illocutionary force. In many cases this would be true. Thus, a speaker who said

(14) Turned out nice again, hasn't it?

might quite conceivably be seen as making a genuine comment on a pleasant day. However, under the following conditions, the interpretation will run differently.

(14) a. This is a formula.

b. It means that the weather is nice.

However, from the immediate physical environment, H gains the information:
c. It is pouring with rain. The encyclopaedic information about rain includes the following assumption:

   d. Rain is not generally thought to constitute nice weather unless it is necessary to the activity planned.

Assumptions c. and d. together with e, already mutually manifest to S and H because of a prior arrangement, yield the conclusion (14) f.

   e. The activity planned is a boating picnic.
   f. Therefore, S must be speaking ironically.

Note that it is the mutual manifestness of the unmarked or usual meaning of the formula which gives rise to the interpretation of irony, as the use of the formula is an echoic use; that is, it relies on the existence of a straightforward usage, or a potential usage, whose meaning is propositional in a different context. Another context - here the physical context - shows up the absurdity of the usual interpretation.

Other formulas used by Brown and Levinson to support their contention that the pragmatic force is invariant are subject to just the same shift in emphasis, depending on the context. Some examples, from chapter three are analysed below.

   (15) If you don’t mind, I’d like to get some work done.

   (15) a. S is evidently busy.
   b. I am interrupting S.
   c. S is indicating kinesically that she does not want to talk to me any more.
   d. S wants me to leave her alone, whether I mind or not.

(16) If you’ll allow me, I’ll just return to the business in hand.

   (16) a. S is asking my permission to redirect the conversation.
   b. S is my employer.
   c. In our culture, it is not customary for employers to ask for employees’ permission to direct the conversation.
   d. I am not in a position to give S my permission.

Once again, where a speaker produces an utterance, which could be polite in one context, but is patently inappropriate in another context, the echoic nature of the utterance leads to a perception of irony.

   e. S is being ironic.

Where a speaker is ironic in a situation in which a direct admonition to the employee would be more appropriate, the hearer will be led to the interpretation that the speaker has a reason for producing the utterance in an off-record way. In a context where S is known for trying to spare employees’ feelings, the interpretation would be
f. S is trying to interrupt me in a tactful way.

Otherwise, interpretation f. would result.

g. S is trying to humiliate me.

The interpretation in g. is reached as a result of some encyclopaedic information about irony, which is that it is often used to humiliate others, in a way which doubles the strength of a face attack.

In these examples, formulas which would automatically carry a pragmatic reading indicating that they are to be used for politeness have potential for other readings in other environments. Examples (15) and (16) show that these can be either linguistic or other social environments or a mixture of both. In this social context a speaker is not impeded in directing discourse whereas the hearer is, and the speaker’s use of a formula which denies this situation gives rise to the perception that something extra is being conveyed. Both interactants share the same assumptions about who has the freedom, which makes the interpretation of the face attack much more readily accessible.

Formulas which are used for face attack are of particular interest, as they rely on shared assumptions about social relationships which are at one level lexicalised, and at another not lexicalised, but easily accessed. Therefore, a remark like

(17) Didn't quite catch the name. Girl's blouse, wasn’t it?10

has available for its interpretation at least these five sets of assumptions, the first, and least likely being a simple recovery of propositional content, as in conclusions a-c below:

(17) a. He didn't hear my name.

b. He is trying to ascertain what my name is.

c. He thinks it is 'girl's blouse'.

Such an interpretation fails to achieve relevance, since it is patently nonsensical, given the naming conventions of our society, that H's name should be 'girl's blouse', or imagined to be that. The search for relevance must continue:

(17) d. He is likening me to a girl's blouse.

Here, H will access information about girl's blouses like:

e. Girls' blouses are usually attractive, soft, feminine etc.

f. He is saying I am attractive, soft, feminine etc.

The conclusion in f. does not yield a possible interpretation. Indeed steps e. and f. will be unlikely to be entertained because of the accessibility of the context in (17) g-k, which is crucially foregrounded in this situation.

(17) g. This is a rugby team we belong to.

H's encyclopaedic information about rugby teams includes assumptions like:

h. One of the things we are supposed to be is strong and masculine.
Again, the recently accessed entry for girl's blouses contains the information
   i. A girl's blouse is not associated with strength or masculinity.
The conclusion in j. is a result of the combination of d. and i.
   j. He is saying I am not strong and masculine.
In the context of g. and h., j yields the contextual effect:
   k. This is an insult.
It is not possible for H to rest at this interpretation because within the context surrounding the assumption in d. is the set of assumptions about rugby team membership which includes that members are solidary against the opposing team, that insults are a common form of interaction among rugby team members, together with previous interational experience with S. Further searching will occur, unless some previous exchange has revealed that S does not consider H to be part of that solidary group.

   (17)   l. It is customary for members of the team to make insulting remarks to each other, jokingly.
   m. He is joking.
Some of the background assumptions made available to the interactants by the interaction, including those previously held, and strengthened as a result of the interaction, are as follows:

   (17)   n. This kind of team maintains solidarity partly by joking.
   o. The jokes usually take the form of insults.
Some of the assumptions about the social organisation of such teams involve the prerequisites for team membership, in the social sense of being fully accepted by the others in the team.
   p. It is a marker of group membership to be able to take these jokes.
Previous interational experience adds assumptions about the types of insult available for such team membership tests:

   q. Insults against men in this kind of team often involve reference to women, their anatomy, clothing, names etc.
   r. These insults reflect the assumptions we hold about women.
   s. Our assumptions about women are not flattering - i.e. to be likened to one implies an insult.
   t. Our group-membership relies on making other groups, (here, women), out-group.

The above process appears to contravene the economical processing requirement on an individual aiming for maximal relevance. However, two points must be considered in this regard. Firstly, with formulaic language use, much of the information will be part of the pragmatic index associated with the lexical entry of the formula. Some of it will be relatively opaque (i.e. known only intuitively) by the speaker. However, the information, like the semantic information of
formulas and idioms, must be there for the purposes of retrieval. A newcomer to a group like the rugby team will have much of this to learn, especially if he comes from a different culture. I will call this the condition on lexicalisation of pragmatic information.

The condition on lexicalisation of pragmatic information
Any lexicalised syntactic fragment (formula) will have the set of assumptions habitually associated with its use lexicalised with it. This information is recoverable by the usual process of utterance interpretation.

The second point to be made about the complexity of the analysis in (17) is that, in Relevance Theory, any complexity in the interpretation process must be offset by a gain in contextual effects. The potential for recovery of the assumptions in (17) d-t is essential to any individual who has a vested interest in being part of the group which uses the information - the rugby club, in example (17). Where the motivation to be part of the team is strong, the recovery of at least (17) m. is crucial to H's face needs, and the internalisation of the pragmatic information will be an immediate need of the individual. The rich set of contextual effects can be likened to the vague set of effects which Sperber and Wilson (1986:59) describe as an impression; 'a noticeable change in one's cognitive environment, a change resulting from relatively small alterations in the manifestation of many assumptions'. The speaker cannot be said to have been meaning any of n-t, in the sense of meaning-nn (Grice 1957), but the vaguer effects can be conveyed by the strengthening contextual effects generated by the utterance of (17).

If a member of a group involved in such an interaction were questioned about the accuracy of the analysis in (17), it is likely that at least some of the above assumptions would be consciously held, but it is also true that some of them might be strenuously denied. However, I would contend that they do exist in such an individual's cognitive environment, though they may be in a very different form; one which is much more flattering to the holder of such assumptions.

Because of the opacity of much of the pragmatic information associated with formulas and idioms, it is likely that they will frequently be used in an unconscious way. A speaker might say

(18) Don't be such an old woman, Bert.
and be quite genuinely surprised when a feminist, who has overheard, becomes irate, and takes him to task for his sexism. The habitual experience of such a formula is unlikely to take into account the sort of assumptions which have led to its use as a criticism, but they are recoverable if the process is set in motion.

(18) a. S has called H an old woman.
Here the characteristics of old women will be accessed:

b. Old women are often frail, with bent backs and lined faces.
c. Old women are often slow and hesitant, with defective hearing.

The conclusion will be reached as below:

d. S is saying H has some of these characteristics.

If H is strong, with an unlined face and a straight back, the conclusion will be:
e. S is saying that H is slow and hesitant, or doesn't hear well.

The offence to the feminist would occur as a result of her encyclopaedic information about naming practices, salient in her cognitive environment because of the importance accorded to naming practices in feminist thought. Assumptions which would be accessed include:

(18')
a'. Words for women are often used for insults.
b'. Words for women are particularly insulting when applied to men.

Her feelings of outrage will arise as a result of having these assumptions strengthened by the utterance she overhears.

The interesting thing about this strategy, which I have called a deflected FAA in chapter Two, is that, while ostensibly an on record bald attack on one H, in fact it has potential as a very low risk off record attack on the other H. If the second H challenges the remark, she is at risk from the possible solidarity of the other two participants, and can be taken to task for interrupting a private conversation.

4.5. The integration of social knowledge into a theory of utterance interpretation

The facts about humiliation, coercion and relative power/group status can be revealed by the same process as the recovery of the full propositional content of the utterance. Consider example (6) again, with the contextual enrichment extended.

(6) A: I'm just not orientated to city life.
    B: Oh you'll become orientated in no time.

(6)
a. B has repeated the word orientated.
b. B has stressed the syllables tated.
c. A has pronounced orientated wrongly.

After this (summarised) interpretation, the fact of B's having phrased the criticism in this way makes some further assumptions manifest to A, given A's assumptions about the rules of interaction.

d. It is not polite in this context to draw attention to the mistake.

