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**Miššíková, G., Mačura, M. (eds) (2007) *Topics in Linguistics, Issue 1 – October 2007. Politeness and Interaction*. Nitra: Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Faculty of Arts, 87 pp.**

*Politeness and Interaction* is the title of the first issue of a newly established journal, *Topics in Linguistics*, published by the Faculty of Arts, Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, in October 2007. It comprises a collection of selected papers that had been presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Nitra Conference on Discourse Studies, held in March 19-20, 2007. As the editors point out, the papers focus on existing models of linguistic politeness, covering a wide range of pragmatic as well as sociolinguistic factors that play role in the process of understanding communicated messages.

The volume opens with an article based on one of the keynote speeches, namely *Text and Real Language*, delivered by Widdowson from University of Vienna. The author reflects on the complexity of the relationship between *text*, *discourse* and *context*, and challenges the general notion that "... the analysis of text in corpus linguistics represents real language as distinct from formal model of linguistic description ..." (p. 4). On the contrary, Widdowson argues that "... the language of the corpus is above all unreal" (p. 5) as it only provides text isolated from its natural context. The conclusion he reaches, however, is a conciliatory one, highlighting the significance of corpus linguistics and the undeniable merits of its description.

The aspect of politeness in different linguistic contexts is addressed by Lencho, University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, who provides an interesting insight into the intricacies of such seemingly ordinary social rituals as ordering food. He presents a thorough examination of his personal experience (from the US and Slovakia) and points out "the extensive amount of social embedding modulating the turn-taking process" (p. 11).

In his contribution, Cap (from University of Łódź), another of the conference keynote speakers, touches on the highly topical issue of the worldwide war on terrorism declared by President Bush as a reaction to the 9/11 attacks, and he investigates the linguistic strategies used to communicate this message to both America and the world. The analysis of the "war-on-terror rhetoric" is carried out on a sample of several addresses of President Bush in the course of 2001 – 2003 and it suggests that the legitimization process is based on the model of proximization constituted by three factors: spatial, temporal and axiological. Cap finally expresses a tentative hypothesis about the feasibility of employing this

model in analyzing “the phenomenon of (political) legitimization as a whole” (p. 16).

Similar to Cap, Horváth (University of Prešov) has also worked on material from the same political setting, namely the Inaugural Address of President Bush, and shares the key findings of the analysis in his article *Pre 9/11 Inaugural Address of President George W. Bush: Critical Discourse Analysis*.

An interesting view on the role English is playing within the European (political) context is offered by Jesenská from Matej Bel University. It points out the obvious analogy with Latin, although each stemming from a different environment, and focuses on the basic characteristic features of this new kind of English, referred to as *Eurospeak*.

*Some Aspects of Politeness in Public Speaking* is the title of the contribution by Dontcheva-Navratilova from Masaryk University, which brings up the issue of politeness in public discourse in institutional communication. The paper presents the results of the analysis of ten diplomatic addresses, or rather of the salutation parts of these, made by the current Director-General of UNESCO in the period from 2005 – 2007, which prove that in this kind of discourse both negative- and positive-politeness strategies are used, bearing in mind however that as the objective tends to be “to assert common ground and shared values [with the audience]” (p. 34), it is the positive-politeness strategies that prevail.

Interestingly enough, Povolná, also from Masaryk University, is looking at (linguistic) politeness used at the opposite end of the formality scale, i.e. in everyday face-to-face communication. Her contribution is concerned with those of linguistic means which “enhance the smooth flow of spoken interaction” (p. 80) and assist in maintaining discourse coherence. Expressions like *you know, you see, I mean*, etc. are labelled by Povolná as interactive D-items, and having demonstrated their role on texts taken from the London-Lund Corpus, she concludes with the assumption that these items can operate as part of both, positive- and negative-politeness strategies (allowing for exceptions in cases where it might be difficult to separate the two).

The article *E-mail – a Bridge between Written and Spoken Mode & Strategy of Beginnings* by Comorek (University of Hradec Králové) also has informal everyday communication in the centre of attention but unlike the previous paper, it analyses a written medium, the e-mail.

The results of a contrastive study of *Maxim Hedges in Political Discourse*, carried out on the sample of speeches of Tony Blair and Mikuláš Dzurinda in the years of 2007 and 2006 respectively, are presented by Miššíková (Constantine the Philosopher University). The author comments on major types of hedges

and offers an overview of a basic classification of hedging devices as used in the English and Slovak contexts mentioned above.

The paper by Adam, Masaryk University, concentrates on the theory of Functional Sentence Perspective, specifically on the dynamic-semantic scales as devised originally by Firbas in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In line with his previous research and in collaboration with Chamonikolasová, Adam identifies another subtype of these, thus modifying the final list as follows: the Quality Scale, the Presentation Scale and the new *Extended Presentation Scale* whose existence is justified by the occurrence of ‘double-rheme’ sentences especially in biblical texts.

Most of the remaining articles focus on different aspects of discourse taking place in various professional settings, i.e. Gyuró and Komlósi (*The Janus-face of Politeness: Hidden Strategies Revealed in Problem Interviews in Health Communication*), Ferenčík (*Politeness Aspects of Question-Answer Sequences in Mediated Talk-in-Interaction (Radio Phone-ins)*) and Halušková (*Some Pragmatic Aspects of the Process of Communication and their Relevance to Language Pedagogy*), whereas Haase and Bílá analyse text in written form (*Subjectivity and Vagueness in Academic Texts: Scientific vs. Popular-Scientific English*, and *Structural and Cohesive Devices in Business Letters* respectively).

The volume concludes with two reviews: the first, written by Kozáčíková, deals with the collection of papers *Discourse and Interaction 2* published at Masaryk University, Brno, in 2006, while in the other, Miššíková highlights the qualities of a textbook by Dontcheva-Navratilova titled *Grammatical Structures in English: Meaning and Context*.

To sum up, the first issue of the new journal *Topics in Linguistics* provides its readership with an excellent opportunity to find out about the outcomes of a number of current research projects, comparative studies and analyses, featuring diverse linguistic phenomena and yet unified by two key words: *politeness* and *interaction*. The high quality of the volume will undoubtedly be appreciated by many a scholar and student alike.

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