HOW TO ASK A PROFESSOR

POLITENESS IN CZECH ACADEMIC CULTURE

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The objective of the publication being presented is to introduce to the readers the communicative strategies that Czech university students choose when in contact with their lecturers and professors. The institutional communication in Czech universities has its specifics – on the one hand, it conserves traditional manners of communication, as the university is an institution with considerable hierarchy, and many interactions follow formal rules (e.g., how to address the professor in an official letter or during the degree ceremony); on the other hand, students as speakers of the younger generation bring new phenomena into the communication. Students whose communications have been analysed have undergone the process of enculturation and socialization since 1989 when, in the former Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution brought an end to the Communist era after a span of 40 years and Czech culture started to be influenced by Western countries. Younger speakers who often travel abroad to spend some time in foreign countries during their studies bring new communication schemes; therefore, permanent changes occur. Czech linguist Vilém Mathesius (1932) used the term *pružná stabilita* (flexible stability), which means that language can develop only as fast as to enable consecutive generations to understand each other. However, this publication is not about language in the sense of the Saussurean term *langue* but in the sense of *parole* (Saussure, 1916). Therefore, communicative strategies can develop only as fast as to enable consecutive generations not to threaten each other's fate; this term, first authored by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), will be referred to in many contexts in this book.

In the first chapter, I will consider the function of politeness in human society and a possible definition of politeness as presented by Czech scholars and by Czech laypeople – university students – with regard to how they perceive politeness and how they define polite behaviour. My aim is not to revise any main theories on politeness or to point out their weaknesses, as that has been done many times before (for a comprehensive critical look, see, for example, Eelen, 2001). On the contrary, I will concentrate on the students' approach to politeness, which could be interpreted as a laypersons' approach. It shows that their perception of politeness differs significantly from those

presented by linguists. Throughout the book, I will try to find the possible reasons for this discrepancy.

In chapter two, I will take into consideration many of the aspects of Czech culture that could manifest themselves within verbal politeness. I present the results of several Czech studies oriented at pronominal and nominal addressing in the Czech Republic in general and especially in academic settings; some of them describe real communicative situations and are based on authentic material, and the others present students' preferences and are based on questionnaires or discourse completion tasks. Again, it shows that there is a difference between the real state of usage and the ideal state from the students' point of view, which suggests that a change in communicative scheme is imminent.

Chapter three focuses on the previous research on computer mediated communication in academic settings. The main part of the publication (chapter four) presents the research oriented on requests for information addressed to faculty by Czech students. The first part of the research focuses on analysis of requests for information in students' e-mails addressed to a university lecturer; 240 authentic e-mail requests for information were analysed. The requests were related to, for example, the schedule of the courses and examinations, dates of consultations, themes of diploma theses, questions as to whether the lecturer had already received a seminar paper and/or if its academic level was considered appropriate, and which grade the student received on a test. The second part of the analysis focuses on requests for information posted on the student information Internet forum SIS helpdesk, which is an internet service offered by the faculty. Members of the academic staff, students' affairs department administrators and central schedule planers answer the questions that students post on the internet forum. Students ask how to solve problems with schedules and enrolling in courses. 260 initial contributions containing requests for information were examined.

To analyse both types of requests for information, the coding scheme that was developed for the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project / CCSARP (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), which largely builds on Edmondson's and House's work (Edmondson, 1981; Edmondson and House, 1981), was used. The introductory part of the request (establishing contact, forms of address, greetings), level of directness of the head act (the minimal unit that can realise a request), lexical and phrasal modification of the head act and syntactic modification of the head act were analysed.

Additionally, supportive moves, external modifications that are not included in the head act, were taken into consideration. Among the supportive moves that occurred were, for example, thanks, promises, grounders, final greetings and phatic elements. The results have been compared to the findings of other studies oriented towards verbal politeness, and some tentative conclusions about the strategies that may be preferred by university students in the Czech Republic have been drawn.