The encyclopaedic information accessed here includes assumptions about correcting others' language in public, and how such behaviour is considered to be very face-threatening.

e. To do so publicly is to humiliate the other participant.

As a result of i., certain of A's assumptions about B are enriched.
f. B is not worried about humiliating A.
A's assumptions about social interaction lead her to the conclusion about her own future behaviour in B's presence:

g. A will have to be careful what she says.
Further assumptions will be accessed, both because of the salience of the contextual implications they give rise to, and because they have been foregrounded by the accessing of encyclopaedic information about social interaction:

h. Group members who want to make individuals comfortable in the presence of the group encourage them to participate.
i. B does not want me to participate.
j. B doesn’t want me to feel part of this group.

Once again the insult conveyed to H is twofold: the criticism implied in the utterance itself, and the fact that the phrasing of the utterance is meant to draw attention to the criticism. The informative intention is to let H know that the pronunciation of the word is not right, but if that were all S wanted to convey, there would be other ways to do so, in a non-threatening manner. However, the fact that S has chosen to make the point obliquely, and in a public setting provides clues to the communicative intent, which is that S wants to communicate the information about the pronunciation, and also some other information which involves the social relationship between S and H.

The same is true of the rugby example analysed above. If S’s only desire were to communicate friendship and solidarity with H, the most economical way (involving least processing effort), would be to say something like

(19) What did you say, mate?11

but, while this would communicate the friendship successfully, it would fail to encode the other layers of information. These other layers are not incidental to the interaction. They are a crucial part of the management of social relations, and any accessing of contexts in which that information is recoverable must be seen by H as worthwhile, in terms of the contextual effects gained. As the transmission and interpretation of face information is crucial to the social function of information, I argue that it is cost-effective for a hearer to extend the contextual enrichment as far as is necessary to recover crucial information about her social status with regard to other interactant/s.

In many cases, this will be not very far at all - the cases where rather routine exchanges take place between interactants whose roles are generally stable. Even in these cases, however, there is a constant potential for change, and interactants will be sensitive to subtle changes which might herald a redefinition of roles. Where the role definition is less stable, or where the
situation places the security of roles at risk, or in competition with each other, constant and efficient manipulation and monitoring of the role definition will be an integral part of the interpretive process.

5. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have introduced the main principles of Relevance Theory, and shown how it can account for the kinds of communication which falsify claims made by Brown and Levinson (1978). I have demonstrated that the principle of relevance provides the necessary generalisations about communications ranging across the spectrum from polite to impolite, and that it provides a principled account of phenomena such as off-recordness, discourse-based strategies, and the special nature of formulas and idioms. The importance of hearer perception is demonstrated in the recovery of assumptions during the interpretive process, and I have shown how social information is transmitted both by what is said and by the fact of its being said, the crucial factor in each situation being the contextual information available to the hearer.

In the next chapter, I will examine some of these situations, where non-cooperative communication is used as a tool for manipulation and maintenance of certain social realities, and show how the insights provided by Relevance Theory can explain the messages transmitted, and the effect these messages have on the recipient.
1. For a more detailed exposition of the process of cost-benefit analysis, see Sperber and Wilson (1986:123)

2. Robyn Carston (1985) makes the point that there is more to the enrichment of propositional content than reference assignment and disambiguation. She says 'truth-conditional semantics takes as its domain propositional forms which are only partially determined by the linguistic expressions used, achieving full specification via pragmatic means' (Carston 1985:14). This is in conflict with other pragmatic theories in which pragmatic enrichment is implicature and occurs after the propositional form is determined.

3. Sperber and Wilson acknowledge the contribution made by Grice in the description of the process of interpretation. This acknowledgement is echoed by Thomas: 'it would be a mistake to underestimate the insights which Grice has given us into the process of utterance interpretation' (Thomas 1986:53).

4. Holmes (1984a:48) deals with the problem of assigning illocutionary force to syntactic forms. She says, 'In other words items which might be classified semantically as modality markers may function pragmatically as devices reflecting the relationship between the speaker and the addressee'. See also Kempson (1975), Hudson (1975), Leech and Svartvik (1975). There is an acknowledgement of the problem of arbitrarily assigning illocutionary force, which is taken further in Sperber and Wilson (1986) and Austin (1987).

5. Conceptual address is Sperber and Wilson's term for the marker of a chunk of encyclopaedic information in the long-term memory of an individual. See Sperber and Wilson (1986: 86ff.)

6. See the introduction for a more detailed definition of face.

7. Maltz and Borker (1982) draw an analogy between those situations where people from different cultures are hindered in their communication by culturally defined concepts, and a situation which occurs intra-culturally. They claim that differential
accessibility of assumptions, caused by different acculturation processes, has been shown to cause miscommunication between women and men in Western society. I exclude the miscommunication caused by non-mutual acculturation from the category of face attack, except where knowledge of possible misinterpretations is manipulated for the purposes of attack.

8. This situation is recognised by Leech (1983), who notes the case where what is ostensibly a piece of advice can be interpreted as a warning.
   s will always be able to claim that it was a piece of advice, given from the friendliest of motives. In this way, the 'rhetoric of conversation' may show itself in s's ability to have his cake and eat it.


10. This example is taken from Kuiper (forthcoming).

11. Note that there is no plausible environment in which example (17) could be paraphrased as 'I didn't hear your name properly but I think it is girl's blouse'. The availability of the explicit meaning via the interpretation process, however, make such formulas ideal vehicles for comedy.
Chapter Five

Relevance Theory and Non-cooperative communication: Some applications

Currently, research on sexism and language has not always provided the evidence which feminism needs: lists of sexist words pose little threat to the patriarchal order.
Spender (1980:32)

1. Introductory remarks

Claims are often made that language is used to communicate prejudices of different kinds. These claims frequently founder on the fact that they rely on lists of lexical items which are derogatory and demeaning to the recipient. While such items are in fact effective verbal weapons, it is too easy to dismiss their use as only superficially wounding, and not really of fundamental importance in reinforcing social inequalities.

Opponents of linguistic reform state that the change of terminology will not result in a change in attitudes. In a paper delivered to a symposium on language, sex and gender, Gregersen makes this point. He focusses on the speaker intention factor, and says that claims for the effectiveness of reform are based on an acceptance of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which he regards as untenable. He points out that it is quite possible, indeed common, to have a change in linguistic habits which is not matched by a change in attitude. He cites examples of graffiti which he has seen around his university:

A dramatic example of the difficulties involved in trying to get a better self image through change of label came across to me in a men's room at my university......On one wall was scribbled "Kill all blacks"; on the other, "Kill all gays". In a sense, it would have been less disturbing if the inscriptions read "Kill all niggers" and "Kill all faggots".
Gregersen (1979:5-6)

As far as it goes, Gregersen's argument is persuasive, and there are certainly examples of the
phenomenon of superficial terminology changes in the area of sexist language. Attempts to change image by altering terminology have frequently succumbed to our seemingly cultural need for differentiation by gender. For instance, the use of chairperson as a genderless title has been eroded by the fact that chairperson is now widely perceived to denote female chairing a meeting/committee and to connotate something like feminist (read militant) person chairing meeting/committee, or referring to same.

The recipients of humiliating and coercive language are aware that they are on the receiving end of language which diminishes their self-esteem, but they are not able to be specific about why this effect is occurring, nor about how to combat it. I claim that it is not the semantic reading of the lexical item itself which does the damage, but the social facts communicated by its use. These are the facts which I have shown to be salient in Chapters 1-3, and the ability for hearers to recover that information has been explained in Chapter 4.

In this chapter, I propose to look at some specific situations where power and group-status are salient factors in an interaction, and to analyse interactions using the model of interpretation developed in chapter four. This will serve to clarify the reasons for the effect of non-cooperative communication on the recipient. I will show that it is possible to apply the principles of relevance theory in recovering assumptions which underlie certain types of communication, thus providing a principled account of their effect. As interesting and varied examples, I have chosen to look at sexist communication, a literary work, and reports of judgements in criminal proceedings.

2. Sexist communication

Feminists have long been advocates for the reform of the language. They argue for removal of linguistic sexism and discrimination, in order to improve women's self esteem, and social image. In some cases, they seem to be suggesting that a change in the use of language to women will bring about a change in speaker-attitudes towards women. In many cases, however, there seems to be a greater emphasis placed on the importance to the hearer of sexist language, and the way this effects women's ability to participate freely in social and occupational interactions.

The change in attitudes is not occurring swiftly, and it seems unlikely that it can be brought about just by linguistic reform. However, I argue that linguistic change and awareness of the process of linguistic sexism are crucial to the improvement of women's self image, not because of the effect on the speaker, but because of the effect on the hearer. We are all aware of situations where hearers impute motives and intentions to speakers, of which the latter are entirely unaware. The fact that this is so does not necessarily alter the effect on the hearer, even if the speaker subsequently claims innocence, since there are no proofs to the hearer that the speaker is actually sincere. It must
always be a matter of faith.

For example, the use of terms such as the generic man is seen to be a limiting practice, which causes an invisibility of women in everyday usage. Although users of the term claim that they are using it generically, research shows that hearers or readers of the word will form a mental picture which excludes women. Studies have been undertaken with preschool, primary and secondary school-age children which show that the mental image evoked by written passages extensively using the generic man is that of male human beings. These results have been further borne out by similar research using university students. 2

The real damage, however, occurs as a result of the hearer’s perceptions of the location of the power base, and/or group-membership in a given interaction.

