

REVIEWS

Válková, S. (2012) *Regulating Discourse: Compliments and Discourse Signposts. (English-Czech Interface)* Saarbrücken: LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, 305pp.

Sylvia Válková's monograph *Regulating Discourse: Compliments and Discourse Signposts. English-Czech Interface* (2012) is an interesting investigation into compliments and discourse signposts, usually labelled discourse markers (DMs) in the relevant literature (Schiffrin 1987). In the present study, which is conceived as a natural continuation of her earlier publication on politeness (2004), the author provides a critical survey of recent developments on politeness and DMs while hoping to create a bridge between the two monographs through the conceptual link between politeness and signposting strategies.

Válková attempts to create a general conceptual framework in which politeness is related to indeterminacy and vagueness and to establish a network of language means used to signpost the discourse by regulating all the three components of the grammatically relevant semantic system of language as identified by Halliday (1984), i.e. ideational, interpersonal and textual. Politeness is regarded as a relational category which comes in degrees, similarly to vagueness and indirectness. This allows the author to treat the process of complimenting and their results, i.e. compliments, as scalar notions ranging from sincere compliments to insincere flattery. The two processing strategies, i.e. looking for networks and looking for scales, are complemented by another strategy – that of looking for comparable functions within the proposed networks. This approach enables the author to unify formally heterogeneous units under the umbrella term 'discourse signposts' and study them in mutual relations rather than as isolated tokens while contributing to a more delicate function-based taxonomy in the domain of communicatively regulative means (Leech 1983).

Since the proposed theoretical framework focuses on English language teaching methodology and cross-cultural comparison of two typologically remote languages, English and Czech, Válková is aware of the language means given preference in the given socio-cultural communities and of the priorities in the choice of communicative strategies underlying language use, which for the purposes of the study are limited to means used to signpost the discourse. Therefore instead of looking for a list of discrete functions of signposts she focuses on their context-retrievable functions by which she understands the

functions negotiated in the process of interaction and emergent from the interplay with other factors of the overall communicative situation.

A more specific aim of the study is to discover how to incorporate the findings on communicatively regulative units (CRUs) into the everyday encounters of non-native learners of English and how to socialize them into target language strategies in use. With regard to the pedagogical perspective of her work, Válková postulates two more specific aims, namely to survey theoretical findings on compliments and signposts and define a theoretical framework for authentic data processing and, secondly, to formulate working hypotheses to be verified in the application part of the present work. This is perfectly in accordance with the overall structure of the monograph, which consists of Introduction, Interlude, Chapter One (longest of all), Chapter Two (much shorter), Conclusion, References, Sources and Appendices.

As regards the data used in the study, there are three different types. In Chapter One three kinds of questionnaires were used to collect authentic Czech material, i.e. a preliminary questionnaire, a written discourse completion task, and a questionnaire aimed at communicative strategies used in complimenting. In both Chapter One and Chapter Two, the British National Corpus and Český národní korpus (Czech National Corpus) were used, supported by manually collected extracts based on spoken and written texts. As for methodology, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used since the author believes they are complementary.

In the *Interlude*, Válková offers her critical survey of politeness theories based above all on Eelen's critique of politeness theories (2001) and his socio-psychological model of human reality underlying politeness theories. She also mentions works by other authors (e.g. Locher and Watts 2005) and conceptualizes her own delimitation of politeness influenced in particular by Halliday's conception of language as social semiotic and Goffman's notion of 'face' and facework.

In Chapter One *On Complimenting and Compliments*, which is divided into Part One *Mapping the Field* and Part Two *Compliment in the Making* (altogether 110 pages), Válková first surveys the latest theories in the field and then, in the application part, provides a detailed analysis of utterances from the viewpoint of their structure, function and distribution from an English-Czech perspective. She emphasizes her understanding of compliments as social lubricants which are the result of a speech-act set of complimenting, are not required in interaction and the occurrence of which is principle-controlled rather than rule-governed (p. 50). The author suggests a tentative schema of a speech-act set configuration and views compliments as socio-cultural phenomena, drawing attention to

differences in gender, status and educational background of complimenters. In agreement with Verschueren (1999), she proposes three key notions to be taken into account when making choices in the process of complimenting, i.e. variability, negotiability and adaptability (p.59).

Since the investigation into compliments is based on three different questionnaires, one working with authentic responses, one with supposed verbal reactions in previously defined situations and one with communicative strategies typical of the Czech socio-cultural community, in her concluding remarks (pp. 148-151), Válková offers only tentative answers to her research questions concerning formal and semantic properties of Czech compliments, typical patterns used by Czech complimenters, typical objects of compliments in Czech, and typical responses used by speakers of Czech. I fully agree with her that it is only possible to indicate some general tendencies rather than provide quantitative and qualitative results.

Similarly to Chapter One, Chapter Two *Signposting the Discourse* is divided into two parts, a more theoretical part *Signposting and Signposts* and a more practical part *Discourse Markers as Signposts* (altogether 75 pages). Influenced by the functional and multi-faceted approach to DMs taken by Aijmer (2002) and her colleagues, Válková uses Aijmer's integrated approach as a frame of reference owing to its interdisciplinary approach to DMs, projection of DMs into politeness and facework, need for cross-language comparison, educational dimension, and in particular comparison of DMs with other communicatively regulative means of language. This is in harmony with Válková's top-down perspective from which DMs are looked upon as a subclass of a superordinate class within the network of CRUs. Two basic properties for the inclusion of language units among discourse signposts are their communicatively regulative functions and their non-propositional nature. The process by which discourse signposts enter interaction is called signposting. Based on the Cooperative Principle and the maxims, signposts are divided into two groups: interpersonal signposts and textual signposts. For the purposes of the English-Czech cross-language interface the analysis focuses on a selected number of prototypical markers, namely *ah*, *oh*, *well* and *now*. All these one-word expressions fall into the 'interpersonal signposts' group and have been chosen for the analysis since, apart from having some common features, such as multifunctionality, their meanings may coincide and thus they are interesting from the viewpoint of their translations.

Finally, the author explains that she found a bridge between the two chapters in her monograph in the fact that compliments and DMs share the properties of CRUs with no rules prescribing the WHAT-WHEN-WHY of their forms,

functions, and distribution in discourse to their users. Instead, they have to be viewed as manifestations of socio-cultural norms of expectations with mostly significantly different cross-cultural manifestations (p. 229).

In the concluding part, Válková surveys her results and suggests possible directions for future research in both theoretical and educational approaches to compliments and DMs. With regard to the suggested conceptual framework and detailed analysis of compliments and selected discourse signposts from cross-cultural and pedagogical perspectives, the monograph will definitely be of great interest not only to researchers working in the field of pragmatics and discourse analysis in general and compliments and discourse markers in particular, but also to students of English and readers from the general public interested in the manifestation of linguistic politeness in English and the phenomena under investigation.

References

- Aijmer, K. (2002) *English Discourse Particles. Evidence from a Corpus*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Eelen, G. (2001) *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Manchester: St. Jerome Publishing.
- Halliday, M. A. K. (1984) *Language as a Social Semiotic, The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Leech, G. (1983) *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Locher, M. and Watts, R. (2005) 'Politeness theory and relational work.' *Journal of Politeness Research. Language, Behaviour, Culture*. Volume 1(1), 9-33.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987) *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Válková, S. (2004) *Politeness as a Communicative Strategy and Language Manifestation. A Cross-Cultural Perspective*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého v Olomouci.
- Verschueren, J. (1999) *Understanding Pragmatics*. London: Arnold.

Renata Povolná