1. POLITENESS IN LANGUAGE

1.1 SEARCHING FOR A POLITENESS DEFINITION

Over the past 30 years, the need to differentiate between the concept of politeness modelled by linguists on an abstract level (politeness$_2$) and a layperson's concept of politeness (politeness$_1$) tending to be evaluative, has become evident. "There can be no idealised, universal scientific concept of (im)politeness (i.e., (im)politeness$_2$) which can be applied to instances of social interaction across cultures, subcultures and languages" (Watts, 2003: 23). Language users evaluate as polite those utterances that correspond with their own experiences and notion of politeness. The utterance that is considered polite may not always be evaluated positively at the same time; many language users consider (formal) politeness to be manipulative, snobbish, insincere, and/or too formal. Moreover, every interactant evaluates a particular utterance in its particular context. It is now widely acknowledged that an utterance cannot be inherently polite or impolite; its evaluation is always context dependent. Classic theories of politeness mostly stress the illocution of the utterance; the speaker's intent is the most important factor – e.g., whether the speaker follows the politeness maxims, chooses a conventionally indirect strategy, chooses an appropriate form of addressing, etc. Recently, the perlocutionary effect has also started to be taken into consideration; a recipient's evaluation is crucial in evaluating the utterance as polite or impolite. Terkourafi presents "a situation where a female shopper is browsing items in a shop and is interpreted by other shoppers as making ways for them to pass. She had no intention to be polite to anyone, yet her behaviour was positively evaluated by them as evidenced by their thanking her for it" (Terkourafi, 2008: 58). It shows that the point of view of the producer and recipient may not be equivalent.

Classic politeness definitions take politeness as a means to avoid conflict, minimise antagonism, and lessen tension and aggression in interactions:

"Politeness is a strategic conflict avoidance" (Leech, 1980: 19).

"The strategies available to interactants to defuse the danger and to minimalise the antagonism" (Kasper, 1990: 194).

"Politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction" (Lakoff, 1975: 64).

"Politeness is a complex system for softening face-threatening acts" (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987)[1].

In accordance with Brown and Levinson's classical approach, Czech linguist M. Švehlová sees human interaction as a possible threat, and politeness is seen as a protection against aggression:

"Problémem každé sociální skupiny je kontrolovat vnitřní agresi... V mezilidské interakci je to právě zdvořilostní princip, který onu potenciální možnost agrese dovoluje 'odzbrojit', a to řečovými strategiemi, jejichž fungování umožňuje interakci mezi lidmi (skupinami, národy) potenciálně agresivními" (Švehlová, 1994: 39–40).

"The problem of every social group is to control aggression... In human interaction it is the politeness principle which allows to 'disarm' the aggression through speech strategies whose functioning makes possible the interaction between people (groups, nations) potentially aggressive." (Translated by P. Ch.)

Alternately, politeness can be seen from a positive point of view as a means of constituting and maintaining good relations and a friendly atmosphere between interactants. Arndt and Janney (1985: 282) talk about "interpersonal supportiveness." Sifianou (1992: 86) defines politeness as "the set of social values which instructs interactants to consider each other by satisfying shared expectations." Hill et al. (1986: 349) view politeness as "one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others' feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort and promote rapport."[2] An elaborate definition of politeness in this sense is proposed by Czech linguist S. Válková (2004: 38):

"Linguistic politeness is a partly routinized and partly creative language manifestation of social values, finding its way of reflection at various levels of language representation (phonic, grammatical, lexical, textual, etc.) and reflecting interactional strategies by which interactants signal their interpersonal supportiveness, i.e., their intention to consider each other and satisfy shared expectations about cultural and situational assumption in order to avoid or at least soften face-threatening acts, to create happy conditions for interaction and to avoid losing one's face."

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1   Definitions cited also in Watts (2003: 50–52) or http://research.shu.ac.uk/politeness/defining.html.
2   Definitions cited also in Watts (2003: 50–52) or http://research.shu.ac.uk/politeness/defining.html.

