LEARNING HOW TO MAKE PEOPLE FEEL GOOD
CHILDREN AND POLITENESS

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SUMMARY

The object of this work is the development of politeness in children.

In the first part of the dissertation, the relevant literature is reviewed and a model for the development of politeness is presented. This model is based upon analysis of the social cognition needed for polite communication and generates a set of related developmental hypotheses. In general, it was expected that children would first achieve conventional use of politeness and only later be capable of positive, sympathetic politeness in social intercourse. Positive politeness was expected to be related to the ability to monitor the social interaction by means of recursive thinking involving self-reflection.

In the second part of the dissertation, six studies are reported, all taking into account three age levels: 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds. Overall, 369 children were individually tested. Several methods were adopted: naturalistic and experimental observation, role-playing experiment, interview. The main results showed that: 1) politeness increases as a function of age; 2) young children possess a linguistic repertoire of politeness before being able to use it in real life situations; 3) conventional politeness is achieved earlier than sympathetic politeness; 4) although basic understanding of politeness is achieved at the age of 7, the understanding and use of politeness as a means to monitor cooperative discourse is achieved at the age of 9; 5) self-reflection related to politeness in communication emerges only at the age of nine.

The results of the six studies show that the development of politeness starts from possession of a linguistic repertoire of polite words and phrases, progresses to the recognition of the social conventions of polite usage, and finally develops into understanding and care of people's feelings. By the age of nine, children are aware that politeness can indeed be used to "make people feel good".
PART I

Review of the literature and hypotheses
CHAPTER 1

Politeness

Introduction

The main aim of this work is to describe the development of linguistic politeness. As a first step into the field, let us consider two spontaneous conversations among children. The first was tape recorded in a kindergarten and involved three 5-year-old children. The second was tape recorded in a day care centre and involved two 3-year-olds (D'Aniello, Morra Pellegrino, 1991, p.86).

Example 1

Yader: No, no...mi serve! mi serve a me! (a Paola che gli ha preso un bastoncino) (No, no...I need it! I need it for myself! - addressing Paola who has snatched a stick from his hand)
Paola: Anche a me mi serve a fare cos'! Ecco! (I need it too to do this! There!)
Romina: Ma se le serve anche a lei, scusa! (but, if she needs it, too! if you please! - addressing Yader)
Yader: Se vuoi te lo do (offre un altro bastoncino) (if you wish, I will give you this - offering another stick)
Paola: No! questo non mi serve! Mi serve questo! (No! I do not need that one! I need this one)
Romina: Ma dai! (Oh, come on!)
Yader: No
Romina: Yader, per favore, se tu le dai quel bastone io ti do questo (offre un cambio) (Yader, please, if you give her that stick, I will give you this one - offering something in change)
Yader: Dammelo (accetta) (Give it to me - he accepts the exchange).

Example 2

Carlo: Guarda! Un serpente! Tieni! (lo offre a Umberto) (Look! a snake! Take it! - offering it to Umberto)
Umberto: Te lo tieni (You can keep it for yourself)
Carlo: Tieni! (Take it!)
Umberto: Té! (Keep it!)
Carlo: Tieni! (Take it!)
Umberto: No
Carlo: Io ti ammazzo! (I'll kill you)
Umberto: Anch'io ti ammazzo! (I'll kill you too!)
Both groups of children are involved in a verbal conflict, but the verbal means employed are different in the two cases. In the first case, Romina employs several kinds of linguistic forms - including some politeness - to placate the conflict between her two friends. In the second case, the conflict is not resolved, but is aggravated by verbal hostility. Both examples show that words can indeed be used by young children as means to perform social actions. Although the ability to resolve social conflict by verbal means is an advanced and positive social skill, the ability to express aggressive feelings by playful words is not an inferior social skill. By means of language even young children can guide a potential fight into play.

Eisenberg and Garvey (1981) and Garvey (1984) described the development of children's ability in resolving conflicts by means of words. They found that, by the age of five, American children have a variety of linguistic strategies which can be adopted in managing verbal conflicts among peers. Similar results have been observed for Italian children. For example, D'Aniello and Pellegrino (1991) found that 3-year-olds tend to develop conflicts involving two children, while 5-year-olds develop conflicts involving three children. In addition, 3-year-olds seem unable to manage a verbal solution and they often break the interaction by expressing verbal hostility. In contrast, 5-year-olds adopt a variety of verbal means to solve peer-conflicts, including jokes and different types of requests or directives.

Another source of evidence comes from Corsaro's work on social rituals among pre-schoolers (Corsaro, 1979). By means of participant observation of children in their natural settings (i.e., kindergartens), Corsaro found that children perform different kinds of social actions by means of words. For example, they have special "formulae" to enter into play with peers (e.g., "We are friends, right?"), while - apparently - they do not have special rituals for leave-taking.

One might conclude that from an early age human beings are endowed with the ability to perform social actions (such as resolving conflicts or entering into play-groups) by means of words. The opening conversation shows that it is possible to find examples of 5-year-olds using politeness to modify peers' behaviour.

Not only is politeness present in most adults' everyday speech, it is also widespread in most known cultures. Politeness is a somewhat elusive phenomenon which perhaps makes itself more remarkable for its absence than for its presence. Let us imagine the following scenes.

In a conversation with a colleague, we are feeling at ease and relaxed, discussing a topic of mutual interest, when some irritation slowly creeps into our mind: "Why does this bore only quote his published work?"
At a restaurant, the person at the next table calls for the waiter and says loudly "Hey, waiter, we need a second bottle of wine, here!".

We are teaching a small group of postgraduates in our office, a student abruptly puts his head round the door and says "What about the book you promised to lend me?". Only our well tempered knowledge of adolescent behaviour keeps us placidly smiling.

The same scenes can be imagined with polite speakers. A nice colleague giving credit for our work over his own, a person at a restaurant making himself unnoticeable by using ordinary polite words, a student showing some respect for his teacher. Life would appear if not better, at least more smooth and pleasant.

As psychologists, we seem more inclined to study what makes life unpleasant (aggression, for example, or psychopathological states) than what has the potential to make it more enjoyable. Of course, the study of what can be harmful for human life is of primary importance. Yet why should we neglect the study of our propensity for happiness and pleasure? Politeness is intended to make people feel good when we speak to other people. It takes care of people's social comfort. Politeness can be viewed as the smile of human good nature making itself visible through words.

A polite speaker will understand and respect other people's positions in the world and also their wishes, he will put his own wishes and position on one side. If his social position is prominent, he will not impose it. If his social position is lower than his hearer's, he will tinge his discourse with some (not too much) elegant deference. A polite speaker will not be a menace to anybody, but will enhance other people's self-esteem and self respect. In a few words, the polite speaker will tend to arouse more positive than negative emotion. Politeness is pleasurable. "Please" is its prototypic word.

Politeness is like Vivaldi's music: airy, elegant, most enjoyable, and intelligent. It will not solve the great questions of humanity, nor will it shake the foundations of human life for a better destiny. No, politeness is a simple phenomenon, devised by human wisdom to lighten the road we must walk in each other's company. This is why it is universal - although differently expressed in various cultures.

There are many detractors of politeness. They think that politeness is pure formality. Some say that it is bad for young people because it is a form of hypocrisy. I do not share this point of view. One should not forget that words are not good or bad in themselves. They are are just tools. The actual use of words is the individual's choice. Thus, politeness can be used in various ways, good and bad.

Much formal politeness keeps people apart. In this sense, it is formal and empty. It can be used to keep people off, to build defences against others. Even this use of politeness is not unreasonable: Why should people not defend themselves if they feel threatened or potentially abused in their social rights (privacy, status, etc.)? After all, politeness is a very civilized defence. Some people, alas, use politeness to be aggressive
and abusing in subtle, twisted ways. They are offensive and, at the same time, keep the weapons out of their opponents' hands by adopting much politeness. For example, snobs play this trick very efficiently, thus hurting and humiliating people. If we consider only this aspect, politeness can indeed be composed only of complacent, formal and "empty" words. Lack of interest is understandable.

But this is only one side of the medal. Politeness does have a formal, defensive side, which protects people from invasion and can, on occasion, be used harmfully. However, politeness has also a caring face, which positively enhances emotional comfort and cannot be twisted too badly. It signals respect, attention, care of the other's feelings, wishes and position. This side of politeness is less easy to identify because it is less routinized. It can be expressed by concerned questions, jokes, humour, felicitously placed comments, interest in the other person. This side of politeness is the most pleasurable one.

It is an error to reduce politeness to its formal side, forgetting the other one. Politeness is more than simply good manners. The problem is that manners (including their absence) are more "visible" than the constant disposition to take care of other people's comfort in social intercourse. Besides, while manners are usually taught explicitly to children, attention to other person's needs may be considered less.

My aim is to show that children can indeed use politeness in its positive potentials. The observation of children's behaviour indicates the existence of positive aspects of politeness. I would also like to show that a developmental study will find that formal politeness is easier than positive politeness - the former requiring only knowledge of social conventions (manners), the latter a far deeper understanding of social intercourse.

Before progressing with more specific information, it may be of interest to consider briefly how people of different countries and centuries viewed politeness. Let us start with a contemporary 7-year-old boy:

*Interviewer:* "When is it necessary to be polite?" (Quando bisogna proprio essere gentili?).

*Paolo* (7-year-old): "It is enough to be kind and to respect the rules of the world" (Basta essere gentili e rispettare le regole del mondo)

The main implication of Paolo's "basta" (translated here as "it is enough") is that one should not worry about detecting special occasions in which politeness is necessary. If one is kind and respects the rules, politeness is there. For this young philosopher, politeness is a mental habit of kindness and respect, scarcely influenced by the external necessities. Politeness is a frame of mind.

