PRAGMATICS 1
Language and society

'Much of what we say...is determined by our social relationships'

'A linguistic interaction is necessarily social interaction'

Yule 1996: 59
Shared social norms

People are social creatures: belong to social group, follow expected patterns of behaviour e.g. saying appropriate things, being polite email:
Hi there professor! Do we have lecture tomorrow? Bye XXX
Kirstin
Factors in social distance/closeness

1) external to interaction
   • relative status of participants
   • age
   • power

2) internal to interaction
   • imposition
   • friendliness
Social interactions

Social relations
• often worked out during the interaction and
• may change during the interaction
e.g. start by saying Mr So-and-so, then change to first names

Internal and external factors influence:
• what we say
• how we say it
• how we are interpreted
• and how our behaviour is evaluated
(e.g. rude, inconsiderate, thoughtful, sexist, racist)
Norms of politeness

What is considered polite varies from culture to culture

Usually participants are aware of the existence of norms of politeness

"In different social situations, we are obligated to adjust our use of words to fit the occasion. It would seem socially unacceptable if the phrases above were reversed."
• a group of friends:
  "Go get me that ball!"
  "Shut-up!"

• with a group of adults at a formal function:
  "Could you please pass me that plate, if you don't mind?"
  "I'm sorry, I don't mean to interrupt, but could you speak a bit more loudly please because I cannot hear you properly."

http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/politeness.html
Politeness theory

First formulated in 1978 by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson

Types of politeness strategies

4 types of politeness strategies

(Brown and Levinson 1987):

Situation:
You are at a lecture and you forgot your pen. Your lecturer has several in front of him/her on the desk
Bald On Record

"Ooh, I want to use one of those!"

no effort to minimize threats to your lecturer’s

http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/politeness.html
Off-record-indirect strategy

Indirectly say, "Hmm, I sure could use a blue pen right now."

The main purpose is to take some of the pressure off of you. You are trying not to directly impose by asking for a pen. Instead you would rather it be offered to you once the teacher realizes you need one, and you are looking to find one.

http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/politeness.html
Positive politeness

"I'm sorry to bother you but, I just wanted to ask you if I could use one of those pens?"

In this situation you recognize that the lecturer has a desire to be respected. It also confirms that the relationship is friendly and expresses group reciprocity.

http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/politeness.html
Negative politeness

"So, is it OK if I use one of those pens?“

Similar to Positive Politeness in that you recognize that the lecturer wants to be respected; however, you also assume that you are in some way imposing on him/her.

Some other examples:
"I don't want to bother you but..." or "I was wondering if ..."

http://logos.uoregon.edu/explore/socioling/politeness.html
The sociologist Erving Goffman introduced the concept of "face" in sociology in 1955.

The concept of *face* in politeness theory
Face (self-image)

• a technical term

• the public self-image of a person

• 'the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognise' (Yule 1996: 60)

• face can be positive or negative

• positive and negative faces are universal
Face

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. Face is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes.

Goffman (1955: 213)
Face

[Face] is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction. In general, people cooperate (and assume each other's cooperation) in maintaining face in interaction, such cooperation being based on the mutual vulnerability of face.

Brown and Levinson (1978: 66)
Face

People strive to maintain the face they have created in social situations. They are emotionally attached to their faces, so they feel good when their faces are maintained; loss of face results in emotional pain, so in social interactions people cooperate by using politeness strategies to maintain each others' faces.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Face_%28sociological_concept%29
Face wants

• people's expectations concerning their public self-image

• one generally assumes these wants will be respected
positive face wants
- the need to be connected

• "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others", or alternately, "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality'...claimed by interactants" including 'the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of'. (Brown and Levinsom 1987)

• desires to be liked, admired, ratified, and related to positively (Brown1997)

• the need to be accepted...liked,...to be treated as a member of the same group (Brown1997)
negative face wants
- the need to be independent
• "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others",
• or "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction--i.e. the freedom of action and freedom from imposition".
  (Brown and Levinsom 1987)
• the desire not to be imposed upon (Brown 1997)
• 'the need to be independent, to have freedom of action,...not to be imposed on by others' (Yule 1996: 61)
Face threatening acts

when a person says something that represents a threat to another individual's expectations regarding self-image (Yule 1996: 61)

Negative face is threatened when:

• an act inherently damages the face of the addressee or the speaker by acting in opposition to the wants and desires of the other;

• Positive face is threatened when:
  the speaker or hearer does not care about their interactor’s feelings, wants, or does not want what the other wants
Positive-face threatening acts

An act that threatens the need to be accepted/liked/treated as member of same group

e.g. disapproval, criticism, complaints, accusations, contradictions, disagreements

E.g. Criticism:
“"I think your report was not concise enough."
– The hearer’s positive face is threatened because s/he is blamed for having done something badly, i.e. his/her self-image is negatively evaluated.

(http://www.glottopedia.de/index.php/Face-threatenining_act)
Negative-face threatening acts

An act that threatens the need to be independent/have freedom of action/not be imposed on orders/requests, suggestions/advice, reminding, threats/warnings/dares offers/promises, compliments, expressions of emotions

E.g. Order:

“Please give me that book.” -> The speaker expresses an anticipation of some future action of the hearer and thereby restricts his/her personal freedom.

(http://www.glottopedia.de/index.php/Face-threatenin)**

##**
Face saving acts

When the speaker says something that lessens the possible threat that comes from the interpretation of some action (Yule 1996: 61)
Positive-face saving acts
Lessens the threat to the need to be
accepted/liked/treated as member of same group

A positive politeness strategy:
expresses solidarity (stressing closeness between
speaker and hearer)

recognizing other's needs when they appear to
have a problem

A: How about letting me use your pen mate?
Negative-face saving acts
Lessens the threat to the need to be independent/have freedom of action/not be imposed on

A negative politeness strategy:
expresses deference (stressing the heare's right to freedom)

e.g. an apology or sign of respect

A: Could you lend me your pen?
What is politeness?

Politeness is:

- the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another (Mills, 2003, p. 6).

- a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction (Foley, William. 1997)

- the means employed to show awareness of another person's face (Yule 1996)

- being polite therefore consists of attempting to save face for another. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politeness_theory)