Czech linguist D. Zítková combines both approaches:

"Zdvořilost lze obecně vymezit z negativního úhlu pohledu (tzn. jako prostředek mající za cíl zabraňovat konfliktům a rovněž kontrolovat a omezovat potenciální agresi komunikantů) i z pozitivního úhlu pohledu (tj. jako prostředek podporující udržení dobrých vztahů a přátelské atmosféry mezi komunikanty)" (Zítková, 2008: 47).
"Politeness can be defined from a negative point of view (as a means to avoid conflict and reduce potential aggression between interactants) and also from a positive point of view (as a means to maintain good relationships and friendly atmosphere between interactants." (Translated by P. Ch.)

In the following definition proposed by the Czech linguist F. Čermák, the notion of deference, which is important in Czech culture, is stressed:

"Zdvořilost je konvenční sociální postoj a projev úcty a takové chování, které je přijatelné a nekonfliktní a které má v jazyce různé vyjádření" (Čermák, 1997: 402).
"Politeness is a conventional social attitude and expression of deference and such a behaviour which is acceptable and non-conflicting a which has various manifestations in the language." (Translated by P. Ch.)

Some linguists primarily focus on linguistic realisation of utterances:

"Language usage associated with smooth communication" (Ide, 1989: 225).

"Zdvořilostí se v lingvistice rozumí v užším smyslu formy a funkce oslovování, pozdravů, tykání a vykání, v širším smyslu aktualizované užití zvláště gramatických a lexikálních prostředků, např. negace, slovesného způsobu a vidu, determinace, deminutiv, modálních sloves, částic atd. Užívá se termínu řečová etiketa" (Karlík, Pleskalová and Nekula, 2002).
"Politeness in linguistics means in a narrow sense forms and functions of address, greetings, T and V-forms, in broader sense actual usage of grammatical and lexical means, e.g., negation, verbal mood and aspect, determination, diminutives, modal verbs, particles etc. The term linguistic etiquette is also used." (Translated by P. Ch.)

"Zdvořilost je soubor řečových strategií, způsobů užívání jazyka, které jako svůj hlavní cíl mají nejen bezproblémovou komunikaci, ale zejména seberealizaci a sebeobranu komunikujícího individua v interakci s jinými komunikanty" (Hirschová, 2006: 171).
"Politeness is a set of speech strategies, ways of using language whose main objective is not only the incident-free communication, but above all

self-realization and self-defence of the communicating individual in the interaction with other communicants." (Translated by P. Ch.)

The most recent approaches, sometimes called discursive or post-modern, stress relational and contextual aspects of politeness:

Sara Mills defines politeness in the following way: "... As a person, relating to other people, I use politeness to refer to behaviour which I see as showing concern for others and which fits in with, and shows respect for, wider social norms" (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011: 2).

Jonathan Culpeper defines politeness as: "(a) an attitude consisting of particular positive evaluative beliefs about particular behaviours in particular social contexts, (b) the activation of that attitude by those particular in-context-behaviours, and (c) the actual or potential description of those in-context-behaviours and/or the person who produced them as polite, courteous, considerate, etc." (Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011: 3, more definitions ibid.)

1.2 APPROACHES TO (LINGUISTIC) POLITENESS

According to Fraser (1990), there are four basic approaches to politeness. *The social norm view* stresses the politeness rules that function in each human society; congruence with the norm is then positively evaluated, and impoliteness/rudeness is negatively evaluated. This approach is rare among researchers, but, as will be presented in section 1.3, it is quite popular in lay definitions of politeness. *The conversational maxim view* relies on the Gricean co-operative principle (Grice, 1975) and its four maxims whose violation signals conversational implicatures, non-explicit messages intended by the speaker to be inferred by the hearer. Subsequent politeness principles were proposed by Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) (see section 1.2.2). *The face saving view* is related to Brown and Levinson's classic theory and, according to Fraser, "is seen as the most clearly articulated and most thoroughly worked out, therefore providing the best framework within which to raise the crucial questions about politeness that must now be addressed" (Fraser, 1990: 219) (see section 1.2.1). *The conversational contract view* was proposed by Fraser (1975) and Fraser and Nolen (1981). Upon entering into a conversation, each party brings an understanding of some initial set of rights and obligations that will determine what the participants can expect from the others (e.g., respecting the status of the participants). There is always a possibility of renegotiation of the conversational contract (CC). "Politeness is a state that one expects to exist in every conversation; participants note not that someone is being polite – this is the norm – but rather that the speaker is violating the CC. Being polite does not involve making the hearer 'feel good' à la Lakoff or Leech nor with making the hearer not 'feel bad' à la

B&L. It simply involves getting on with the task at hand in light of the terms and conditions of CC." (Fraser, 1990: 233) The authors stress the role of the context; no utterance can be inherently polite or impolite.