... open grabs for power and blatant expressions of misogyny are always possible and can, of course, have tremendous impact. Yet it is the covert messages that are most difficult to resist, that we may unwittingly send ourselves, and that are easiest for the dominant group (sometimes sincerely) to deny.

Sally McConnell-Ginet (1980:8)

The form of non-cooperative communication which is subtle, and difficult to define in literal terms is the one which transmits most messages about these social factors, and communicates them most efficiently in terms of the speaker's needs. I will examine some examples of this, and show how the interpretive analysis reveals facts about the relationship between the speaker and hearer which cause constraint and difficulty in further interactions.

The use of Ms, a title intended to obviate classification by marital status, now tends to classify the bearer politically as a feminist. The following exchange, representing a conversation I had with a member of the business community, illustrates this nicely.

(1) A: Now that will be Miss, won’t it?
B: No, Ms.
A: Oh, one of those.

There are two facts communicated by this interchange. The first is recovered by the following analysis:

(1) A. That will be Miss, won’t it?
(1) a. A assumes that my correct title is Miss.

In the situation, which involves H establishing her credibility with a member of the business community at the beginning of their professional relationship, it is important for H to determine the impression she is making on A, and to assess what social point they are starting from. For this
reason, an interpretation which goes only as far as (1) b., or even not as far as that, is unlikely. Rather, it is likely that information about the rules of interaction are going to be salient in her context throughout this transaction. Information which H has as part of her cognitive environment includes the assumption that the title Miss is used in addressing unmarried women.

b. He assumes I am an unmarried woman.

H has access to highly salient information from the immediately preceding interaction, which includes the following:

c. I have given no indication of my marital status.

The relevance of A's statement is to be found in assessing what assumptions A has made about H's marital status in the interaction.

d. He assumes that I am unmarried because of some property he assigns to unmarried women.

Here, H will search for information which links the utterance with the encyclopaedic information she believes A to have about her. Based on the immediately preceding interaction (the only one they have had) she recovers the assumption:

e. The only thing he knows about me is that I am capable of transacting financial business.

The presence of d. and e. together in H's cognitive environment produce the following conclusion:

f. The ability to transact financial business is not a property he assigns to married women.

The encyclopaedic information available to H about married women includes one highly salient assumption:

g. Married women generally have husbands.

The combination of f. and g. yield the conclusion in h.

h. He assumes a married woman leaves the transaction of financial business to her husband.

The ability to be taken seriously in transacting business is likely to be very important to a person who is engaged in a business transaction. Therefore, a conclusion like h. is highly relevant to her, and is also where she can stop the interpretive process, since she now has information about the business relationship between her and S which has an important bearing on her future dealings with S. Any further assumptions which she may access, although relevant in some way, will not be as relevant as an assumption which has a bearing on this transaction, and her status within it.

Note that there is no reason within a Gricean analysis for there to be any search for implicatures at all. There is no requirement on the Gricean speaker to say only what is true, rather the speaker is required to say what he believes to be true. A hearer could quite conceivably interpret the utterance as an attempt at the truth, correct the speaker, and leave it at that. There would be a significant number of hearers who would do that, and Relevance Theory predicts that
this is the case. In a Relevance Theory framework, the absence in the hearer's cognitive environment of salient assumptions about address forms and their meaning would cause the most simple (i.e. most easily accessible) interpretation to be made.

However, Relevance Theory also predicts that, if the hearer's cognitive environment included those assumptions about address forms and their significance, the most basic interpretation would be ruled out. This is because, in that context, the utterance would produce significant contextual effects, each one of which would cause a further enrichment of the context to take place. For instance, in a cognitive environment in which assumptions about the gender-related aspects of address forms were highly salient, the interpretation would continue as below:

i. This assumption removes married women from the group of independent agents in financial transactions.

j. I am aware of certain assumptions he holds which are derogatory to my social group.

Such assumptions have contextual implications for the hearer in regard to further interactions with the speaker, and may be regarded as highly relevant if she has strong ideological reasons for not dealing with people who communicate these opinions. The assumptions will be reinforced by the next part of the interaction which includes the utterances

(2) B. No, Ms.
A. Oh, one of those.

Particularly in the light of the previous interpretation, which has just taken place, the hearer will recover the following assumptions:

(2) a. I have said that my title is Ms.

b. A has replied, using a formula which can have derogatory connotations.

H is likely to choose the derogatory option for the formula, given the assumptions which have been foregrounded during the immediately preceding interaction. H has, as part of her encyclopaedic entry about interaction in general, which is activated automatically during any interaction, the following assumption about the nature of such formulas, which leads to the conclusion in d:

(2) c. A would not use such a formula about a group he respected.

d. A is indicating a lack of respect for people who use the title Ms.

In d., the conclusion is formed about the status of the group to which H belongs, an important factor in terms of her continued interaction with A. As part of the interactional information available to her, H has the set of assumptions about on-recordness and off-recordness and the reasons for using these strategies, which further bear upon the status of H's group in relation to A's group:

(2) e. A is indicating this in a joking and blatant fashion.

f. He would not do so unless he had sufficient power to be confident of freedom
from risk of retribution.

It is clear that such conclusions as those reached in (2) a-f above will have some effect on the hearer in terms of her ease in interacting with the speaker on future occasions. She may decline to deal with that particular person subsequently, and will certainly feel on the defensive in any further interactions, from a need to prove that members of her group, i.e. married women who use the title Ms, are both capable and reasonable. She may of course opt for reinforcing his assumptions if her political motivation requires this.

The next example is taken from a book which contains a transcript of a training seminar. A is the therapist running the training session on neuro-linguistic programming, and B is a woman in the audience.³ The following exchange takes place:

(3) B: You sound like the devil.
A: You're not the first one who has said that, I'll tell you!
There was a cute little social worker who came up to me in a workshop I did in the Midwest ...
B: A man or a woman?
A: Does it matter? Are you a sexist? How's that for reversing a presupposition?

A hearer whose cognitive environment does not contain assumptions about the use of certain adjectives in connection with people of a certain gender would probably find A's first remark unremarkable. A hearer whose cognitive environment included information that men often describe women in terms of their physical appearance, and that this is both natural and acceptable derives the set of premises and the conclusion in the following way:

(3) a. A has said that the social worker was cute, little.
b. Men do not usually describe men as cute.
c. A is probably referring to a female social worker.

If that is as far as her interpretation goes, her following remark will be a genuine request for information. It is unlikely, however, that a strictly literal interpretation of her utterance is the appropriate one, particularly as she has interrupted A to ask him what should otherwise be an irrelevant question. There is a point B wishes to make which justifies the extra complexity her question introduces, resulting from further steps which can be made in her analysis of A's comment, as a result of the presence in her cognitive environment of the following cultural assumptions about the appropriateness of physical descriptions in specific contexts:

(3') a'. A has described the social worker's physical attributes.
b'. The social worker's physical attributes are unlikely to be relevant to this discourse.

In producing the utterance, A has communicated the tacit guarantee of relevance, so B will go
further to recover assumptions which will have a rich enough contextual effect.

c'. A would not unnecessarily refer to those attributes unless there were another relevant reason.

B is likely to have, as part of her cognitive environment, certain assumptions about the reasons why men include physical descriptions of women inappropriately:

d'. A considers women's physical attributes important in all contexts.
e'. This is a sexist way to behave.
f'. A is being sexist.

In the context(3') a'-f, B's following utterance is clearly to be interpreted as ironic, drawing attention to A's differentiation on the grounds of sex. That A interprets her utterance as ironic is clear from his response, which includes reference to sexism. Note that it is the third part of his reply

(4) How's that for reversing a presupposition?

which alerts us to the fact that he knows that B is in fact accusing him of sexism, and is trying to laugh it off. Given that the formula *How's that for...* is an indicator of pride in one's achievement (How's that for a cake!), the use of that formula may mean that he is also boasting about his adroitness in interaction with B.

The interpretation of boasting is further reinforced by the fact that he continues his story as follows:

(5) The comment this person made to me as it came up and coyly looked at me was.....

This breaks down in its interpretation to a series of humiliating off-record digs at B for trying to catch him out.

(5) a. A is referring to the social worker by the pronoun *it*.

Hearers have, as part of their grammatical knowledge about pronouns, the following information:

b. It is grammatically illformed to use a non-personified pronoun with a personified referent.

However, as a result of the guarantee of relevance, H forms the assumption in c.

c. A considers the inappropriate pronoun relevant enough in some way to justify its use.

In the context of the previously processed interaction, B would have as salient assumptions:

d. I have challenged A openly, and he is aware of this.
e. A is drawing attention to my question about the social worker's gender.
f. A is using my concern about gender to make fun of me.

In addition, there is another part of A's utterance which activates highly salient assumptions in B's cognitive environment, present as a result of the previous interpretive process:

g. A is also describing the social worker's behaviour as coy.
The interpretive process in (3') a'-f' applies in exactly the same way to g, except that the number of steps would be shortened because of the strength of assumption (3') f' in B's cognitive environment.

h. A is reiterating the sexism which I have challenged him on already.

B has assumptions about the way in which a speaker will change his behaviour if criticised by someone whose good opinion he values, which lead her to the conclusion:

i. A is saying that my disapproval is not to be regarded.

An interesting point arises from the above example. The first example of sexist language was relatively off record, in that it assumed the necessity for accessing contexts (3') beyond the immediate one (3) for recovering its full import, and therefore gave the speaker a certain amount of immunity from rebuke, in that A could have ignored or denied the existence of the other relevant context. In making the humorous reference to his awareness of the other context, however, he puts his following remark on record. The audience now have, as part of their immediate context, the fact that he has consciously made a sexist remark before, and presumably will do again.