Is this little boy right? or rather, is his view the one more generally adopted? to answer these questions it may be of interest to start with the classical definition of the semantic field of "politeness" presented by the *Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and
Phrases (first edition 1852). In the 1982 edition (Lloyd, 1982), Politeness belongs to three semantic areas: Elegance, Courtesy, and Respect. For example, the semantic area of the three names are the following:

**Elegance**
Style, perfection, grace, beauty, refinement, good taste, restraint, distinction, dignity, clarity, perspicuity, purity, simplicity, naturalness, simplicitness, naturalness, plainness, classicism, Atticism, harmony, euphony, symmetry, rhythm, flow, fluency, felicity, the right word in the right place, neatness, polish, finish, well-turned period, ornament, classic, purist.

**Courteous**
Chivalry, deference, respect, consideration, condescension, humility, graciousness, politeness, civility, urbanity, mannerliness, manners, good manners, good behaviour, gentlemanliness, ladyliness, good taste, tactfulness, diplomacy, courtliness, formality, amenity, amiability, kindliness, benevolence, gentleness, mildness, good humour, complaisance, affability, suavity, sociability. Courteous act, courtesy, civility, favour, kind act, soft answer, leniency, compliment, kind words, congratulation, introduction, friendliness, welcome, acknowledgement, recognition, salutation, salute, greetings, handclasp, handshake, respects, bow, curtsy, farewell, valediction.

**Respect**
Regard, consideration, esteem, approbation, high standing, honour, favour, repute, attentions, courtesy, due respect, deference, humility, obsequiousness, servility, humble service, loyalty, admiration, awe, wonder, fear, reverence, worship. Respects, regards, duty, kind regards, greetings, courteous act, red carpet, guard of honour, address of welcome, salutation, salaam, bob, bow, curtsy, genuflexion, obeisance, reverence, hommage, salute, presenting arms.

The content of such areas suggest a notion of politeness as a sophisticated form of social behaviour, slightly inclined to formalities. This view of politeness strongly recalls the Confucian notion of "li". The word "li" indicates "good manners", "rites", "ceremonies", "respectful behaviour". In the Confucian philosophy, which vastly influenced the civic and political life of China over the centuries, "li" governed social life, being the foundation of both stability and human solidarity. "Who does not know the rites ("li"), does not have stability", K'ung Fu Tsu is said to have declared (Arena, 1991). This view celebrates the civic virtues of politeness, stemming from the traditional wisdom of cultures attracted by stability and elegant ceremonies or, more generally, by sophistication in social intercourse.

In European cultures, this view of politeness might perhaps be traced back to the feudal world in which courtesy was the basic social - and even moral - principle of people living in the courts. The philosophy of courtesy was further developed during the Renaissance. For example, Baldassar Castiglione expressed the philosophical notion of
politeness as clear, harmonious, and balanced behaviour in his famous "Il cortegiano", published in 1528 (Castiglione, 1528). The neo-platonic view of ideal harmony among all human passions, between reason and affect, between the individual and society, and between man and nature is exemplified by the beautiful, elegant, polite behaviour of the "cortegiano". Just after publication, the book was extraordinary successful in the Italian courts which, at that time, were the leaders for arts and culture in Europe. During the XVIth century, the book was translated into several languages, including Latin and English (1561), and its message spread throughout Europe.

It is fascinating to think that politeness has been considered as a central notion for individual and social behaviour both in China 500 years B.C. and at the beginning of modern Europe. The "court" politeness has been a special behaviour, incorporating two powerful human aspirations: aspiration towards superior morality in social intercourse and aspiration towards elegance and beauty. Roget's "Thesaurus" also stresses the aesthetic value of politeness, as related to harmony, elegance, and, by and large, to the resolution of conflict. In a sense, the idealization of politeness - or, more simply, a wish for politeness - might express the never-ending human aspiration for peace, constantly elusive in both the internal and external worlds.

A second, more modern definition for politeness can be found in the Oxford Dictionary of Current English (1980) according to which to be polite is "having, showing the possession of, good manners and consideration of other people". In the same Dictionary "consideration" is defined as "the act of considering, thinking about" and as "thoughtful attention to the wishes, feelings, etc., of others". It is interesting to see that the definition of politeness reported by the Oxford Dictionary is similar in structure to the young philosopher's definition which opened this section. Two components of politeness are identified. On one hand, there are sets of conventional social behaviour ("good manners" for the Oxford Dictionary, "the rules of the world" for the little boy); on the other hand, there is an inner psychological disposition to be concerned for others ("consideration of other people" for the Oxford Dictionary, "to be kind" for the boy).

Two centuries ago, Goethe adopted a similar structure in his definition of politeness: "There are no exterior signs of politeness which do not have a deep moral basis.(...) There is a politeness of the heart which is close to love. From it, the more convenient politeness of external behaviour derives". Again, we have a distinction between conventions and inner dispositions. In addition, Goethe - whose mode of thinking is closer to ours than the "court" one - stressed an important point. Politeness may be observed as external behaviour, yet it derives from deep inside. This is a "psychological" view of politeness, the one which probably best expresses the spirit of our times.

What is characteristic of a psychological view of politeness? First of all, a distinction between internal and external worlds is present. Second, external behaviour is
viewed as deriving from internal sources. Third, the internal sources for politeness are
conceived as both possession of social norms or rules and as positive dispositions
towards other human beings. In the above examples, such positive dispositions may
range from the more detached Oxonian "consideration for other people", to the graceful
Italian "kindness", to the more passionate, Romantic "love".

If we turn from general or literary to scientific definitions of politeness, we must
note that, unfortunately, not much attention has been devoted to politeness by
psychologists. Thus, a psychological definition of politeness phenomena is missing.
Most of the available scientific information on politeness comes from linguists and
philosophers of language. Yet such literature is more theoretically than empirically based.
Some empirical evidence on politeness comes from developmental psychologists who
based their studies upon linguistic theories. The presentation of the literature relevant to
our issue is thus divided into two parts. The general linguistic theories relevant for the
understanding of politeness phenomena are presented in this chapter. In the second
chapter, the developmental literature is presented and discussed.

Linguists' work on the issue includes three main aspects. The first is the linguistic
theory of speech acts, which is the general background of any linguistic theory of
politeness. The second aspect addresses the issue of a linguistic definition of politeness
phenomena. The third is related to both the previous ones and concerns the question of
indirectness in speech acts.

Linguistic means to perform social actions: Speech acts and their
development

The issue of social use of language was first investigated by philosophers of
language in the 1960s (Austin, 1962). In psychology, the topic started to become
important in the early 1970s, when the conceptual frame of developmental
psycholinguistics underwent a major shift from the Chomskian theory of transformational
grammar to the first generative semantic models (Antinucci, Parisi, 1973; Slobin, 1975).
In the study of child language, it soon become clear that the meaning of any sentence is
not absolute. On the contrary, the meaning of children's first words (e.g., Halliday,
1975) is strongly related to the context in which the sentence is uttered. The same
sentence can have different meanings according to various contexts not only in children's
language, but also in adults'. For example, the sentence "It is hot today" can be either a
casual turn-filling remark, or an attempt to start a conversation or an indirect hint to get
something to drink - and many other things. Only contextual information can fully reveal
the actual meaning of the sentence.
The strong relation between action, context, and language has been demonstrated by means of developmental research in the work of the Roman group (Bates, Camaioni, Volterra, 1975; Bates, Benigni, Bretherton, Camaioni, 1977). They showed that infants can first perform social actions by non-verbal communication (for example, by pointing) and only later can they insert words within the frame of their (social) action. The conclusion is that "semantics emerges, developmentally and logically from pragmatics, in much the same way that syntax has been shown to emerge from semantic knowledge" (Bates, 1976b, p.420).

The human ability to perform social actions by means of language appears as a question which should primarily concern pragmatics. Things, however, are not so simple. For example, Levinson (1983) thoroughly discusses several definitions of pragmatics. The main problem is that the term includes two different phenomena. On one hand, pragmatics is concerned with those aspects of the linguistic structure which depend upon context, for example, deixis. On the other, pragmatics is also concerned with the principles of language use and comprehension which are not related to the linguistic structure per se (Levinson, 1983), such as the socio-linguistic rules of a given social group or culture. In other words, the pragmatic aspects of language are given by an interaction between specific linguistic structures and principles of language usage. Two major types of attempts at disentangling the intricacies of this interaction may be identified: a linguistic approach and a competence approach.

The linguistic approach adopts the view that pragmatics is limited only to the study of the relations between language and context which are represented in the grammatical structure (Levinson, 1983). Examples are the study of deixis, presuppositions, honorifics, etc.. This approach aims at casting light upon the "universals" of the pragmatic use of language. The main advantage is that, by narrowing the definition of pragmatics down to the linguistic aspects of discourse, a clear distinction can be made between pragmatics and sociolinguistics. For example, Leech (1983) distinguished between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. In the first case, "the particular resources that a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983, p.11) are involved. On the other hand, in sociopragmatics the social conditions which influence pragmatic performance are taken into account. Sociolinguistics has also been defined as the use of language in context by social groups, pragmatics the individual use of language in context (Bates, 1976b).

The main disadvantage of the linguistic approach is that it is really hard to define properly what "the context" (or the "social conditions") are. For example, Ochs (1979) speaks of context as the social and psychological world in which a speaker operates in a given moment. Lyons (1977) defines context as the knowledge of social roles and statuses, of spatial and temporal location, of level of formality, of appropriateness of
style, register and topic. Any attempt at defining context apparently reintroduces extralinguistic factors.

The competence approach is rooted in the principle of appropriateness in language usage. From this point of view, pragmatics is the study of the speakers' ability to relate language to the appropriate contexts (Levinson, 1983). This definition may not appeal much to some linguists and philosophers of language because it makes the limit between pragmatics and sociolinguistics even fuzzier. However, a competence approach may be appealing to psychologists who are interested more in the communicative abilities of human beings than in abstract definitions. A well-known example of this second approach can be found in Hymes's (1971) notion of communicative competence, which challenged Chomsky's notion of linguistic competence.