1.2.1 FACE AND FACEWORK

The term face was first defined by Goffman 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). In Goffman's conception, face is only temporary, rooted in one particular communicative situation. On the contrary, according to the classic and widely cited conception of Brown and Levinson, face is a constant attribute of each person (Brown, Levinson, 1978, 1987). Brown and Levinson differentiate between negative and positive face, which are connected to positive and negative politeness strategy. "Negative face is the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others. Positive face is the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others." (Brown, Levinson, 1987: 62)

Face saving is one of the crucial motivations to be polite in communication. There are many communicative situations that are inherently face threatening. Brown and Levinson refer to Austin's speech acts theory (Austin, 1988, Searle, 1970) and use the term *Face Threatening Acts* (Brown, Levinson, 1978, 1987). Among face threatening acts are those that exert pressure on an addressee (order, request, advice, warning) or acts that negatively evaluate some aspects of the addressee's face (mockery, complaint, insult, rebuke, criticism). Politeness should soften the impact of the face threatening acts in interpersonal contact. When performing a face-threatening act (e.g., a request), a person may use a direct strategy (on record) or employ a negative or positive politeness strategy to save a hearer's face. A negative politeness strategy is represented, for example, by conventional indirectness, questions and hedges, communicative pessimism, minimising the imposition, showing deference and apologising (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 131). Negative politeness is usually employed in formal settings where the social distance between interactants is greater. A positive politeness strategy is represented by attending to the hearer's interests, presupposing common ground, joking, offering and promising, showing optimism, etc. (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 102). Positive politeness is mostly employed in informal situations where the social distance between interactants is smaller. Another possibility is to avoid performing the face threatening act altogether (the off record strategy).

Brown and Levinson's theory has been widely criticised for its Anglocentric bias. Their approach is rooted in an individualistic culture in which speakers choose intentionally the optimal strategy to achieve their communicative goals. However, this tendency is not universal. The efforts to formulate a universal theory of politeness applicable to all cultures and all contexts have proven it to be untenable in recent decades. For example, there seems to be a problem when evaluating Asian cultures that have their own cultural specifics that differ from Western cultures. The authors describing

Asian cultures reject the theory that the speaker is free to choose language means to reach his/her objectives and that he/she is trying to use the most effective communicative strategy (Ide, Hill, Carnes, Ogino, Kawasaki, 1992; Matsumoto, 1988). For example, negative face, as presented by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), is a concept that is not compatible with Asian culture. In Asian languages, e.g., Japanese, politeness does not depend on the free choice of language means and individual will of a speaker but instead depends on the prescriptive communicative norms. It is based on a principle called *wakimae*, which is a speaker's judgement of the communicative situation and context, especially the social status of the people present (*to whom I am talking to*). The principle of *wakimae* is based on the interactants' social roles and the system of formal rules that can be applied to particular communicative situations. One does not have to calculate options, just follow the rules of automatically matching the ritualistic form and the context (Ide, 2005). The concept of face has been further elaborated, and new approaches try to overcome the limits of Brown and Levinson's theory, getting partly back to Goffman's original conception. Three of the new conceptions of face will be briefly mentioned here: the approaches offered by R. B. Arundale, H. Spencer-Oatey and M. Terkourafi.

R. B. Arundale presents a *face constituting theory*. He sees a face as a social phenomenon arising in the conjoint co-constituting of human relationships rather than as an individual phenomenon involving person-centred attributes. He construes a face as "a relational and interactional phenomenon arising in everyday talk as opposed to a person centred attribute understood as determining the shape of an individual's utterance" (Arundale, 2010: 2079). Face and facework have a complex, dynamic and dialectical nature, and interactants are continually achieving and re-achieving face. Face is dependent on past and future communicative events, and it is constantly developing. Both the speaker's intentions and addressee's interpretations are important. Face Constituting Theory explains face as participants' interpretations of relational connectedness and separateness, conjointly co-constituted in talk/conduct-interaction.