Because of the importance of face in interaction, and because B has brought the power aspect of the relationship between her and A to the fore by challenging him, she will recover the following social information by extending the analysis in the direction seen in (5).

(5) j. A is being overtly sexist, and disregarding my opinion.

Encyclopaedic information about power relationships foregrounded by the previous interaction will yield an assumption like:

k. This is risky, since A could be reprimanded by members of the group for this.

Information about the interaction of power and risk variables would yield the assumptions:

l. If A thought the risk was high, he would not have been so overt.

m. A thinks there are conditions in this interaction which make him safe.

There is information in the physical and social environment of this interaction which supplies the assumptions:

n. These are potentially:
   - He is running the seminar.
   - We have all paid a lot of money to be here.
   - He is a well-known expert.
   - He is a man, and senses some sympathy from other men in the audience.

One or more of these assumptions would yield the conclusions in p.

o. These conditions give him power over me, which has been publicly stated, therefore I have been publicly diminished.

The likely effect of this on B is to constrain her further behaviour in one of these ways:
(i) She will probably feel humiliated and unwilling to challenge A again.
(ii) She may feel unable to continue in the situation she is in - she may leave the seminar, or at least turn off mentally.
(iii) At the very least, she will find that her immediate context for interpreting what A says is altered: i.e. that the second stage is now accessed first, and further interpretations will quite likely lead through the range of social information recovered in (5), even if indications are not given that this should be so. Given that B has publicly challenged the person running the course, and has now got the chance of attention being focussed on her in subsequent interactions, the need for her to access the information to p. above is strong, and the payoff in terms of contextual effects compensates the effort involved.

A report on sexual harassment quotes a situation where a woman student habitually received offers like this from a male lecturer:  

(6) Some private tutoring would probably help, how about we made it in the evening?

In the context available to her, a non-cooperative interpretation is likely. These are the facts from the immediate environment:

(6) a. She is a B-student.

From what the student knows of university grades, and what these means, she is aware of the fact in b.

b. A B-student is unlikely to be offered extra tutoring unless she has asked for some help.

Also from her knowledge about the way staff operate in the university environment, she also has the information:

c. The evening would be an appropriate time for individual help only if other times were unsuitable.

Previous interactions with the speaker have left the information in d. as a stored assumption:

d. There have been no other times discussed.

Social knowledge available to the hearer makes the assumption in e. part of H's encyclopaedic information about evenings, accessed because of the need to find the relevance of a seemingly irrelevant remark about meeting in the evening.

e. The evening is an appropriate time for other activities, i.e. those of a more personal and social nature.

Information about the expected relationships between teachers and students, and the expected relationships between people who socialise together in the evenings make f. available to H.

f. This is potentially an invitation to a more intimate relationship than would be expected between student and teacher.

Given that such an invitation ranks in the inventory of social mores as being quite risky, especially
in situations where the relationship has not previously been of an intimate or even socially equal nature, H will access information about factors which enable S to break social norms:

g. S is using his position of authority to make an intimate approach.

In the event, the pattern established by that approach was continued until the woman felt obliged to discontinue her enrolment. Such an example illustrates how the perception of power asymmetry caused the woman to feel constrained to leave rather than challenge the lecturer.

The following example makes quite explicit the role of relevance in recovering assumptions communicated by an utterance:

(7) A: I was discussing my work in a public setting, when a professor cut me off and asked me if I had freckles all over my body.

In a situation where a student is presenting an academic report, such a remark will be considered demeaning and embarrassing by the recipient. She will recover assumptions in the following manner:

(7) a. He has interrupted my academic report to ask a question.

b. The question concerns the freckles on my body.

H has information available to her in the light of her academic experience, which concerns topics which are considered relevant and appropriate in certain contexts.

c. This question is not relevant since it fails to connect with any information or assumptions recovered in the immediately preceding interactional environment.

It is possible at this point to decide that the remark is merely irrelevant and cease processing it. However, such an interpretation would fail to capture two important facts about communication. The first is that the speaker has interrupted her and is in authority. He would hardly be expected to interrupt with an irrelevant question. The presumption of optimal relevance requires that the hearer search for a relevant interpretation of the utterance. The second is that the relevance may lie, not in the propositional content of the utterance itself, but in the reason why the remark was made in the first place. H will continue as follows, accessing the next most available information, which will concern the focus of interest in the situation:

(7) d. To remark about my body at this time implies that my body is more important in this situation than my work.

Information which H has about situations in which the body is the most salient aspect of a person would yield the following assumptions:

e. I am a woman.

f. Women are traditionally seen in terms of their physical attributes.

g. He is ignoring my ability as a student in favour of traditional aspects of my gender.

h. This is sexually suggestive and insulting.

The information about interaction once again yields facts about power and the riskiness of on-record
strategies:
  i. He would not do this unless he were sure of immunity from retribution.

H will recover from the environment a major factor which can contribute to this speaker's power:
  j. His immunity lies in his power as a professor

Given the fact that the professor is not just using his generalised power over any student, but is
using a particular power over a woman in a sexually suggestive way, it is likely that a second
source of power will occur to the student:
  k. He also has power from his solidarity as a man, with the males in the group.

It would certainly be hard to imagine him saying the same thing to a male student.

A very clear example of group-membership manipulation is offered by example (9).

(8) When I volunteered the fact that I was a politics major (the professor) expressed
surprise and asked 'Now why would you want to do that?' when he had
commended the same information just minutes before to one of the men.

The interpretation of this utterance is shown below.

(8) a. He has commended the male student on his choice of major.
    b. I have made the same choice.
    c. He has expressed surprise about my choice.

The contradiction in the speaker's behaviour must be resolved if the hearer is to discover the full
relevance of what has been said.

    d. He can know of no difference between me and the other student, other than facts
       which are physically apparent.
    e. The only salient fact is that I am a woman.
    f. He is implying that I should not do a politics major because I am a woman.
    g. He is implying that women do not belong to the group of people (i.e. men) who
       can study politics.

A further example drawn from a university environment is seen in (9) below.

(9) A male professor, introducing his female graduate student who was giving a
    seminar said: 'It's nice to find a student who is intelligent and can write, but it
doesn't hurt if she's also good looking.'

This ostensible compliment can be readily interpreted as an intrusive comment on her physical
appearance. It's relevance can be recovered as follows:

(9) a. I am about to present a piece of academic work.
    b. The professor is introducing me.

There are rituals associated with the introduction of speakers, which H has a part of her
encyclopaedic information on introductions, activated by the professor's action in introducing her. H
will interpret S's remarks about her as follows:
c. He is making reference to my qualifications for presenting this seminar.

d. In addition to my intellectual abilities, he is referring to my physical appearance.

H’s encyclopaedic information about introductions, accessed as above, in the context of the presentation of academic work, includes the assumption in e.

e. Physical appearance is of no relevance in the presentation of a seminar.

However, the woman does not stop here in her interpretation. As a result of the tacit guarantee of relevance, she knows that there should be some good reason for what has been said, so she continues in her search for relevance:

(9)

f. However, he thinks my appearance is relevant to the group.

g. This must be because I am a woman. (He has specifically used the feminine pronoun.)

Such differentiation with regard to women gives rise to the interpretation in any such setting:

h. He believes that, for a woman, intellectual qualities are not enough to adduce as qualifications in his introduction.

The purpose of the seminar, and the ostensive action which the woman has made in standing up to deliver the paper make the woman’s presumption of her intellectual abilities salient, and the professor’s manner of introducing her weaken the assumptions she has made overt by her action.

i. He is belittling my ability, and placing me outside the group of people for whom intellectual ability is the main criterion for success.

While it is true that the speaker may well not intend such assumptions to form part of the interpretation, since such comments are frequently a kind of heavy-handed compliment, it is also true that there are cultural reasons why he considers such compliments acceptable. For many women who engage in academic work, the cultural background to such remarks will be known, and other assumptions connected with such behaviour will be accessible. There will be women for whom such behaviour is not unacceptable, or at least for whom the lack of intentionality will be seen as a mitigating factor. However, the fact that such assumptions are communicated, and that the audience is internalising those assumptions, or using them to strengthen already held assumptions, means that there is an element of face attack involved. The foregrounding of information about women in non-traditional roles makes the recovery of such assumptions the more likely. After recovery of these assumptions, it would be surprising if the woman did not experience a degree of both humiliation and coercion. She would most likely feel it incumbent upon her to perform exceptionally well, and she would be uncomfortably aware of the fact that her physical appearance had been focussed on.

The above examples offer an explanation of the process by which a woman recovers assumptions implicit, and sometimes explicit, in sexist communication. The value of relevance theory in analysing such communication is twofold. The underlying assumptions which many women recover
intuitively when they are targets of sexist comments are seen to be predictable from the joint requirements of the principle of relevance; that the speaker maximise contextual effects to the hearer, and that the form chosen to communicate the assumptions be the most relevant one available. If those requirements are not met at the level of what is said, the hearer must and does access contexts in which their relevance can be achieved, even if this means accessing encyclopaedic entries which include social information of a kind not usually associated with the interpretation of utterances. The payoff for her, and there must be one in accordance with the principle of relevance, is that she maintains a close surveillance on the power relationships which exist between her and the speaker, and attempts to satisfy her own face requirements by her response to the situation. That this is not always possible does not diminish the importance to her of maximising her chances by recovering the information.