A competence approach to pragmatics thus shows the potentials for answering our first broad question in ways which may be of interest to psychologists. Which kind of linguistic means do people use to perform social actions? It may be observed that there are utterances which explicitly perform actions in the social world by means of "performative" verbs (for example, "promise" or "apologize") (Harris, 1990). In other cases, however, social actions are performed without explicit performatives, as in the two verbal conflicts reported at the beginning of this chapter. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) proposed that any action performed by means of language could be called a "speech act".

According to Austin's (1962) theory, three aspects can be distinguished in speech acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. These three components operate together, each being involved in virtually every utterance.

The locutionary component refers to the very words that the speaker employs. Locution is strictly related to linguistic aspects such as speech sounds and meanings. It involves the phonological, semantic, morphological and syntactical aspects of a given language.

Illocution, though strictly related to locution, is closer to the contextual components of speech production. By means of the illocutionary components of language, the speaker tries to make explicit his intentions to the hearer. Language has various devices which can express different intentions. Performative verbs are good examples of the ways in which a speaker can make use of the illocutionary component of language. Verbs such as "promise", "ask", "request", "apologize", "tell" and many others not only express the speaker's intentions, but can also express the strength of such intentions. For example, consider the following statements: "I am calling you tomorrow", "I will call you tomorrow. I promise", "I might call you tomorrow". From the different illocutionary strength of such utterances, the addressee can judge the probability of being called by the speaker the day after. An important characteristic of the illocutionary component is its
degree of explicitness. Searle (1975a) distinguished between direct and indirect speech acts. In direct speech acts, the speaker's intention is explicitly expressed by the propositional meaning of his utterance. For example, "Please close the window" is a direct speech act in which it is clear that the speaker wants the window closed and directly asks for it. In indirect speech acts, the speaker's intention must be inferred because it is not directly expressed. As Searle (1975a, p.60) described it, in indirect speech acts "one illocutionary act is performed indirectly by way of performing another". For example, "Don't you feel cold in here?" is an indirect speech act in which the speaker's intention (i.e., to have the window closed) is hidden behind a polite interest in the other person's comfort. This point will be discussed later.

Finally, any speech act also has a perlocutionary component, that is, the effect which is achieved in the social world by the speaker's verbal behaviour. The perlocutionary component is more linked to context than either locution or illocution. It should be noted that although Searle (1969) limited his analysis of speech acts only to locution and illocution, Austin's original formulation also included the contextual effects of words as an important component of speech acts. Perlocution is particularly important to psychologists, because it describes "when, how and where" words really work.

One major problem in speech act theory is how to group speech acts of different nature together. As Ballmer and Brennenstuhl (1981, p.13) put it: "The classification of speech acts, which are basic units of linguistic behaviour, seems to be a necessary precondition for a solid theory of language".

The problem of speech act classification has been considered a crucial one since the first steps of speech act theory. Austin (1962) proposed classifying performative verbs by analysing the meanings reported in a dictionary. He also proposed a preliminary work which included five categories and 188 examples. Searle (1975b) proposed five categories of performative verbs which were different from those of Austin. Searle's ideas have been quite influential among psychologists interested in the development of pragmatic skills. His categorization is reported below:

Representatives (tell people how things are: suggest, insist)
Directives (try to get them to do things: request, advise)
Commissives (commit ourselves to doing things: promise, swear)
Expressives (express our feelings and attitudes: thank, apologize)
Declarations (bring about changes through our utterance: christen).

Ballmer and Brennenstuhl (1981) criticized both Austin's and Searle's classifications and proposed a new approach to the problem which considered the
analysis of lexical, semantic meanings of verbs. Basing their work upon the semantic areas expressed by English verbs, Ballmer and Brennenstuhl elaborated a complex and systematic classification of speech acts. Their method is not far from Austin's original proposal, yet the thoroughness of their work resulted in a far more complete account of the range of possibilities to perform social actions by means of words. Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's (1981) database is composed of 4800 speech act verbs. These verbs are divided into 600 categories. The categories belong to 24 models, which can in turn be grouped into eight model groups. The latter can be summarized into four basic linguistic functions which correspond to four types of linguistic behaviour: Expression, Appeal, Interaction, and Discourse.

In order to clarify better the system, the four functions (Expression, Appeal, Interaction, Discourse) and their related model groups will be reported with examples of categories for each model group, as follows:

**Expression**

*Emotion Model* (linguistic expressions of emotion)
Ex.: indicators of emotional states, value judgements, curses, etc.

**Appeal**

*Enaction Model* (speaker's attempts to get somebody to do something by expressing an idea, wish, intention, plan, goal, etc.)
Ex.: calling for/offering help, demanding, commanding, etc.

**Interaction**

*Struggle Model* (competitive verbal fight)
Ex.: make claims, reasons for the argument and their consequences, attack, retreat, compromise, argue, explain, agree, etc.

*Institutional Model* (entering an institution and thereby adopting, following, or violating its norms and rules)
Ex.: allowing, forbidding, promoting, judging, committing, punishing, violating a norm, etc.

*Valutation Models* (valuations of actions, persons, things, state of affairs, decisions and their after-effects)
Ex.: scolding, correcting, criticizing, praising, accepting, rejecting, etc.

**Discourse**

*Discourse Models* (organization and type of discourse)
Ex.: asking for participation, entering discourse, reconciliation of disturbances, intending turn-taking, permission to speak, etc.

*Text Models* (textual assimilation and processing of reality, producing, receiving, manipulating data)
Ex.: declaring, reporting, uttering, confirming, informing, teaching, understanding, learning, translating, reformulating, commenting, accepting/refusing data, wondering, supposing, categorizing, comparing, differentiating, etc.

Theme Models (process of thematic structuring and its results)
Ex.: think, include, reorganize, structure, connect, accentuate, weaken, clarify, announce, premise, begin, elaborate, perform, etc.

"Expression is the least hearer oriented and least extroverted function of the four. It is an often uncontrolled mirroring of emotional states of human being. Appeal is a linguistic function clearly directed towards a hearer. It is, essentially, unidirectional from speaker to hearer. The speaker tries to get control over the hearer. Interaction then is the linguistic function involving speaker and hearer in mutual verbal actions. The hearer tries to get control over the speaker as well, which the speaker may try to avoid. Thus the basis for a (verbal) struggle is laid. After a possibly hot quarrel the mutual competition may go over into reciprocal cooperation. This is the basis for a better-behaved and more rigidly organized verbal interaction between speaker and hearer: The fourth function of linguistic behavior, Discourse, can become operative" (Ballmer, Brennenstuhl, 1981, pp.30-31). Very interestingly, the authors claim that the higher linguistic functions typically imply the lower ones. "The higher linguistic functions in typical cases imply or even (presuppose) the lower ones. That is, being a Discourse imply being (in part) also an Interaction, an Appeal, and an Expression, for example. More explicitly this means that being a discourse is being (an elaborate form of verbal) Interaction, which means that many single mutual Appeals occur, and some kinds, if neutral, Expressions of emotion." (Ballmer, Brennenstuhl, 1981, p.31). Thus, Discourse can be considered the highest linguistic function (or behaviour) because one or more Interactions are usually embedded and resolved in it. Interaction appears when Appeals from two (or more) speakers are integrated into a dialogical, although competitive, frame. Appeals and Expressions of emotion are the micro-components of speech acts. They can be used as such or variously combined into linguistic frames which can be more (discourse) or less (interaction) social oriented and conventional. In addition, Ballmer and Brennenstuhl found that their four main linguistic functions can be divided along two dimensions (private/socially entrenched; monological/dialogical). "A noteworthy observation is that the four functions can be divided up into two unilateral (Expression, Appeal) and two bilateral or dialogical (Interaction, Discourse) functions. The first of every two functions (i.e., Expression, Interaction) can be said to be the more original and racy, whereas the second of every two functions (i.e., Appeal, Discourse) are the more institutionalized and controlled versions.

The four functions follow roughly the following cross-classification which has the two dimensions of privacy (social entrenching) and discourse character (monologue-dialogue):
The most interesting features of Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's theory are two. The first is the strong correspondence between the semantic-based speech categories and the social disposition of the speaker. The speaker can just be concentrated upon himself (monological) when his speech is primarily private and not concerned with the other person's reaction (Expression). The speaker can be plainly oriented towards the other person in a social exchange, yet he can be totally unconcerned about the other person's feelings or reactions (Appeal). The speaker can be concentrated upon his own aims and start a competitive dialogue where he* is well aware of the other person's different aims or wishes, but he basically does not care about them (Interaction). Lastly, the speaker can start a socially oriented dialogue, in which awareness of the other person's aims, feelings and reactions serves the goals of cooperation (Discourse). The second interesting feature of this theory is the claim that the higher linguistic functions imply the lower ones.

In brief, Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's theory stresses two important facts in the field of speech acts:

1. speech acts belong to four different categories which are hierarchically organized, as higher linguistic functions imply lower order ones;
2. each category comprises speech acts which show different degrees of both social orientation (monological-dialogical) and conventionality (private-social entrenched).