Spencer-Oatey (2000, 2002) develops a conception of politeness in the frame of *rapport management*, i.e., communication oriented on creating positive interpersonal relationships. She suggests that "the motivational force for rapport management involves two main components: the managements of face and the management of social rights" (Spencer-Oatey, 2002: 540). Face has the following interrelated aspects:

> "Quality face: We have a fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities; e.g., our competence, abilities, appearance etc. Quality face is concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves in terms of such personal qualities as these, and so is closely associated with our sense of personal self-esteem."

> "Social identity face: We have a fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e.g., as group leader, valued customer, close friend. Social identity face is concerned with the value that we effectively

claim for ourselves in terms of social or group roles and is closely associated with our sense of public worth."

Additionally, social rights have two interrelated aspects:

"Equity rights: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to personal consideration from others, so that we are treated fairly: that we are not unduly imposed upon or unfairly ordered about, that we are not taken advantage of or exploited, and that we receive the benefits to which we are entitled."

"Association rights: We have a fundamental belief that we are entitled to association with others that is in keeping with the type of relationship that we have with them" (Spencer Oatey, 2002: 540).

Spencer-Oatey also relates the conception of face to the social psychology conception of identity. "Face and identity are similar in that both relate to the notion of 'self'-image (including individual, relational and collective construals of self), and both comprise multiple self-aspects or attributes… Interactionally, face threat/loss/gain will only be perceived when there is a mismatch between an attribute claimed (or denied, in the case of negatively evaluated traits) and an attribute perceived as being ascribed by others" (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 644).

Terkourafi proposes a *frame-based theory*. "Frames contribute to the understanding process by making available background knowledge which is relevant to the eventuality at hand" (2001: 26). A frame is understood as "data structure representing a stereotypical situation" (Minsky, 1975: 202, cf. in Terkourafi, 2001: 25). Frames are construed in an individual during the socialization process and are, therefore, culture-dependent; the individual generalizes his/her experiences gained in particular contexts. Frames contain the information about situations, e.g., who the participants are, where the event takes place, etc. Past experience helps to decide which politeness strategy may be appropriate. In new situations, the interactants compare the parameters with information stored in long-term memory. Frames, as such, are universal; however, their concrete realization is influenced by the culture in which the interactants grew up. In Czech linguistics, frames are introduced by J. Kraus (1988). He uses an example of the frame of visiting a theatre, which includes many static and dynamic elements – one's best clothes, departure, information about the play and cast, tickets, a partner to go with, etc. A frame also represents a hypothesis that is constantly verified on the basis of interpreted discourse (Kraus, 1988: 144).

According to Terkourafi (2007), face is built on two properties: 1) a biological grounding in a dimension approach versus withdrawal and 2) intentionality. "In sum, the literature on human emotions concurs on the importance of a dimension of approach/withdrawal that is phylogenetically primary, universal, and pre-conscious. … such a dimension provides a natural basis for a universalizing notion of face, from which the latter can inherit two important features: its dualism between positive

(approach) and negative (withdrawal) aspects, and its universality." However, what makes face uniquely human is intentionality. "Face is similarly intentional inasmuch it presupposes an Other. Awareness of the Other, in turn, presupposes a notion of Self" (Terkourafi, 2007: 323). An individual has several faces concurrently, as many as there are other interlocutors in a situation.

Terkourfi (2007: 317) elaborates on Grice's cooperative principle (Grice, 1975), interrelating face and rationality: "Co-operate as much as necessary to constitute your own face (which may involve constituting or threatening your interlocutor's face in the process")". In this sense, the cooperative principle is followed even in conflictive situations when interlocutors do not cooperate, as they infer information from the partner's utterances and interpret implicatures.