3. A look at literature - Ibsen's *A Doll's House*

Relevance theory has an interesting function in the analysis of literature, in that it offers a clear and credible analysis of the insights revealed by the language about relationships between characters in novels and plays. A play which lends itself very clearly to such analysis is Ibsen's *A Doll's House.* The power asymmetry between Nora Helmer and her husband, a paradigm of husband/wife relationships of the late nineteenth century, and not too far removed from many contemporary relationships, is clearly revealed by the communicative style between them. When the power-base shifts a little, again the language mirrors the movement.

Let us look at examples of the language from four main phases of the relationship which I will call the beginning, the discovery, the retreat and the enlightenment.

3.1. The beginning

The play opens with Nora happily engaged in domestic duties, and her husband closeted in his study doing his work. We are presented with two spheres: the trivial and the momentous.

(10) _Helmer (calls out from his room)._ Is that my little lark twittering out there?

_Nora (busy opening some of the parcels)._ Yes, it is!

_Helmer_ Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

_(pp.34)_

The information conveyed by this sort of exchange - a frequent occurrence in the first part of the play - can be recovered as follows:

(10) a. Helmer likens Nora to a lark, a squirrel.

Our encyclopaedic information about larks and squirrels yields these facts:
b. Larks and squirrels are busy, noisy little animals, given to what humans would see as cute behaviour.

The information we have received about Nora already includes these facts:

c. Nora is a married woman with three children.

Our information about married women with children includes the assumption:

d. As an adult who has achieved the production of children and the running of a household, she has a right to be taken seriously.

What we know of Torvald's opinion of Nora, revealed by his manner of addressing her is as follows:

e. Torvald does not see her as a person to be taken seriously.

Our knowledge of relationships, particularly of relationships at the time at which this play was written leads us to recover the assumption about this relationship:

f. Torvald makes such judgements because of his status relative to that of his wife in the household.

g. He has power because of his economic status, and the perception of the greater importance of males in this society.

The analysis above is further reinforced by the following exchanges:

(11)  Helmer ..........Now, you must go and play through the Tarantella and practise with your tambourine. I shall go into the inner office and shut the door, and I shall hear nothing; you can make as much noise as you please.

(39)

(12)  Helmer Come along, Mrs. Linde; the place will only be bearable for a mother now!

(21)

The power asymmetry which is seen as natural by Torvald, but mildly resented by Nora, is obvious below:

(13)  Helmer Nice? - because you do as your husband wishes? Well, well, you little rogue, I am sure you did not mean it in that way.

(36)

Notice that Torvald asks questions of her, but they are usually either rhetorical, or he takes it upon himself to answer them for her. This sort of communicative behaviour is common between adults and children, and as such is demeaning when used to an adult.

Nora's perception of the inequalities is recoverable from the statement:

(14)  Nora. Yes - you see there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as
companions.

(44)

in the environment:

(14) a. Nora and Dr. Rank have been talking.

We are watching their interaction in the context of the sort of exchanges we have just recently watched Nora having with Torvald. This leads us to make the contrastive assumptions:

b. They have been speaking as equals.

c. Dr. Rank seems to respect Nora as a person.

Because of the difference in Nora's manner when she speaks with Dr. Rank, as opposed to the childlike way in which she answers Torvald, we form the assumption:

d. Nora feels at ease with Dr. Rank.

We know that Nora's relationships with others in the course of the play so far have been restricted to few people, and the reference to love points us to the conclusion that she is speaking of Helmer when she makes the contrast in (15).

e. Nora contrasts her ease with Dr. Rank with the mingled love and fear she has for her husband.

The power asymmetry between Nora and Torvald, and their perceptions of it, have caused them to be much less intimate and companionable than Nora and Dr. Rank. The interaction of the P and D variables means that the increase in the power of one individual causes an increase in the distance between that individual and the one over whom he has power. Torvald can appear to minimise this by speaking to her as if she were a child, but Nora is unable to decrease the distance by revealing to him more about her nature and her needs.

The lack of respect shown by Torvald to Nora, as contrasted with the attitude of Dr. Rank, is seen in this extract:

(15) Nora. Doctor Rank, you must have been occupied with some scientific investigation today.

Rank. Exactly.

Helmer. Just listen! - little Nora talking about scientific investigations!

(61)

The interpretation involves recovery of these assumptions:

(15) a. Nora is referring to a previous conversation between her and Dr. Rank.

b. She mentions the scientific investigations he spoke of.

c. He confirms the accuracy of her insight by his reply.

d. Torvald draws attention to her use of terminology.

e. He implies that such use is remarkable.

f. There must be relevant circumstances in which he thinks the terminology is
remarkable.
The use of the word *little* as an epithet for Nora, and our knowledge about the sort of people for whom the use of terminology like *scientific investigations* can be regarded as remarkable lead us to the conclusion in g:

g. He is likening Nora to a child and saying that she hasn't the intellect to understand such things.
h. He, unlike Dr Rank, discounts the value of what she says.

3.2. The discovery

When Torvald discovers that Nora has betrayed him, his behaviour towards her undergoes a marked change. His main concerns are that she has not acted within the constraints of their power asymmetry:

(16) *Helmer (walking about the room).* What a horrible awakening! All these eight years - she who was my joy and pride - a hypocrite, a liar - worse, worse - a criminal!

(65)

In the context of what we know about the relationship between Nora and Torvald already, the subtext of this outburst is readable as, among other things:

(16) a. She was my joy because she did nothing but obey me.
b. She was my pride because she was a physical and social asset.
c. Now I discover that she has acted independently from me.
d. This causes me to completely reassess our relationship.

The point of transition for Nora comes a little earlier than the above statement, not long after Torvald discovers her secret:

(17) *Helmer.* ... Do you understand what you have done?

*Nora (looks steadily at him and says with a growing look of coldness in her face).* Yes, now I am beginning to understand thoroughly.

(64-65)

Because of what we know of her thoughts already, we are able to recover the implications behind what she says, which are different from the simple recovery of propositional content made by Torvald.

(17) a. I already understood what I had done.
b. I am now beginning to understand a further result of what I have done.

Nora's coldness, which is contrasted strongly with her manner to Torvald before this point, and the context of the immediately preceding interaction to this one, in which Torvald has learnt of the
anguish which Nora has undergone, point us to the assumptions in c. and d.:

- c. This result is the unveiling of the true nature of our relationship.
- d. This includes the value you place on me, and the degree to which you are prepared consider the effect of this on me.

3. 3. The retreat

Torvald receives another letter, which explains Nora's actions and removes the threat of exposure which had caused him so much agony in the previous phase. His response is for him to redefine the distance between them again towards intimacy, but to attempt not to relinquish any of the power which he has always enjoyed.

(18) *Helmer.* ... What is this?-such a cold, set face! My poor little Nora, I quite understand; you don't feel as if you could believe that I have forgiven you.

(66) Our interpretation of this remark is as follows:

- a. Torvald notices that Nora does not share his happiness.
- b. He assumes that he knows the reason, which is that Nora doesn't realise she is forgiven.

Our knowledge of the power asymmetry between them, and our general information about the way such an asymmetry can affect interactional behaviour leads us to the conclusion below.

- c. Torvald assumes the right to accuse without any retribution.

Given our knowledge of what has occurred immediately prior to this scene, and the knowledge we have about forgiveness and the behaviour which usually requires to be forgiven, we derive the following:

- d. He assumes that there is no need for him to be forgiven, and that his power is so great that he feels he can impose on Nora in any manner, without her having any right to expect apology.

His pleasure in the use of the institutional power of the husband is revealed in the following statement:

(19) *Helmer.* ... There is something so indescribably sweet and satisfying, to a man, in the knowledge that he has forgiven his wife ... It seems as if that had made her, as it were, doubly his own; he has given her a new life, so to speak; and she has in a way become both wife and child to him.

(67) Here Torvald articulates all the assumptions which have been covertly present in his behaviour to date. The fact that he has articulated them makes these assumptions even more clearly available
to Nora:

(19) a. He is saying that a man likes a woman to be totally dependent on him.
b. He is saying that he likes to own her.
c. He is saying that a woman should hold the same relation to him as a child.
d. He is saying that he likes total power in the marriage.

Assumptions a-d are contained within the propositional content of his utterance. The overtleness of the claims causes us to go further, in that they are comments which many people would prefer to keep covert, as they are objectionable. We ask ourselves why he should take so much pleasure in making these assumptions overt, and come up with the following facts from our encyclopaedic information about relationships between husbands and wives in the context of the play:

e. He does not find anything objectionable in saying these things because he believes that it is right to hold such views.
f. He knows that society sanctions his views.
g. Nora has no right to challenge this behaviour.

We can see that this makes Nora’s position as his wife intolerable, as he has reasserted his right to absolute power over her, and has once again diminished her to the status of child.

3. 4. The enlightenment

It is the fact that Nora cannot tolerate a continuance of this behaviour, and knows that she cannot fight it from within the marriage, which forces her to the decision to go. She likens her position in the house to that of a doll, playing and living in a doll’s house, and accuses him, jointly with her late father, of a great sin against her. This astounds Torvald whose perceptions of his kindness and goodness to her are as follows:

(20) *Helmer.* What! By us two - by us two, who have loved you better than anyone else in the world?

(69)

(20) a. Our kind of love is the best kind of love.
b. We are therefore beyond reproach.

(21) *Helmer.* How unreasonable and how ungrateful you are, Nora!

(69)

(21) a. I have been magnanimous to you as my dependent.
b. Dependents should be grateful.
c. A dependent who is not grateful is being unreasonable.

Torvald appears to accept the reallocation of power between them when he says that there will be changes, and there will be education. But when questioned by Nora, he reveals that the
education will be of her and the children. His definition of demonstrating enormous love is revealing, as is Nora’s reply:

(22)  

*Helmer.* I would gladly work day and night for you, *Nora* - bear sorrow and want for your sake. But no man would sacrifice his honour for the one he loves.  