If we turn to the field of human development, it may be observed that the notion that higher-order functions imply and organize lower-order ones is not new in developmental psychology. On the contrary, it is a point of view which, stemming from Darwin's evolutionary theory, has always been typical of an organismic approach to human development (see for example, Dixon, Lerner, 1988). In developmental literature, Halliday's (1973, 1975) well known functional analysis of children's speech adopts this very point of view. The main issue in Halliday's theory is that children's first words or

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* For reason of graphic presentation and easier reading, the third person singular in this text is always rendered simply as "he". No sexual discrimination is intended in any way.
utterances have one function, while later utterances generally serve multiple functions. Halliday found that his son's speech could be divided into three phases. In the first (9-18 months), the child used simple grammatical structures (one or two words) each aimed at achieving one goal. At this stage, six functions could be identified:

- **Instrumental**, the child expresses a desire for objects or action;
- **Regulatory**, the child tries to influence other people's behaviour;
- **Interactional**, the child just aims at interaction;
- **Personal**, the child expresses his own uniqueness;
- **Heuristic**, the child explores the world;
- **Imaginative**, the make-believe function.

In the second phase (16-35 months), Halliday's son Nigel was able to use the same grammatical structure to express more than one aim. At this stage, three main functions could be identified:

- **Pragmatic** (embedding the earlier Interactional, Instrumental, Regulatory), the child tries to act upon others;
- **Mathetic** (embedding the earlier Personal, Heuristic, and Imaginative functions), the child organizes his experience by means of language and, basically, does not require any response;
- **Informative** (emerging at about 22 months), the child offers information.

In the third phase (over 35 months), the above functions are variously combined, so that each utterance can serve various purposes, as in adults' speech. Harris (1990, p.57-58) describes the three more advanced Halliday's functions as follows:

"At this point, any utterance can be described in terms of three related functional components.

1. The ideational function is concerned with the content of what is said and, developmentally, can be traced back to earlier mathetic, personal heuristic and imaginative functions.

2. The interpersonal function, which relates to the illocutionary force of an utterance, derives from the pragmatic function and its antecedents, the instrumental, regulatory and interactional functions.

3. The textual function is concerned with the creation of coherent and meaningful sequences of utterances (or written sentences) within a conversational sequence and within a particular setting."

In the third phase, each utterance expresses all three functions. It is easy to agree with Harris's (1990) opinion that the ideational function corresponds to Searle's (1975a)
propositional or locutionary component, while the interpersonal function corresponds to Searle's illocutionary component.

In conclusion, Halliday's work shows that, from the beginning, children's language has social intentions and functions which are progressively integrated within more complex linguistic frames. It is interesting to note that, as in Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's linguistic theory, in Halliday's developmental theory the higher-order linguistic functions derive from the integration of the lower-order functions. From both developmental and general linguistic points of view, discourse is viewed as a complex, progressively integrated linguistic frame, in which several functions are coordinated. Halliday's analysis, however, was stopped when Nigel, the subject of the longitudinal study, was about 3 years old and from this analysis we do not know the course of later developments. Besides, it left relatively unexplored the issue of the relative frequency of the various types of speech acts in children's speech.

This last point, however, was the focus of another study. Dore (1977) recorded and categorized 2829 speech acts produced by 3-year-old children in spontaneous conversations. Dore's study did not address a developmental question directly, but his study is interesting because only the illocutionary component of children's speech was taken into account. Dore found that 3-year-olds' illocutionary acts can be divided into six categories, as follows:

- **Requests**, solicit information, action or acknowledgement (27.0%);
- **Responses**, directly complement preceding utterances (18.5%);
- **Descriptions**, represent observable or verifiable aspects of context (22.3%);
- **Statements**, express analytic and institutional facts, beliefs, attitudes, emotions, reasons, etc. (13.8);
- **Conversational devices**, regulate contact and conversations (5.8%);
- **Performatives**, accomplish act by being said (10.8%) (Dore, 1977, pp.234-235).

The major limitation of this study is that, apparently, each utterance has only one function. This is in contrast with Halliday's results for this age group and, in addition, poses several problems if one is interested in classifying spontaneous speech acts in children older than 3. However, Dore's study does highlight two important facts: First, in very young children the most frequent spontaneous illocutionary acts are requests and, second, the conventional linguistic devices which rule cooperative discourse are rare in young children (5.8%).
In conclusion, the literature reported and discussed up to now shows that human beings have a variety of verbal means which can be employed to perform social actions and that an important aspect of linguistic development is the acquisition of such means.

Theories of politeness

Politeness phenomena may be considered as a special class of speech acts. Linguistists and anthropologists have made us aware of the fact that forms of linguistic politeness are present in most contemporary languages and cultures. For example, perhaps not surprisingly, in contemporary Chinese politeness is still highly valued (Shenkar, Ronen, 1987) and so is in Japanese (Hori, 1986). Politeness phenomena have been documented for various cultures, such as, for example, the Mayan community (Brown, 1980), Oceanic (Ochs, 1988) and Puerto Rican Spanish speaking people (Milan, 1976).

The first person to draw attention to politeness phenomena in language was Robin Lakoff (1973) who contrasted Grice's point of view on conversational rules. Grice (1975) had proposed that conversations have rules which enable people to understand each other better and to prevent misunderstandings. Such conversational postulates - which can be summarized by the maxim "Be clear" - have been called "Gricean maxims" and include:

"**Quantity:** a speaker should be as informative as the situation requires but should not provide more information than is necessary. Clearly, this involves making sophisticated decisions about what the listener already knows and how much information is necessary to fill in the gaps.

**Quality:** a speaker should try to say what he or she believes to be true and should avoid saying things which are known to be false, or for which he or she lacks evidence.

**Relations:** a speaker should try to make a contribution to conversation that is relevant to what has gone before.

**Manner:** a speaker should seek to organize his contribution so that it is easily understandable. This involves avoiding unnecessary obscurity or ambiguity, being brief and saying what needs to be said in a sensible order." (Harris, 1990, p.59).

Lakoff proposed that in natural conversations Gricean maxims are integrated by a second type of conversational postulates, summarized by the maxim "Be polite". According to Lakoff, politeness in conversations can be described by three maxims:

- **Don’t impose**
- **Give options**
- **Make your partner feel good**
The polite speaker tries to leave as much freedom of action as possible to his interlocutor; besides, the polite speaker is bound to pay attention to his addressee's emotional reactions (however subtly expressed) so that he can smooth down unpleasant feelings down and increase the other person's comfort. There are several ways by which such aims can be achieved by means of language. For example, speakers can resort to the repertoire of polite speech markers given by their culture - as in the way illustrated by Romina's conversation reported at the beginning of the first chapter. In addition, all the resources of "Discourse" speech acts (Ballmer, Brennenstuhl, 1982) can be suitably employed.

However, Lakoff's maxims do not stand on the same level. The first two require the speaker to hold a "weak" position (don't impose) and leave the field free for the other one (give options). The third maxim is more general, as it requires the speaker to take care of his partner's feelings (make your partner feel good). Sometimes this can be done simply by lowering one's own presence; in other cases, something different is required. For example, during an emergency making the other person feel good - that is, safe - may require some imposition. In other words, in Lakoff's maxims, the polite speaker seems to be concerned by two issues: regulation of reciprocal statuses by lowering his position, and regulation of partner's feelings. In this respect, a useful distinction between politeness and deference was introduced by Fraser and Nolen (1981). When behaving deferently, the speaker uses the linguistic devices of politeness to signal his recognition of his inferior status. Deference increases the other person's status at the speaker's expense. Basically, deference underlines vertical social distance. Thus, in certain contexts some deference is needed in order to be polite (for example, when speaking to people of superior status), while in other contexts it is not appropriate (for example, among close friends). The maxims "Don't impose" and "Give options" are oriented towards deference, while the third one ("Make your partner feel good") is not necessarily so.

Brown (1980, p.114) gave the following definition of politeness, which appears to be based mostly upon the third of Lakoff's maxims: "What politeness essentially consists of is a special way of treating people, saying and doing things in such a way to take into account the other person's feelings". This definition underlines the empathetic, emotional aspects of politeness. The polite speaker has a representation of his partner's internal world (wishes, thoughts, expectations, etc.) and tries to say things which will be in accordance with his partner mental state or mental world. Labov and Fanshel (1977) mentioned this aspect of politeness in their analysis of "therapeutic discourse". The focus upon the third maxim suggests a view of politeness as a set of "supportive strategies" in the domain of emotive communication (Arndt, Janney, 1985). Probably, it is this the "sense" of politeness which Goethe found close to love.
Interestingly enough, Lakoff thought that women’s speech is more polite and less assertive than men’s. She also indicated some linguistic features which are typical of feminine language in English, for example, tag questions, qualifiers or compound requests. Thus, she raised a question which has been thoroughly - and on occasion vehemently - debated in sociolinguistic research: Are women more polite than men? As this is not our main focus, it will be sufficient to say that the evidence on this point is not straightforward (Zimin, 1981). For example, Bell (1985) found a consistent relationship between politeness and gender which supported Lakoff’s view. However, evidence on person perception showed that, while politeness in speech is a powerful factor in affecting how people are perceived (Holtgraves, 1986; Newcombe, Arnkoff, 1979), it does not necessarily relate to gender (Baroni, D’Urso, 1984). Thus, as the evidence on the issue is not conclusive, the problem of verifying whether women are more polite than men is still open.

In the literature we can find further interpretations of politeness, mostly portrayed by those who are interested in general, universal rules for politeness usage and, thus, are concerned with the appropriateness of such use. The most complete model for politeness usage according to an appropriateness approach is that first proposed by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in 1978 and then presented in a revised version in the book "Politeness: some universals in language usage" published in 1987. We will not go into the complexities of Brown and Levinson’s linguistic model here, because our interest is not of a linguistic nature. It will be sufficient to define the main concepts of their theoretical work as relevant to the present psychological inquiry.