1.2.2 CONVERSATIONAL AND POLITENESS MAXIMS

Linguistic politeness research in the 2nd half of the last century often referred to Grice's Cooperative principle (Grice, 1975), which is based on four conversational maxims (quality, quantity, relevance and manner). The Cooperative principle is a general intuitive principle presupposed to guide our interaction so that the locutors are capable of disclosing the communicative intention in utterances by basing their interpretation on mutual assumption that both parties co-operate and contribute to the common verbal exchange in a sensible way (Štekauer, 2000: 297). The Cooperative principle was specified by Grice (1975: 45, 46) as follows:

> "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage in which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged."

The principle was originally formulated as a philosophical concept, and the applicability of the theory to face-to-face communication proved to be problematic. It is not possible to follow the maxims in real conversation (e.g., due to politeness); on the contrary, interactants infer the meaning from utterances that violate the maxims of the Cooperative principle. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986: 66), inferential comprehension is a central thought process. The authors stress the role of the context, which helps to explain which meaning out of all possible meanings was intended by the speaker. Their relevance principle is based on one single maxim: "Every act of ostensive communication communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance" (1986: 158). The most important factor in communication is to interpret the speaker's intention. Achieving the optimal relevance is easier than following the Gricean principle.

Authors' proposed politeness principles emphasize the relational aspects of communication, not just rationality. Lakoff (1973) formulated two basic maxims or rules of pragmatic competence: *1. Be clear.* (similar to Gricean maxims) *2. Be polite.* The politeness rule comprises three partial rules: 1. Do not impose. 2. Give options. 3. Make the

addressee feel good – be friendly. The politeness principle of Leech (1983) presupposed minimizing the expression of impolite beliefs and maximizing the expression of polite beliefs. He formulated the following maxims: *Maxim of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy*. Even the approach based on politeness principles has its weaknesses and has been criticised. To describe all of the situations in communication, an indefinite number of maxims would be necessary. The principle has been criticised for its Anglocentric bias, as maxims are not applicable to the same extent to all cultures (e.g., in British culture, the Tact maxim plays the most important role). Leech himself does not state that his principle is universal. However, he suggests that what is universal is the *Grand Strategy of Politeness*: To be polite, a speaker communicates meanings that (a) place a high value on what relates to the other person (typically the addressee) and (b) place a low value on what relates to the speaker (Leech, 2007). Of course, there are both qualitative and quantitative differences in setting social parameters and linguistic parameters in languages.

1.2.3 DISCURSIVE APPROACH TO POLITENESS

The discursive approach attempts to overcome the weaknesses of the former approaches, which build on speech act theory and analyse politeness as it is realised through the use of isolated phrases and sentences. Focusing in on longer stretches of utterances, no single utterances can be evaluated as polite or impolite, and the relationships between participants and contextual factors have to be taken into consideration. "This discursive approach to the analysis of politeness and impoliteness can be summarised as being concerned with the contextual analysis of politeness. That is, the focus is on what the language used means to the participants, including both speaker and hearer, whether the participants themselves classify the utterances as polite or impolite, how they come to make those judgements, and what information and cues inform those decisions about whether someone has been polite and impolite" (The Linguistic Politeness Research Group, 2011: 5). Evaluation of behaviour by the participants plays a crucial role. It is necessary to distinguish between politeness$_1$, the ways in which (im)polite behaviour is evaluated and commented on by lay members, and politeness$_2$, politeness modelled by linguists as a theoretical concept (Watts, 2003). Not just politeness but also impoliteness is in the centre of interest. Relational work covers "the entire continuum from polite and appropriate behaviour to impolite and inappropriate behaviour" (Locher, 2004: 51, cf. in Culpeper, 2008: 21). Watts (2003) presents the term *politic behaviour* for behaviour that could be judged as polite but, based upon how it is conventionalized and expected in a given situation, is not registered as polite. He formulated the following definition of politic, impolite and polite behaviour: "Politic behaviour involves mutually shared forms of consideration for others in a given culture, impoliteness is an observable violation of politic behaviour which is open to negative evaluation by the participants and the researcher, polite behaviour is an observable 'addition' to politic behaviour, which may be positively evaluated, but is