*Nora.* It is a thing hundreds of thousands of women have done.

(73)

Helmer, in stating as a general truth that a man cannot sacrifice his honour for love, is attributing to himself grandeur as a member of the class who hold their honour so dear. This is deflated by Nora’s insight that for a woman to love a man involves an automatic sacrifice of her honour. The play ends with Nora asserting that no marriage between them is possible unless it is one of equality of power and true intimacy.

The interpretation of a dramatic work can be seen as the archetype of the sort of process we undertake in interpreting spoken interaction. Because of the fact that we are supplied with so little contextual information other than the physical environment on the stage, and the words of the actors, means that we have to engage in a great deal of context building in order to gain the meaning from the play. We do this in just the way predicted by relevance theory. We search for contextual clues which will allow us to find the relevance of utterances, using previously processed utterances and the encyclopaedic information we have built up on each of the characters through the play to that point. We hold assumptions in our memory to be confirmed, strengthened or weakened as the action continues.

In writing a play, an individual gives a strong guarantee of relevance to those who are the intended recipients: that there will be sufficient contextual clues in the text to make processing worthwhile, and that the effect of the processing will be commensurate with the effort needed. The audience interprets the play with that guarantee tacitly given them, and are prepared to put much more effort into processing the oral clues than they would usually have to use in the course of personal interactions, where monitoring of clues and progress in interpretation is possible.

This is not to suggest that there is no difference between art and life, nor between literary and non-literary interaction. The fact that the play is not meant to be regarded as identical to reality is an assumption within the cognitive environment of the reader/audience. In other words, it is a salient contextual factor in itself. For instance, the fact that we know it is a play means that we search for meanings and significance where otherwise we might not bother, because we take thematic significance as being part of the guarantee offered to us by the author. The relevance of the play must lie in what results it yields in the context in which it is placed: comedy, tragedy, satire etc. The fact that some plays do not achieve relevance in the way that is promised is less
significant than the fact that the writing of a play communicates the guarantee, and the reader/audience who takes up that guarantee undertakes to search for the relevance as far as is possible within the constraints of time and setting.

4. Messages from the courtroom

I have chosen to examine some examples of a judge’s comments on criminal proceedings, taken from newspaper reports. These frequently communicate strong assumptions about the people involved, both accused and victim, which are influential inasmuch as they tend to confirm the assumptions of the general public about certain classes of people.

This example is taken from a rape case, where a long-time sex offender is being jailed for seven years for the rape of a fourteen-year-old girl. In sentencing the man, the judge makes the following rather contradictory statements:

(23) ... there had been no aggravating factors and that the girl’s life experience belied her years.

(24) She was a regular drinker and hotel patron.

(25) ... girls of the complainant’s age would be better protected if they remained at school and at home, and slept in their own beds, not with their boyfriends.

(26) Rather, X had subjected her to a degrading ordeal.

(27) Of real concern was the fact that the list included jail terms for unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 12 and 16 in 1978; two years for rape in 1982; and four months for assault on a female in 1984.

(28) He took into account that no weapon was involved in the girl’s rape nor had she sustained serious injury.

(29) I take the view that any sort of rape is a serious crime

I will take each of these reported statements and show how they communicate assumptions about the conduct of people in such situations. I will show how the messages are contradictory and confusing.

(27) Of real concern was the fact that the list (of X’s convictions) included jail terms for unlawful sexual intercourse with a girl aged between 12 and 16 in 1978; two years for rape in 1982; and four months for assault on a female in 1984.

(27) a. X is an habitual offender against women, often sexually.

b. This fact is of concern to the speaker.

The assumptions in a. and b. are given as part of the propositional content of the utterance. As part of our encyclopaedic information about offending and the concern this causes law-makers in our society, we are able to formulate the conclusion in c., which is an explication of the utterance,
although an explicature which is moving towards the implicature end of the spectrum, in Sperber and Wilson's terms.

c. The judge perceives the man to be predisposed to attacking women.

(26) Rather, X had subjected her to a degrading ordeal.

(26) a. X had performed actions on the girl.
   b. These actions degraded her.
   c. These actions were of such a nature as to cause the girl a large degree of distress.

The assumptions in a., b. and c. are explicatures, c. being as a result of an enrichment of the semantic content of the word ordeal.

It would be legitimate to assume, given the statements discussed above, that the judge intends to take a serious view of the crime and punish the criminal severely. In the event, he does deliver quite a heavy sentence. This is in line with the judgements made on the way the criminal had treated the victim - i.e. in a degrading and distressing manner.

However, there are more comments, and these conflict with the above in a way which communicates attitudes which compromise the complainant's victim status. It is interesting to note that it is in these statements that we need to move away from explicatures into the implicatural process in order to recover the full meaning, particularly the social meaning of what is said.

(23) ... there had been no aggravating factors and that the girl's life experience belied her years.

(23) a. An aggravating factor is one which worsens a situation.
   b. There were none of these in addition to the rape.
   c. Therefore, the crime was just a rape.

All these are explicatures and are quite straightforward. However, in the cognitive environments of those who have fearful perceptions of rape, particularly the cognitive environment of the girl herself, there is a set of strongly held assumptions about the effects of rape as opposed to the effects of other forms of physical violence.

   d. Rape is the worst form of violence a man can perform on a woman.

This assumption brings the conclusion in e. to the foreground.

   e. The judge does not see rape as potentially the worst thing that can happen to a woman.

Given that the perception in e. reveals a lack of understanding of the victim's experience, e. brings a further assumption into prominence.

   f. The judge's sympathy with the victim is not absolute.
There is a further aspect of the judge's utterance which strengthens the assumption that the judge is not entirely in sympathy with the victim. That is his comment about the girl's experience.

  g. The judge is saying that the victim has had experience beyond her years.
  h. This is seen as relevant in some way.

The audience and the victim will be aware, given the context of the rape case, and some widely held assumptions about girls and sexual experience, that the relevance can be found in accessing assumptions about the connection between sexual experience and victim status.

  i. The relevance is connected with the girl's status as a victim.

Given that the previous utterance in (23) was of a mitigating nature, and given the use of the word *furthermore*, which indicates that the following statement will in some way add more weight to the previous one, the assumption in j. will be strongly held.

  j. The girl is in some way less of a victim.

The audience and the victim now have a salient assumption in their cognitive environment about the judge's attitude to the victim. This is fertile ground for the processing of the utterance in (24).

(24) She was a regular drinker and hotel patron.

(24)

  a. The judge is communicating certain facts about the girl's way of life.
  b. These are that she drinks and goes to hotels.

Comments about the personal and life-habits of individuals in a court case are usually restricted to those of the accused in the case, since the accused is the one whose innocence must be proved. In this case, the accused has been found guilty, and is being sentenced, therefore it is marked behaviour that the judge is indulging in. There is a strong guarantee of relevance given, since the judge is taking time in a busy environment to make these remarks. Therefore, the audience is clearly directed towards the search for a relevant interpretation. Since the previous remarks concern the girl's status as a victim, this is the most obviously signposted way to go.

  c. The relevance of the remark lies in the girl's status as a victim.

As part of their encyclopaedic information about societal sanctions against young people who drink and patronise hotels, there will be assumptions in the audience's mind that such behaviour is generally thought to reduce sympathy for the young person in question.

  d. Drinking and being in hotels in some way makes a girl less of a victim.
  e. This victim deserves less sympathy for this rape.

(25) ... girls of the complainant's age would be better protected if they remained at school and at home, and slept in their own beds, not with their boyfriends.

(25)

  a. The speaker is giving advice to the girl, and to girls in general.
  b. This includes the information that she would be safer at home.
  c. The speaker is saying that if she sleeps with her boyfriend she puts herself at
risk of rape.

The assumptions in a, b, and c. are explicatures, and are readily recoverable. Also readily recoverable, but implicated, are assumptions which deal with the connection between place of abode and safety (in this case safety from rape).

d. Her sexual behaviour with her boyfriend means she has failed to protect herself from rape.

e. The advice given to her is of a critical nature, and she is in some way being held to blame for having been raped.

As part of our encyclopaedic information about trials, and the identity of the people who are liable to criticism in this environment, we hold assumptions that it is the person who is defendant who should be criticised.

f. The victim is being addressed as if she is on trial for her behaviour, as is she must share in the responsibility for the rape.

Further information we have about the nature of blame, and public admonishment or retribution for crimes, means that the assumption in g. is foregrounded.

g. This in some way diminishes the defendant status of the rapist.

(28) He took into account that no weapon was involved in the girl's rape nor had she sustained serious injury.

Our knowledge of the various factors involved in sentencing procedures tells us that judges will sometimes mention things which mitigate in favour of either the victim or the defendant.

(28) a. The judge is listing some mitigating factors.

b. One is that no weapon was used.

c. This factor is seen to mitigate in the defendant's favour.

Our encyclopaedic information about the relative strength of men and women, and the effect of that strength, both physically and mentally, on the woman, yield the following assumption:

d. This implies that the man's superior strength and violent disposition are not coercive weapons in a rape.

There is a further assumption communicated by the judge's utterance:

e. The girl has not sustained serious injury.

In the context, we are aware of facts about the case like her lack of cuts and abrasions, and the fact that she was not battered as well as raped. Therefore, we link the judge's utterance with the assumption in e.

f. She is not physically damaged.