Brown and Levinson think - in accordance with many other people, as mentioned above - that politeness is mainly concerned with the feelings of the other person and that it is a means to protect or ease them. In order to analyse this point, the Authors take into consideration Goffman’s (1967) notion of "face". According to Goffman, the social being has both a positive and a negative face during social intercourse. The positive face is the subject’s wish (or "want" in Brown and Levin's terms) that the other person wants for him the same things that he wishes for himself, for example, a good life, a positive self-image, wealth, health, success, and so forth. We simply note that, apart from the very general desiderabilia just exemplified, sharp eyes, powers of observation and subtle discernment are required to identify what constitutes the positive face of any given individual, as human beings greatly vary in this respect.

The negative face is perhaps easier to identify. It is everyone’s want to be free from impositions and to have his own territory respected. Politeness, basically, takes care of the feelings which are related to these two aspects of "face". In Brown and Levinson’s theory, politeness is called upon to act whenever, for any reason, there is a potential Face
Threatening Act (FTA). Examples of non-mitigated, straightforward Face Threatening Act against positive face are ironic remarks or criticism because they lower the hearer's self-image; examples of Face Threatening Act against negative face are requests or commands because they are impositions upon the other's free will. We thus have two types of politeness, each aimed at taking care of a set of feelings relating to face: positive politeness and negative politeness. Brown and Gilman (1989) found very nice examples of both in Shakespeare's *Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth* and *Othello*.

Here are a their examples of **positive politeness** (Brown, Gilman, 1989, p.167):

1. Notice admirable qualities, possessions, etc.
   
   Desdemona: Alas, trice-gentle Cassio (Oth., III, iv, 122)

2. Exaggerate sympathy, approval, etc.
   
   Goneril (to King Lear): Beyond all manner of so much I love you (I, i, 63)

3. Intensify the interest of the hearer in the speaker's contribution.
   
   Othello (to the Duke and others): And of the Cannibals that each other eat, the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads grew beneath their shoulders. (I, iii, 142-144)

4. Use in-group identity markers in speech.
   
   Hamlet (to Horatio): Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you (I, ii, 163)

5. Seek agreement in safe topics.
   
   Edgar (to Edmund): How now, brother Edmund: what serious contemplation are you in? (King Lear, I, ii, 149-150)

6. Avoid possible disagreement by hedging your statement.
   
   Knight (to King Lear): My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to my judgment...(I, iv, 57-58)

7. Assert common ground.
   
   King (to Rosencrantz and Guildersten of themselves and Hamlet): I entreat you both that, being so young days brought up with him, and sith so neighbored to his youth and havior (II, ii, 10-12)

8. Joke to put the hearer at ease.
   
   Mucduff (to a porter): Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed that you do lie so late? (Macbeth, II, iii, 23-24)

9. Assert knowledge of the hearer's wants and indicate that you are taking account of them.
   
   Regan (to Oswald of himself and Goneril): I know you are of her bosom (King Lear, IV. v. 26)

10. Offer, promise.

   Regan (to Oswald): I'll love thee much (King Lear, IV, v. 21)
11. Be optimistic that the hearer wants what the speaker wants, that the Face Threatening Act is slight.

Desdemona (to Othello of Cassio): I prethee call him back (III, iii, 51)

12. Use an inclusive form to include both speaker and hearer in the activity.

Goneril (to Regan): Pray you, let's hit (agree) together (King Lear, I, i, 306)

13. Give reasons why speaker wants what he or she does so that it will seem reasonable to the hearer.

Regan (to Edmund): Our troops set forth tomorrow: stay with us;
The ways are dangerous (King Lear, IV, v, 16-17)


Macbeth (to Banquo): If you shall clive to my consent...
It shall make honor for you (II, i, 25-26)

15. Give something desired: gifts, position, sympathy, understanding, etc.

Goneril (to Edmund): Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air. (King Lear, IV, ii, 22-23)

Here are Brown and Gilman's examples for negative politeness (1989, p.168):

1. Be conventionally indirect.

Banquo (to Macbeth): Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure (I, iii, 148)

2. Do not assume willingness to comply. Question, hedge.

Queen (to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern): If it please you
To show us so much gentry and good will (Hamlet, II, ii, 21-22)

3. Be pessimistic about ability or willingness to comply. Use the subjunctive.

Osric (to Hamlet): Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty (V, ii, 91-92)

4. Minimize the imposition.

Edgar (to Albany): Hear me one word. (King Lear, V, i, 39)

5. Give deference.

Othello (to the Duke and Venetian Senators): Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors
My very noble and approved good masters (I, iii, 76-77)

6. Apologize. Admit the impingement, express reluctance, ask forgiveness.

Ross (to Mucduff): Let not your ears despise my tongue forever,
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard (Macbeth, IV, iii, 201-203)

7. Impersonalize the speaker and the hearer. Use passive without agent.

Knight (to King Lear): your Highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont (I, iv, 58-60)
8. State the Face Threatening Act as an instance of the general rule to soften the offence.

   Gloucester (to King Lear): My dear lord,
   You know the fiery quality of the Duke,
   How unremovable and fixed he is
   In his own course (II, iv, 90-93)

9. Nominalize to distance the actor and add formality.

   King (to Hamlet): But to persever
   In obstinate condolement is a course
   of impious stubborness (I, ii, 92-94)

10. Go on record as incurring a debt.

    Queen (to Rosencrantz and Guilderstern): Your visitation shall receive such thanks
    As fits a king's remembrance. (Hamlet, II, ii, 25-26)

Politeness, then, can be offered in many different ways and the same utterance can contain both positive and negative politeness (I am here accepting Brown and Gilman's notion, which is in contrast with the original formulation by Brown and Levinson, who set positive and negative politeness as separated in different speech acts). Politeness has a "redressive" value which is aimed at lessening the effects of the Face Threatening Act upon the hearer's feelings. Politeness is a "mitigator". An interesting extension of the theory is that, while positive politeness can be used freely, negative politeness is specifically aimed at "redressing" the Face Threatening Act. Negative politeness, focussed upon the negative face, is designed to acknowledge the listener's freedom of action. In the above examples we find many different strategies by which this aim is pursued. Sometimes the speaker stresses the other's free will (ex. 2,3), on other occasions the speaker enlarges the social distance (1,5,7,9), and on others the speaker will make implicit or explicit reference to the Face Threatening Act itself in an attempt to minimize it (4,6,8). Some aspects of negative politeness are embedded in the very structure of language, for example, the use of pronouns (personal vs impersonal) or auxiliaries or indirect forms. In other words, negative politeness is the conventional side of politeness, the most formal one. By contrast, positive politeness is primarily aimed at strengthening the link (human bond) between speaker and hearer (3; 4; 7; 9; 11; 12; 13; 14). In addition, positive politeness aims at creating positive emotion in the hearer (1; 2; 8; 10; 15) even at the cost of some restraint from the speaker (4; 5). For these reasons, positive politeness is more sympathetic. Its use depends upon both the characteristics of the hearer and the speaker's ability to understand what will please him most.

According to Clark and Schunk (1980, 1981), politeness in requests works within a "cost-benefit" system. On one hand, "the more the literal meaning of a request implies

...
personal benefits for the listener, within reason, the more polite is the request” (Clark, Schunk, 1980, P.111). For example, "Can you tell me what time it is?" is more polite than "What time is it?". On the other hand,"the more attentive the responder is to all of the requester's meaning, the more polite is the response” (Clark, Schunk, 1980, P.111). For example, the reply to the first question "Yes, I can. It's twenty to six" is more polite than "It's twenty to six". In the cost-benefit theory, more politeness in the request calls for more politeness in the response. Brown and Levinson (1987) think that the amount of politeness is universally regulated by three factors: Power (vertical social distance, status, authority), Distance (horizontal social distance, familiarity, solidarity), and Ranked extremity of the Face Threatening Act (the amount of interference caused by the Face Threatening Act upon positive or negative face). There is the assumption that not all the Face Threatening Acts will have the same effect on the listener's feelings. For example, as for positive face, to tell a friend that his car needs a wash is less threatening than to suggest that he needs a wash himself; as for negative face, to be asked to lend a book is less threatening than to be asked to lend a house. Of course, as Brown and Levinson acknowledge, there are cultural variations in the definition of power (P), distance (D) and especially of ranked extremity (R). However, the underlying rule should be universal across cultures: The weight (unsafeness, riskiness) of a Face Threatening Act is a function of the power of the addressee over the speaker, plus the social distance between the two, plus the amount of threat posed by the Face Threatening Act. The amount of politeness should vary accordingly. More politeness is needed when addressing a person who has power over the speaker than when addressing a person who has not. More politeness is needed when the horizontal social distance is great than when it is small. More politeness is needed when the speech act is rather threatening than when it is of low potential harm for the addressee's face. Brown and Levinson give an abstract description of the range of possible strategies in the selection of politeness which are related to the various combinations of the above variables. However, it is interesting to note that politeness phenomena also involve consideration of the absence of politeness. Although there are situations in which it is more likely - or even more convenient - to use some politeness, the speaker always has a choice between using politeness or not using it at all. In the second case, the Face Threatening Act is carried out without any consideration for the hearer's feelings - whatever the perlocutionary effect.

**Indirectness and politeness**

Among linguists some attention has been devoted to the relationships between indirectness and politeness (Blum-Kulka, 1987). As it has previously mentioned, the first linguist to raise the issue of indirectness has been Searle (1975a). The topic was
further pursued by Ervin-Tripp (1976, 1977), whose work on American English directives has been rather influential for developmental research. Ervin-Tripp analysed a corpus of transcripts of adult speech in search of different types of directives. Her samples were collected in natural settings, such as offices, hospitals and laboratories. She found that adults produced six types of directives, each strictly linked to a typical social situation, as follows:

1. **Need statements** (*I need a match*) are primarily directed to subordinates. They are routinely understood, do not require a response for compliance, but require an excuse for non-compliance.

2. **Imperatives** (*Give me a match*) are directed to subordinates or to familiar equals. Like need statements, they are routinely understood, do not require a response for compliance, but require an excuse for non-compliance.