equally open to negative evaluation" (Watts, 2003: 30; see also Locher and Watts, 2005; Locher, 2004). Politeness is seen as a marked behaviour; it could even be negatively evaluated. Not only the speaker's intention but also the addressee's interpretation and the role of the context are taken into consideration. Politeness can be interpreted as a perlocutionary rather than just illocutionary act. On the contrary, politeness can be judged as neutral and unmarked behaviour because polite utterances are not noticed while impolite ones tend to be noticed (House, 2005: 13). To sum up, the discursive approach stresses the role of the context, and, thus, it is not ethnocentric (Anglocentric). Politeness principles have been mostly applied to Western cultures, but these cultures may follow different rules and have different understandings of underlying principles. The discursive approach works with presuppositions of the interactants in a given communicative context and can therefore be applied to any culture, as in every culture there are some types of behaviour that, in a particular situation, could be neutral, expected, appropriate or acceptable. "The discursive approach abandons the pursuit of not only an a priori predictive theory of politeness but also any attempts to develop a universal, cross-culturally valid theory of politeness altogether" (Haugh, 2007: 297, cf. in Mills, 2011: 34).

1.3 HOW LAYPERSONS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC DEFINE POLITENESS

Lay definitions of politeness significantly differ from those presented by linguists. Laypersons are more influenced by cultural background, they tend to be more subjective and intuitive, they rely more on their own personal experience, and they do not claim universality. Nevertheless, lay (folk) definitions of politeness bring important information about the culture which the respondents come from.

In 2011, there was a research carried out among students of teaching preparation for primary school and nursery school, Faculty of Education, Charles University in Prague (Chejnová, 2012a). There were 182 respondents – women, 19–22 years of age. The respondents were not linguists working in the area of politeness research, and neither had they attended any course on pragmatics or sociolinguistics yet; therefore, their responses can be viewed as lay definitions. The task was to write down their own definition of politeness. It should be noted here that there was no information given that politeness in language should be taken into consideration, so that definitions could be broader than just linguistic/verbal manifestations of politeness. The results showed that lay definitions written by the students are mostly closer to the positive point of view. The most frequent (24%) was a definition of politeness as a showing of deference and respect to the addressee:

> *Způsob chování, kterým dáváme najevo, že si druhé osoby vážíme.*
> *Behaviour by which we manifest that we esteem the other person.*

Úcta k druhým i k sobě.
Respect/esteem both to the others and to oneself.

The fact that so many respondents stress this aspect is significant; as will be illustrated later, showing esteem and deference plays an important role in academic settings and in Czech manifestations, e.g., in addressing. The adjective *vážený / esteemed* is still used in forms of address in formal letters and even e-mails to authorities, although its usage has slowly declined. Even the second most frequent definition was based on positive face value, i.e., showing interest and sympathy, making the communication agreeable; such conception was chosen by 19% of respondents:

Být ohleduplní, vnímaví a vstřícní k druhým lidem.
To be considerate, sensitive and friendly to other people.

Alternately, politeness as a means to control aggression leads to strategies whose main objective is not to insult the addressee. Definitions based on such conception were presented by 9% of respondents:

Chování, kdy se k lidem ve svém okolí chováme tak, abychom je neurazili.
Behaviour when we treat other people in such a way that we do not insult them.

Students also mention manipulative aspects of politeness (5%). Their definitions emphasise conventional and acquired characteristics of polite behaviour:

Naučená lidská vlastnost, kterou člověk používá, když se chce někomu zavděčit,
i když to nemyslí upřímně.
Acquired human attribute which a person uses when trying to gratify somebody even
if he/she does not mean it.

Additionally, the social norm view (Fraser, 1990) occurred in lay definitions. Students define politeness as sticking to the rules (9%) or expectations (7%) or as using the appropriate conventionalized formulae (5%):

Chování k druhým v souladu s pravidly etikety.
Treating others according to etiquette rules.

Adekvátní chování, přiměřené situaci, vztahům, zvyklostem a očekáváním.
Appropriate behaviour, adequate to certain situation, relationships, custom and expectations.

Vhodné užití zdvořilostních frází.
Appropriate usage of politeness formulae.