Given our encyclopaedic information about the effects of rape on a woman, highly salient because of the events brought to our notice already in the case, and because the nature of the case has foregrounded assumptions about rape, we hold the assumption:

g. Rape is both physically and mentally damaging to a woman.
The combination of the assumption in f. and the assumption in e., yields a conclusion as in g.:

h. The judge considers damage in rape to be of the overt sort, and considers a rape which does not also involve battering as in some way less serious.

Having said all this, the judge then says:

(29) I take the view that any sort of rape is a serious crime.

(29)

a. The judge is stating his view on rape.

b. This is that all rape is serious.

The assumption in b. is incongruous in the context brought to the foreground by assumptions previously communicated (25) g., (23) j., (28) g., and (24) e.). In this case, it actually should serve to weaken those assumptions, if those assumptions were held at less than maximum strength. However, the fact that those assumptions have been progressively strengthened by each phase of the judge’s comments means that they are held very strongly indeed. Assumption (29) b. is therefore in the nature of a contradiction, and for several reasons we have to resolve that contradiction, expressed in c. and d. below:


c. If he thinks all rape is serious, presumably he means that situational factors like the girl’s moral character in no way diminish the seriousness of the crime.

d. If this is the case, what is the relevance of his previous remarks?

We recall the presumption of optimal relevance, which communicates two separate but related guarantees:

(a) The set of assumptions [I] which the communicator intends to make manifest to the addressee is relevant enough to make it worth the addressee’s while to process the ostensive stimulus.

(b) The ostensive stimulus is the most relevant one the communicator could have used to communicate [I].


According to this presumption, we cannot be expected to assume that the judge’s comments, uttered as they are in a serious situation where time is valuable, are gratuitous and not intended to be relevant to the case on which he is about to pronounce judgement. In that case, we must assume that, while he considers any rape to be serious, he considers the assumptions he has made manifest to the audience in the court, including the victim, are of some relevance to him in passing judgement.

This being the case, it is clear that a relevance-based analysis of his summary and judgement is instrumental in revealing attitudes he is communicating to the girl and to the hearing/reading public. The analysis provides clear evidence that the judge is in fact attacking the girl’s positive face (in making public facts about her character, and assumptions he holds about the value of that
character), and her negative face (in attempting to constrain her future behaviour as well as that of the criminal). He is, of course, at liberty to do so by virtue of his power both institutionally, as an authority figure of some status, and situationally, as the person who holds the power of sentencing the criminal. A wider, and less easily quantifiable result is that of the message being delivered to women as a gender: that their sexual and social behaviour is relevant to their status as victims of violence against them.

5. Concluding remarks

In the preceding chapters, I have made a case for transferring the role of the knowledge of certain social facts from a classificatory and therefore descriptive role, to an explanatory role, in predicting how those facts will be recovered during the process of utterance interpretation. I have shown how relevance theory has the ability to capture the generalisations which give the theory of face attention its predictive power, thereby solving the problems inherent in a model which is somewhat taxonomic and tied to speaker intention.

5.1. Applications of the theory

In this chapter, I have chosen at random three different situations for application of the theory of face attention. I have applied the theory to them in accordance with the principle of relevance, and shown that they can be analysed fruitfully in this way, in order to give an explanatory basis to the intuitions which people have about the messages being communicated in those situations. I have shown that the interpretation of literary dialogue can be seen as a special, somewhat intensified case of utterance interpretation as a whole, mirroring as it does the process which takes place in real-life interactions, without the same access to information beyond the immediate context.

I see the analysis which I have performed on these examples as a prototype of studies of communicative styles in a variety of situations. There is potential for adding substance to the claims which are made about, for instance, racist and sexist communication, verbal sexual harassment, and other coercive and humiliating communication. Studies could be made of classroom, courtroom, business and other interactions, where the assumptions implicit in certain types of communication could be made explicit. This would bring to a conscious level facts about manipulation of power and solidarity variables, and show how the closed nature of certain groups is maintained to the detriment of those on the outside.

There is scope for using relevance theory in empirical studies of interactional behaviour. It would be useful in considering which groups use face attack behaviour, and whether there are any difference between the genders, or particular social or ethnic groups in their use of face attack. It is
likely that different groups will use different methods for maintaining power and solidarity and that in fact face attack is used for different reasons. It would seem, for instance, that some social groups use face attack for strengthening cohesion within their group, and that the context is crucial for determining which FAAs are attacks of a non-cooperative nature and which are used for cohesion. The kind of model I have developed could be used to enrich studies already undertaken on difference in communicative styles by stressing the importance of context and applying contextual considerations to assessments of the function of communicative styles in interaction. (cf. Holmes (1987), Thomas (1985a), Keenan (1976), Lakoff (1975)).

A further interesting question which could be addressed is the extent to which individuals scan for underlying meaning over and above the usual enrichment of meaning by recovery of implicature. It is probably the case that all individuals do, at some time, scan for social implications of utterances, but that it is not a universal tendency. I would hypothesise that individuals who feel their social standing in some way under threat, or who are aware of a power asymmetry which works against their interests are more likely to undertake a 'deep scanning' process. This would explain the generally accepted sociological premise that oppressed people are more aware of and sensitive to the mechanics of their oppression, while the oppressors are often unaware of the implications of their actions, on an everyday basis. An empirical study with this question as its point of departure could yield some interesting information.

5.2. The status of the Cooperative Principle

The definition of the Cooperative Principle given by Grice (1975:45) is somewhat vague, and has consequently been subject to a variety of interpretations. He defines the principle as requiring of the speaker the following:

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.

In a later paper, in which he seeks to define further the notion of cooperation, Grice refers to:

... the general assumption on the part of H that S will not violate conversational procedures.


Variations on this theme include Leech's definition of cooperation as it relates to the Cooperative Principle

The function of the CP is to ensure that one participant cooperates with the other in fulfilling the assumed goal of the discourse.


The problem with all three of these definitions is in fact the lack of definition. There is no
principled way in which they can be tested, or seen to predict the interpretive process. What conversational procedures are being followed? How are they followed and how are they perceived to be followed? Who assumes the goals, and is this assumption mutual?

Leech goes on to say

Cooperation and politeness, for instance, are largely regulative factors which ensure that, once conversation is under way, it will not follow a fruitless or disruptive path.


There is an assumption here that any interaction not characterised by cooperation and/or politeness is fruitless, and the use of politeness in the same context as cooperation indicates that these two concepts are considered nearly synonymous. This claim further confuses the nature of the Cooperative Principle, and certainly the claim for politeness would not be borne out by the evidence presented in the previous chapters of this work. Consider an interactant who had successfully carried out a 'communicative coup' on another individual who perhaps threatened her/his power or status. The likelihood is that the interaction will have been carried out with ostensible politeness at best, and there will have been no cooperation in the sense of a mutually accepted direction. Nevertheless, the interaction will have been fruitful for both parties: for the winner, in achieving the goal; and for the loser, in making manifest certain crucial information about the relative status between these two people, and the danger inherent in interacting with the other individual.

Leech makes a claim, albeit a rather vacuous one, about the maxim of relevance:

'Be relevant' has a relatively clear meaning: It means 'Make your conversational contribution one that will advance the goals either of yourself or of your addressee.'


This is trivially true, in that it is hard to find situations where this principle does not apply. What is needed is a general principle which includes the provisions of Leech's relevance maxim, but which predicts which utterances will be relevant, and how relevance will be achieved.

Thomas (1986) sees a clearly specified principle of relevance as underlying communication, and replacing the cooperative principle. She sees the term cooperative as misleading, and the notion of relevance as non-trivial in view of the fact that 'the forms of relevance can, in principle, be specified and defined fairly precisely.' Thomas (1986:55).

I have argued in chapter four, and shown in this chapter, that precise definition can be achieved via the Principle of Relevance as defined by Sperber and Wilson. The requirement on a communicator in their terms is weaker in one respect than the Cooperative Principle, in that it does not constrain the overall direction of the communication. However, in a more crucial respect it is stronger, because it is more general, covering a wide range of communication, but constraining the communicators in terms of their stated aims, and the means of achieving these:
For us, the only purpose that a genuine communicator and a willing audience necessarily have in common is to achieve successful communication: That is, to have the communicator's informative intention recognised by the audience.


They argue that, to do this, interactants act in accordance with the Principle of Relevance. Note that they do not require that successful communication include the recognition of the speaker's communicative intent. This is in accordance with their rejection of the mutual knowledge hypothesis. It is not easy to recognise the communicative intent of a speaker, although it is possible to hypothesise about this intent on the basis of the assumptions which have been made manifest to the hearer via the recognition of the informative intent. Thus we can say 'I have learnt this from S' but not necessarily 'S intended me to learn this'.

In the light of my work, it seems that we must drop the notion of cooperation, which is a somewhat 'morally loaded' term, and speak in terms of communicating the informative intention. Even the weakest definition of cooperation, Grice's notion of a mutually accepted direction, is falsified by the communication of face attack. The participants in an interaction may have totally different perceptions about the real reason for the interaction, although the ostensible one will be mutually manifest. S will try to phrase the utterance in such a way that H will discover the real purpose, but it follows that this is not mutually accepted, since it is more than likely that H will not accept what is going on, but will be prevented from changing the direction. I would suggest that finding out the direction in which the interaction is going is H's task, in any situation, and this cannot occur until all the assumptions that S holds are made mutually manifest; in other words, until the speaker has communicated her informative intention (and often, incidentally, also her communicative intention). 8

5.3. Relevance judgements - the cost-benefit analysis

There has been some criticism that the procedure for cost-benefit analysis is not fully specified in Sperber and Wilson's theory. This is true, but Sperber and Wilson offer a good reason for avoiding an absolute judgement of relevance. They say that it is not psychologically real for a person to make absolute judgements about the effectiveness of an interpretive process. There is confirmation for this in the literature on cognitive processes. Jackendoff (1987) quotes Lashley (1956:4) as saying:

No activity of mind is ever conscious. [Lashley's italics] This sounds like a paradox, but it is nonetheless true. There are order and arrangement, but there is no experience of the creation of that order....Experience clearly gives no clue as to the means by which it is organized.