3. **Imbedded imperatives** (*Could you give me a match?*). "Directed most often to unfamiliar people, or those differing in rank. In addition, modifications to imperatives were available such as *please*, titles, address terms, postponed tags like *OK* and *could you*, and rising terminal pitch. Imbeddings and modifications occurred when a task was special, physical distance lay between speaker and hearer, or when the addressee was in her own territory.... The ability and willingness of the hearer to help, and whether the act has, or will be, performed can be questioned in imbedded imperatives. The most common of these occurred typically in our data when compliance was already likely." (Ervin-Tripp, 1977, p. 16). Imbedded imperatives are easily understood. Compliance requires an expression of agreement, non-compliance requires an excuse.

4. **Permission directives** (*May I have a match?*) were rare in the American sample and mostly directed to superiors or unfamiliar people. Again, compliance requires an expression of agreement, non-compliance an excuse. They are easily understood.

5. **Question directives** (*Have you got a match?*) "These differ from imbedded imperatives since the desired act, and often the agent of the act, are omitted, so that the resulting form is identical with an information question and misunderstanding is possible. The form is most common when the listener might not comply, so the question turns on the likely obstacle. When there are standard situations with standard obstacles, the question directive becomes a situated conventional directive: (telephone) *Is Sybil there?*; (breakfast room) *Is there any coffee left?*. When the question omits reference to the desired object, it is fully indirect: *Did the W-2 forms come? What's that on the floor?* Comprehension then rests on shared knowledge on what duties the hearer has with respect to that time, place, or object. They are cues referring to other knowledge, much like hints." (ibidem, pp. 166-167) Both compliance and non compliance require an
inference and an answer. They might not be easily understood. Non compliance is possible.

6. Hints (The matches are all gone) For hints non compliance is possible. They require a reply for both compliance and non compliance. "Hints typically require inference. They were employed when the speakers could rely on shared rules in structured situations in offices and classrooms, and on shared understanding of habits and motives in living groups and families. They were important vehicles for solidarity and humor in compatible groups." (ibidem, p.167).

Ervin-Tripp’s developmental theory is that children gradually learn to use more and more indirect directives in which they do not make reference to the desired object. As in Bates's (1976) work which is presented later, the form/content distinction appears to be important: "..the major differences between adults and young children is not diversity of structure, not diversity of social features - though the rules may increase in number of variables and in complexity with age - but systematic, regular, unmarked requests, which do not refer to what the speaker wants. Wide use of tactful deviousness is a late accomplishment." (ibidem, p.188).

The above categorization rests upon the distinction between the illocutionary intention of requesting and the words actually adopted to express it. There are various ways in which the speaker can "hide" his intention to direct other people's behaviour. The major issue here is the indirectness of the request. Some directives are straightforward and others are more involute and require understanding of the social circumstances. As in Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, also in Ervin-Tripp's work, status and social distance are powerful factors in determining the level of indirectness of a request. Although the above categorization is not especially concerned with politeness, one cannot forget that politeness is primarily involved in requests as a means to protect the addressee's negative face (want to be free from impositions and/or to have one own's territory respected). From this point of view, there are a few observations to be made on Ervin-Tripp's theory.

First, Ervin-Tripp shows that there are indeed ways of requesting which leave room for the other person's freedom of will: Question directives and hints. They are both context-bound and require cognitive effort from the hearer to be understood. They are implicit requests.

Second, there are two categories of directives (i.e., imbedded imperatives and permission directives) which, although quite explicit, show peculiar syntactic elaborations when compared with direct requests such as need statements or imperatives. Both imbedded imperatives and question directives are easily recognizable as requests - for example, they also have rising intonation. Yet they need special syntactic surface
forms. Thus, embedded imperatives and question directives are explicit, but more indirect than imperatives. Not surprisingly, embedded imperatives and permission directives are used to superiors and unfamiliar people. In this case, the hearer's negative face is protected by some indirectness expressed by ad hoc syntactic devices.

Third, while syntactically modified directives such as embedded imperatives and permission directives are more likely to be addressed to unfamiliar or superior people, need statements and imperatives can be addressed to subordinates or familiar people. Brown and Levinson's P and D factors seem to be at work here.

To summarize, three levels of politeness in requests can be identified from Ervin-Tripp's categorization:

1. Explicit and direct requests (need statements and imperatives), which can be addressed to subordinates and familiar people. They do not leave much freedom to the hearer, and thus are the least polite.

2. Explicit, but syntactically modified requests (embedded imperatives and permission directives), which are routinely used when differences to the speaker's disadvantage in P and D are in question. They are conventionally, syntactically-based polite requests.

3. Implicit directives which require effort to be understood as such, owing to the fact that they do not have the conventional syntactic structure of a request (question directives and especially hints). As far as only negative politeness (i.e., hearer's freedom) goes, these are the most polite directives.

Blum-Kulka (1989) also distinguishes between three types of requests which show different degrees of directness, as follows:

"1. the most direct, explicit level realized by requests syntactically marked as such, for example, imperatives (...).

2. the conventionally indirect level: strategies that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language.

3. the non conventional indirect level, i.e., the open-ended group of indirect strategies that realize the request either by partial reference to the object or element needed for the implementation of the act or by reliance on contextual clues" (Blum-Kulka, 1989, p.46-47). The first categorization of requests drawn from Ervin-Tripp's work is virtually identical to the second categorization proposed by Blum-Kulka on the basis of her cross-cultural work. Both stress two dimensions: conventionality and directness. However, both treat directness and explicitness as they were the same construct. In contrast, I propose that a distinction should be made between directness (indirectness) and explicitness (implicitness). The former refers to the degree to which the illocutionary force of the speech act of requesting is expressed by the utterance. The latter refers to the
degree to which all the components of the desired act are expressed. To be explicit, that is
easily understandable, a request must verbally indicate at least both the desired
object/action and the agent. The distinction is important because it refers to the difficult
balance between negative politeness and the conversational principles proposed by Grice
(1975) summarized in the maxim "Be clear". One should not forget that an excess of
implicitness is in fact impolite, because it may threaten the hearer's confidence to be able
to follow a conversation (positive face). Obscure speakers are impolite. Nobody likes to
misunderstand things and thus be made to feel stupid. Even in requests, negative
politeness must be balanced against positive politeness.

To come to our point, only question directives and hints are both implicit and
indirect requests. Since the desired object and/or agent are not expressed in the linguistic
structure of the utterance, question directives and hints are the only implicit directives.
Question directives and hints are very polite because they leave options to the hearer
(negative politeness). But, they may be too obscure and become impolite in terms of
positive politeness.

Hints are considered as the most polite form of requesting in English. However,
some caution should be taken in this respect when different languages and cultures are
concerned. For example, an Italian speaker may be not too worried about "tactful
deviousness" which may be perceived as coldness of manner. In Italy, an involute and
very indirect person may be considered well mannered, but such a speaker makes people
feel bad in their "want" of human contact. In Italy, and possibly the rest of the world,
where no sympathy (in Humphrey's (1976) sense, see below) is expressed, little true
politeness exists. It is possible that different cultures put different emphasis either upon
positive politeness (aimed at reassuring the hearer that he is an interesting person worth
speaking to) or negative politeness, which signals respect for the hearer's freedom of
action. For example, it has been shown that the amount of direct as opposed to indirect
requests greatly vary across cultures, ranging from 9.8% (direct requests) to 82.4%
(conventional indirect requests) to 7.8% (hints) for Australian English to 39.6% (direct
requests) to 58.4% (conventional indirect requests) to 2.0% (hints) for Argentinian
Spanish (Blum-Kulka, 1989). A different stress put upon either negative or positive
politeness may gave rise to misunderstandings when people of different cultures or
people with different social orientations interact. To give just a small cross-cultural
example, in English a commonly used, colloquial way of respecting one own hearer's
freedom of action is to answer "I don't mind" when a choice is proposed. This is
awkward for Italians who do not have such an expression. The closest Italian translation
to "I do not mind" is "non mi importa", which means "I don't care". To an Italian ear, "I
don't mind" sounds as "I simply do not care about what you want", which is clearly a
Face Threatening Act against positive face, whereas for an English-speaking person, "I
don't mind" sounds as "Do as you wish, and I will be happy if you are happy", which is a nice way of reassuring negative face. Of course, practice may soften such misunderstandings. Yet such subtle tunings of language which express different views about the other person's feelings and, consequently, different ways of taking care of them, may create wrong impressions and interfere with the process of mutual understanding between people of different cultures.

Imbedded imperatives and permission directives are explicit requests although "softened" or mitigated in their directness by a variety of conventional syntactic devices. The illocutionary component of requesting is both weakened in its force and perfectly represented in the linguistic structure of both imbedded imperatives and permission directives, because the desired act and the agent are explicitly mentioned. Imbedded imperatives and permission directives are quite safe as far as politeness is concerned. They are clear, yet they indicate acknowledgment of the hearer's freedom of action in a culturally-based, routinized way. They are always polite.

Imperatives are of course both explicit and direct. As such, they do not take any special care of the hearer's wish to be free from impositions. Generally speaking, they are impolite. Need or wish statements can be considered as belonging to Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's "Expression" - a function which is both monological and private. Only contextual factors can give need statements the status of requests. Need statements have a certain degree of implicitness because the object is obvious, but the agent of the desired act is not mentioned. If an adult says "I want (need) X", he does not necessarily mean "You must get X for me". For example, in conversations one can safely say "I need a new car" without being considered a shameless beggar. By contrast, if interpreted by the hearer as directives, need statements are certainly direct. Interestingly enough, much social blame is put upon need or desire statements when children are concerned. For example, there is an Italian proverb which says: "L'erba "voglio" non cresce nemmeno nel giardino del re" (The herb "I want" does not even grow in the King's garden). Italian parents quote this proverb to prompt their children to use more conventional and polite forms of requesting than need statements introduced by "I want". In other words, parents try to direct their children towards less egocentric (less implicit) and more sociable (less direct) forms of requesting. Need statements are possibly the most impolite requests because they are both direct and implicit. They do not take care either of the hearer's negative face ("want " to be free from impositions) or of his positive face ("want" to be spared of cognitive effort).
A psychologist's point of view on politeness

From what has been discussed up to now on the basis of linguistic and socio-linguistic research, we are bound to conclude that politeness is a complex phenomenon in which language, social norms, and psychological understanding are woven together. From the psychological point of view, the question is: Which psychological skills are required for mastering politeness?