Jackendoff (1987:45) interprets this as meaning 'if there is to be a relation between computation and awareness, it will be most directly revealed by a theory of structure rather than by a theory of
The implications for Relevance Theory are strong: it is not possible for the processing organism to be aware of the process by which relevance judgements are made. They will be gross judgements of relevance, and the processing will stop when the contextual implications yield sufficient effects in the context in which the processing takes place.

What Sperber and Wilson offer is a list of ways in which contextual enrichment can occur – new contextual effects, strengthening of old assumptions, weakening of old assumptions, and contradiction of old assumptions. If any of these processes takes place in such a way as to alter the cognitive environment of the hearer significantly, then the processing effort will have been worthwhile. In other words, the speaker has enriched the cognitive environment of the hearer. In the case of face information, I argue that a hearer will usually judge any contextual enrichment as sufficiently important to warrant information processing, even if this proves costly in terms of effort.9 Face information transmitted during a conversation will be highly relevant, often more so than any other information contained within the form of the utterance.

I have shown in the analyses in chapters four and five that the accessing of some assumptions has a strong payoff in contextual implications, which consist of further assumptions. Therefore, the hearer’s cost lies not so much in accessing contexts since, because of the Chinese box nature of contexts, accessing further contexts becomes less costly, the more that the previous context gives rise to the next one. It can be seen in those analyses that the concept of salience is important in the cost benefit analysis. If the interpretive process takes place in an environment in which certain assumptions are highly salient, then the contextual implications which are obtained from processing assumptions already accessed in the context of other highly salient assumptions are likely to have a payoff in terms of strengthening, weakening or contradicting those salient assumptions. I have already argued that the process will tend in the direction of strengthening assumptions already held, unless the evidence contained in contradictory or weakening assumptions is strong enough to challenge those already lodged at conceptual addresses in the individual’s cognitive environment.

The end-point of an interpretation for any individual will be reached when the process fails to yield any more assumptions salient enough to warrant processing. In the case of face information, the individual will be motivated by the need to assess her face-status with regard to the other interactant. Once she has received information which sufficiently updates her assessment of the relationship, there will be no need to access any more information. It seems likely that the accessing of information in terms of salience is an automatic process: some assumptions present in the propositional content cause further assumptions to become salient, and these cause further assumptions to become salient, and so on, until the process fails to yield any more assumptions. The
critical components in this process will be the encyclopaedic information contained in the cognitive environment of the individual, the clues from the physical environment, and clues provided by the form of the utterance and its suprasegmental elements.

The status of all the social information found in Brown and Levinson’s politeness model, and also in my face attack model, is that of a set of background assumptions which people bring to interactions and utterance interpretation as a whole. This information includes the concepts of face, politeness, impoliteness and cooperation. It also includes all the information which Leech, Brown and Levinson, Grice and others subsume under the headings strategies and maxims. In situations where the interactants are aware that face will be a key issue, the face-oriented assumptions will be very accessible, and any processing which has to be done will be quite readily justified in terms of effects. Of course, there will be times when the strength of these assumptions will cause misinterpretations to occur, as the need for face orientation may not be mutually manifest. Then, H will likely suffer some face damage, or conversely be boosted by some imagined face attention, of which S is entirely unaware. What S says will still be relevant, in that it meets the requirements on her of adherence to the principle of relevance, but will also be relevant to H in a different way. Obviously, some assumption strengthening, weakening or contradicting will occur, and neither party to the communication will consider that the exchange was irrelevant. If there is no reason for either person to check the accuracy of the information transmission, the asymmetrical situation will not be discovered. Communication will have taken place, but its significance will be judged differently by each interactant. Although this is not as neat and well-defined in the manner made available by concepts like mutual knowledge, it is intuitively closer to what actually happens.

5.4. Summary

The model of politeness adopted by Brown and Levinson has value, not as a set of strategies outlined in their terms, but as part of a much wider set of assumptions available to communicators. The politeness or impoliteness of an utterance crucially involves the context in which that utterance is produced, and there may be a difference in judgements of politeness, depending on whether or not speaker intention is perceived in the same way by both speaker and hearer. In terms of the actual effect of utterances, hearer perception is much more important than speaker intention.

Such reliance on the context may seem to be a form of relativism, and to be unconstrained, but when the requirements inherent in the principle of relevance are taken into account, we see that Relevance Theory provides a strongly predictive framework within which to account for the interpretation of all utterances. This is particularly important in looking at face attack, where previous theories of utterance interpretation and face attention have failed to give any explanatory weight to what happens in face-oriented behaviour, and how the effects are perceived.
The most important contribution of Relevance Theory to a theory of face attention is that it has the power to explain the integration of social facts into the interpretation of utterances. It therefore provides a link between linguistic forms and the wider social context in which they are produced.\textsuperscript{10} It also allows for a motivated account of the benefits to a hearer in recovering such information, and the way in which these offset the sometimes daunting effort needed, in processing terms, for their recovery. The applications of such an integrated theory are wide-ranging, in analysing data from interactions in different social relationships, and showing how the form of utterance not only reflects the relationship between interactants, but also affects that relationship for future interactions. The theory, then, can be used to substantiate research on communicative behaviour in a most illuminating way.
NOTES


2. For reports of research on generic *man*, see Shelston (1981).

3. See Bandler and Grinder (1982:132)

4. From an unpublished Association of University Teachers report on sexual harassment in tertiary education, made available to me by the president of the New Zealand AUT. Examples 8-10 come from an Australian education document from the same source.

5. Ibsen (1910).


7. Thomas (1985a:780) considers the types of facts about role negotiation in interaction which might be studied. In particular, manipulation of the kinds of variables central to face attack can be studied in different cultural groups. Thomas notes a difference between the American situation, where it seems that speakers are likely to reduce social distance, whereas speakers in Britain, from her observation, are more likely to reduce the R_X factor. The model of face attention which has been constructed in this work could be used to effect in this area.

8. For a discussion of informative and communicative intention, see chapter four.

9. The qualification refers to the situations where face information is not highly salient in an interaction. Face is always salient in interaction, but there are situations where H will be sufficiently confident of her face status that searching for face-oriented implicatures will not be seen as necessary.

10. In their introduction to the reprint of their politeness paper, Brown and Levinson state:

   In sociolinguistics, one development that we confidently expect is a change of stress away from concern with linguistic indicators of social origin and identity (as in the influential Labovian paradigm) towards a greater concern with the linguistic expression of social relationships.

This development has been taking place over the last few years, and the use of a pragmatic theory to characterise the linguistic expression of social relationships is of enormous benefit to that study.
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### APPENDIX

Co-occurrence of FAA to Positive and Negative face

**Bald on record attacks on positive face**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Humiliating effect</th>
<th>Coercive effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Express violent emotion.</td>
<td>Diminishes H's self-confidence.</td>
<td>H must comply with S's needs or remove self from situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Be irreverent, talk on taboo topics.</td>
<td>Draws attention to values, characteristics of H, derides these.</td>
<td>H may either avoid S or seem to accept the behaviour, or be drawn into argument.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Bring bad news re H, good news re S.</td>
<td>Derogation of some characteristic, hope, need of H.</td>
<td>H is forced into competition or must accept the comparison in S's favour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Raise dangerously emotive, divisive topics.</td>
<td>Implies little regard for H's values/ beliefs.</td>
<td>H must argue, or will seem either to agree or to be without defence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Conversational non-cooperation.</td>
<td>Shows low regard for H's right to participate.</td>
<td>H must try to assert self or accept exclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Use of address terms.</td>
<td>Indicates S's lack of regard for H's wishes.</td>
<td>H can avoid S or suffer the indignity or retaliate and risk more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. Use of sexually oriented expressions. S is derogatory to the referent group, and by implication, H. H must either dissociate self from group, or imply acceptance of the derogation.

9. Over-familiarity. S is embarrassed by the intimacy implied. H must imply acceptance of S's definition of the relationship/avoid S/appear standoffish

10. Deflected FA. H₂'s characteristics or those of H₂'s group are derided. H₂ has no right of reply as remark is ostensibly to H₁.


12. State H's lack of knowledge. H's abilities are underrated or made public. H loses confidence for further participation.

### Bald on record attacks on negative face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Coercive effect</th>
<th>Humiliating effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unwilling promises.</td>
<td>S maximises H's debt, discourages further requests.</td>
<td>H aware of some miscalculation of D, R, to some extent P.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orders and requests</td>
<td>H has no choice but to comply.</td>
<td>H made to feel inferior i.e S's P must be high.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions and advice.</td>
<td>H must accept or appear churlish and ungrateful.</td>
<td>H's self-esteem or public image is damaged either way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reminders.</td>
<td>H constrained to perform task in question/live up to expectations/be</td>
<td>H may be embarrassed, or suffer much more serious damage to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
threatened by impingement of past.  

|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Dares.</th>
<th>H is constrained to accept or reject.</th>
<th>H may lose face by rejecting (cowardice) or failing to perform (incompetence).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 8. Sexual harassment. | H is constrained to accept advances or object, which may be difficult. H may fear for personal safety. | H may be embarrassed or self-esteem more severely damaged (loss of confidence, insecurity etc.). |