To answer this question, Austin's definition of speech acts can be usefully employed. As reported in the first chapter, according to Austin any speech act is composed of three aspects: Locution, illocution and perlocution.

**Locution.** The first skill required to be polite is necessarily a linguistic skill. The speaker must have at least a basic repertoire of politeness markers, polite utterances and other conversational devices.

**Illocution.** Different skills are required for the illocutionary aspect of the polite speech act. The problem faced here by the speaker is how to express his intentions in a way which is acceptable for his hearer's feelings. To do so, the speaker must first of all be aware that what he is about to say is potentially threatening for the listener's feelings (or face); second, he must evaluate correctly the extent of the potential threat (Ranked extremity, according to Brown and Levinson's jargon). This point is somewhat tricky, because on one side there may well be "universal" although culturally based rankings which enable a speaker to evaluate quickly how big the potential damage to the hearer's feelings is. On the other side, human beings are famous for the loose predictability of their behaviour during social intercourse. Thus, a speaker, comforted by his experience and in-group rules, might judge one Face Threatening Act as not very offensive, but the same act may be perceived as a capital one by his listener, for some idiosyncratic reason (including a bad mood). The extent of the potential threat - it is suggested here - is not absolute but is also related to the hearer's perception of it. Thus, R must be evaluated also taking into account what is known about the individual characteristics of the listener, as far as possible. In a word, evaluation of R includes objective evaluation of cost, cultural norms, and the psychological understanding of one's listener. Lastly, to establish the degree of politeness needed to express an intention safely, the speaker must wisely judge the type of social context he is in. This can be done by a correct understanding of the variables Power, which mostly refers to reciprocal status, and Distance, which mostly refers to the degree of familiarity between speaker and addressee.

To summarize, any illocutionary force expressed politely requires three mental operations: awareness of the force of the Face Threatening Act, psychological evaluation and understanding of the social context. It should be recalled that an excess of politeness, that is, wrong evaluation of the global Weight of the Face Threatening Act (W = P + D +
R), is irritating ("Uriah Heep" effect) or may be perceived as a rejection. Both too much and too little politeness are impolite. A noteworthy amount of social cognition is thus involved in any polite expression which will not hurt or irritate the listener's feelings.

To balance the degree of politeness against the circumstances of any interaction is to face a social problem, as defined by Humphrey (1976). In Humphrey's opinion, any social problem is characterized by three conditions.

First, social problems have a large degree of indeterminacy. "Neither of the social agents involved in the transaction can be certain of the future behaviour of the other" (Humphrey, 1976; pp.22-23). This point is very important for politeness. The very existence of the phenomenon in every language seems to be related to the need to avoid aggression. Thus, negative politeness redresses potential threats to territory, while positive politeness strengthens social links. By keeping the hearer in a good mood, politeness diminishes the probability of aggressive outbursts. Yet human beings remain to a large extent unpredictable and much social cognitive effort is needed to suit the level of politeness to the particular circumstances in which the interaction occurs.

Second, the process of solving the social problem has a certain logic. As in a chess game "...in social behaviour there is a kind of turn-taking, there are limits on what actions are allowable, and at least in some circumstances there are conventional, often highly elaborated, sequences of exchange" (Humphrey, 1976; p.23). This is also evident in politeness. As noted above, Brown and Levinson indicate that there are precise sets of rules for politeness. The conventional, ritualized side of politeness might be denigrated, yet it is an important component of any easy interaction. From this point of view, politeness works like the script of a play. The important thing for the speaker is to understand which part must be played in a given circumstance. As many parts may be played by the same speaker, some effort must be expended to pick up the right role in the play quickly. For example, the polite enquiry "What's your job?" often is one of the first verbal moves between new acquaintances. The answer sets the scene for further dialogue: The level of politeness is tuned by the P (status, authority) and D (social distance) levels indicated by the response.

Third, unlike the player in the chess game who just wants to win, the social problem-solver is restrained by sympathy. "By sympathy I mean a tendency on the part of one social partner to identify himself with the other and so to make the other's goals to some extent his own" (Humphrey, 1976; p.23). Positive politeness performs exactly this function. This is why positive politeness has been previously called sympathetic politeness. It will be remembered that being polite means to be in Discourse, that is to be in a socially entrenched and cooperative dialogue.

The conclusion is that politeness is not only a civilized social game, but it is also a good example of social problem-solving.
Perlocution. Lastly, the perlocutionary aspect must also be taken into account in this analysis. It deals with the "effects" of any speech act upon the listener. As discussed above, there is universal consent among researchers that politeness is designed to protect and take care of the feelings of people. Politeness has been invented by human beings and transmitted in every culture as a useful tool to serve the aims of cooperation and comfort in social intercourse. Politeness aims at smoothing the asperities of social intercourse and, especially in its positive aspect, at promoting positive emotional states. Ethologists have made us aware of the fact that in the social species there are rituals aimed at controlling intra-specific aggression (see for example, Lorenz, 1967). Social animals are endowed with such rituals by biological transmission. Possibly politeness, which is culturally transmitted by means of language, originally had the same biological function: to avoid intra-specific aggression. This aspect is especially evident in negative politeness. For example, Harris (1974) did an ingenious experiment in which an experimenter cut in line in front of the subject in a queue and observed the subject's reactions. She was able to demonstrate that when the experimenter said "Excuse me", subjects displayed less aggression than when the experimenter did not. Yet, the potentials of polite language have been developed by human beings beyond the necessities of individual survival. Politeness has a positive aspect which promotes emotional well-being, friendship and, why not? love among people. In other words, politeness does not only have the effect of protecting of the self (by soothing the other one); it also promotes and strengthens human bonds. The perlocutionary effects of politeness may be of interest not only to social psychologists, but also to clinicians interested in the promotion of human mental health. Unfortunately, quite often negative politeness, which is undoubtedly the most ritualized and can indeed be "empty" (merely self-defensive), has been taken as covering all aspects of politeness.

An analysis, however brief, of the perlocutionary effects of politeness will show that politeness is just a tool. It produces effects upon the other person's internal states. It can soothe potential threats to territoriality or freedom of action, it can make the people feel good by recognition and enhancement of their positive faces. Of course, being such a flexible tool, politeness can also be used to make people feel bad. For example, an excess of negative politeness causes a formal, cool situation which may be hurtful. Politeness is a tool and serves its user's aims. It can be used either instrumentally or sympathetically (in Humphrey's sense). In the first case, the speaker's aim is self-protection and/or self-achievement. In the second case, the speaker's aim is the creation, maintainance or strengthening of the social bond. Thus, politeness is not primarily prosocial. It depends upon the speaker's intentions. Politeness simply takes care of the feelings relating to face. The perlocutionary effects of politeness can be used to serve prosocial aims (Labov, Fanshel, 1977). However, the competent speaker can also use the
same effects in non-social or even anti-social ways: Politeness may merely be a Machiavellian device to pursue one own's aims at the expense of those of others. Perhaps the best known and extreme example of Machiavellian politeness is Valentino Borgia's behaviour towards his opponents. He used to reassure people of his affection and friendship by gifts and nice words, and then... clear the world of them!

As discussed so far, politeness can be considered as a linguistic "tool" which promotes cooperation and emotional comfort. For the psychologist, an interesting point is the amount of social understanding required to perform successfully the task of being suitably polite in any given social circumstance. An analysis of the psychological requirements for politeness focuses attention on the following abilities and understandings:

1. linguistic repertoire of polite speech acts;
2. linguistic awareness of the existence of a Face Threatening Act;
3. understanding of people's individual characteristics;
4. understanding of social contexts (rules, P, D, R);
5. knowledge of the social effects of politeness;
6. "sympathy" or wish to promote emotional comfort in others.

One way to describe the relative role of all the above components is to analyse what happens when a speaker employs politeness. Based upon the literature reported and discussed in this chapter, the operations needed to perform a polite speech act may require at least four steps.

**STEP 1**

**Recognition**

The speaker recognizes a potential Face Threatening Act. The examples are almost infinite. Let us review some of them. The speaker wants something from the hearer, he understands that this is an imposition upon his hearer's negative face (freedom of will). The speaker is talking about his successful work to his boss, he understands that he may be threatening his hearer's positive face ("want" to be recognized as superior by his subordinates). The speaker is talking enthusiastically about a new acquaintance to an old friend, he understands that he may be threatening his hearer's positive face ("want" to be considered as good as the others, preferably better than them). The speaker wishes to refuse an invitation, he understands that this will hurt his hearer's positive face ("want" to be considered a nice person to spend time with), etc..
STEP 2
Decision
The speaker decides that he wants to take care of the other person's feelings. At this stage the speaker recognizes that there are some goals to be achieved by interaction with the other person, instrumental, sympathetic, or both.

STEP 3
Strategy selection
The speaker selects which aspect of the other person's "face" he wants to take care of by means of language. The possibilities are three, summarized by the following rules:

a) take care of your hearer's negative face, stress your respect for your hearer's freedom of action;
b) take care of your hearer's positive face, try to understand what best pleases your hearer and express it;
c) take care of both.

STEP 4
Language
The speaker activates his repertoire of polite language and selects the most appropriate words or utterances, following the above instructions. Thus, either negative politeness, or positive politeness, or both, will be verbally expressed.

If the above description is correct, all polite speakers start with a preliminary act of social understanding: **Recognition.** From a cognitive point of view, "recognition" is the mental operation needed to match the relevant information stored in long-term memory with what is currently happening. Recognition is important because it starts the whole process which may end in politeness. If something goes wrong at this stage, the person cannot be but impolite. The speaker simply does not recognize that he might hurt the other person's feelings and cannot make decisions about how to prevent this. The point is particularly important for the developmental psychologist, because several circumstances may impair recognition. For example, if no knowledge about Face Threatening Acts is stored, no recognition is possible. If the retrieval process is too demanding (e.g., many inferences), recognition may be challenged. If the speaker's knowledge about Face Threatening Act or people's feelings relating to face is inaccurate or wrong, again no recognition is possible. If, last but not least, little attention is paid to people's feelings, no recognition of face threatening acts is possible. To summarize, several factors may impair the recognition of a Face Threatening Act. Among them, the most important may be: a)
lack of experience of that class of social phenomena; b) severe limitations of the cognitive system; c) wrong information about people's feelings; d) attention deficits.

When a Face Threatening Act is recognized, a decision must be taken. The alternatives are: a) to carry out the Face Threatening Act badly; b) to soften, mitigate, and hopefully undo the impact of the Face Threatening Act upon the hearer's feelings relating to face; c) to avoid the Face Threatening Act. Of course, the best solution would be to avoid any potential offence ("Silence is golden"....), but the circumstances do not always allow it. The process of decision making involves the motivational component of human behaviour. To discuss this point better, it will be useful to refer to Eisenberg's work on the development of pro-social behaviour (Eisenberg, 1986). Although some caveats about an interpretation of politeness as pro-social behaviour have already been indicated, Nancy Eisenberg's work may be relevant to enlighten our second step (decision). She proposed a complex model for pro-social behaviour with three components: initial steps, the motivational portion, and the link between intention to assist and pro-social action. For Eisenberg, the first step is what she calls "the interpretation of the situation", influenced by the child's abilities and dispositions (both influenced by cognitive development and socialization) and by the characteristics of the situation itself. It is noteworthy that, as in our previous analysis, much attention is devoted to understanding the internal circumstances which trigger the behaviour under examination. For our purposes, the most interesting part of Eisenberg's model is the central one. She divided the motivational factors into three facets. First, motivation can have a primarily affective source (sympathy). In the case of politeness, for example, the speaker may decide to be polite because he is really sorry to bother the other person. Second, motivation depends upon an evaluation (predominantly cognitive) of the situation, in terms of both cost-benefit and evaluation of the other person's needs. Third, motivation is also related to personality factors, such as self-identity with regard to the "trait" of kindness, self-esteem and self-focus, and values, needs or preferences. According to the above analysis, the decision to be polite can thus be influenced by several motivational factors. The literature on politeness reported and discussed above would suggest that the evaluative component is very important, but other motivational components cannot be excluded and must be indicated. Some attention should be devoted to motivational factors in polite behaviour in further research. For example, motivational analysis would shed more light upon the instrumental/sympathetic use of politeness. Besides, this is an area which might be useful in clinical investigations, when internal models of social relations are under examinations.

Whatever the speaker's motivation to engage in polite verbal behaviour, he must select a politeness strategy. At this stage, two routes are possible. The first is the simpler one. The speaker decides that he is going to take care of the hearer's negative face. From what has been said up to now, it will be remembered that negative politeness
is the more routinized and conventional form of politeness. For example, mitigations ("please") and some indirectness are among the first polite devices acquired by young children. According to his verbal proficiency, the speaker selects the right amount of negative politeness and expresses it. The second route is a more complex one, since it requires a second act of social understanding. The speaker not only recognizes the Face Threatening Act, but also tries to deal with it by focusing upon his hearer's characteristics. He tries to understand what suits the hearer's positive face better and expresses it. A further development of the second route is the integration between negative and positive politeness into complex sentences.

The fourth step is concerned with language, that is, with word access and selection. It refers to the speaker's linguistic proficiency.

To summarize, the mental operations for the polite speaker involve acts of social understanding as well as linguistic proficiency, not to mention the motivation to be polite. The above analysis concentrates on the mental operations the speaker must undertake to cope with his social circumstances. The backbone of politeness in natural interaction - it is proposed here - is not language, but social understanding. The right words (Step 4) are accessed only if the person is both socially oriented (Steps 1 and 2) and socially competent (Steps 1 and 3). If we focus our attention only on the social cognition involved in politeness, a very simple logic can be identified, as follows:

0. no act of social understanding, no recognition, impoliteness;
1. one act of social understanding, recognition, negative politeness;
2. two acts of social understanding, recognition plus understanding of personal characteristics of one own's hearer, positive politeness.

To progress further

The literature and abstract analyses which have been presented so far lead our attention on three major points.

The first is that speech acts are not all of the same level of complexity. Politeness belongs to Discourse, which is the most complex function for speech acts. Discourse is highly complex and thus hierarchically superior for two reasons. The first is that Discourse may incorporate other functions (such as appeals or verbal struggles). The second is that Discourse is the most socially-oriented and dialogical type of verbal action. Thus, a study of the development of politeness is a study of the development of the most sophisticated verbal means which require cooperation and social orientation.

The second point is closely related to the first one. An analysis of the psychological skills needed for polite discourse shows that much attention must be devoted to the social cognition involved in the process of being suitably polite. A study of the development of
politeness must take into account the development of the mental operations regarding the social circumstances in which polite discourse occurs.

The third point is that the literature presented so far focussed mostly on linguistic aspects and did not add much to our understanding of the socio-cognitive components of polite behaviour. Conversely, the same literature offers an interesting account of what polite behaviour is, showing that politeness is a twofold phenomenon which can be described according to two different points of view. On one hand, politeness signals respect for the other person's freedom of action. This is "negative" politeness, which is more often expressed by linguistic devices conventionally embedded in the syntactic structure of the utterance. From this point of view, the study of indirectness in requests is the study of negative politeness. On the other hand, politeness works in a more subtle way because it also aims at wishing for people what they wish for themselves. This is "positive" politeness, which is expressed by words in a variety of ways and cannot always be identified by linguistic markers. Thus, a study of the development of politeness should in principle account for the development of both aspects of politeness.
CHAPTER 2

The development of politeness

To start answering the questions raised at the end of the previous chapter, developmental research involving several empirical studies should be undertaken. Any developmental research has a few, peculiar characteristics, which were clearly illustrated by Bruner several years ago in a paper presented at the meeting of the 18th International Congress of Psychology in Moscow (Bruner, 1966; published in 1973). According to Bruner, human intellectual growth can be studied either by a normative (psychometric) or a developmental approach. The normative approach views human growth as the growth of abilities, an increase in performance. This approach has a long and most fruitful tradition in child psychology, and it has been - and still is - of much practical use in assessing children's abilities or level of performance (for a discussion of the psychometric approach to the study of human development, see Sternberg 1988; also 1990). However, the developmental approach adopts a different, non-normative point of view. According to Bruner, four criteria characterize developmental studies.

First, "any theory of intellectual growth...must characterize the operations of mind in some formal and precise fashion" (Bruner, 1973, p.314). At the time when Bruner's paper was written, most developmental psychologists were under the powerful influence of the Piagetian approach to development. There is no need to recall how much stress Piaget put upon a logical, even mathematical description of mental operations. One may agree or not with the original Piagetian thinking, yet Piaget had indeed indicated the main route to be followed by developmental psychologists: The creation of formal models of the mind from which empirical hypotheses can be drawn and which have the potential, in turn, to offer good descriptions of how the mind works. As Kaye (1982) pointed out, such models can be divided into two classes: Competence (C) and Process (P) models. A C-model is a logical description of the formal characteristics required by a system to operate in a given way. A P-model is a flow-chart, step-by-step description of how the system operates in real time. A complete account of development should, in principle, integrate both types of formal description. A study of the development of politeness, then, should be able to propose at least a general model of the mental operations involved in being (or not being) polite. As this point is a crucial one, it will be specifically addressed in detail later.

The second criterion proposed by Bruner is that "Any theory of intellectual growth must take account of the natural ways of thought, the ones that seem ordinary or
Politeness is certainly an everyday ordinary phenomenon. What can be considered as more "natural" than saying "please" or "thank you" or "how are you"? These small, ordinary words come so spontaneously in conversation and social intercourse that we do not pay any special attention to them. But where do these small words come from? how do we know when and how and to whom address them? There is indeed a system of rules in polite discourse, and cognitive effort must be expended both to learn and remember them. A developmental study on politeness has the potential to cast some light on the mental processes involved in one aspect of people's everyday social intercourse.

The third criterion is related to the second one. "Any account of cognitive growth (or any form of human growth, perhaps) should take into account the nature of the culture in which a human being grows. For, as we have already noted, a culture is, among other things, a system of techniques for giving shape and power to human capacities. The values, tools, and ways of knowing of a culture equipe their members" (Bruner, 1973, p. 315). For a theory of intellectual development, it is important to take into account not only the differences across cultures, but also "the many deep universals in both human nature and in all cultures" (ibidem). Our object of interest - politeness - is particularly apt at fulfilling this third criterion. As has been shown before, politeness is both a universal phenomenon and, in addition, is vastly influenced by cultural factors which vary in space and time and in the means or tools adopted (linguistic forms). It would be of very great interest to have empirical evidence on cultural similarities and differences in the process of acquisition of politeness during childhood. According to Jahoda's (1986), culture is a powerful factor in determining affective and cognitive development and much attention should be devoted to cultural factors. Unfortunately, direct comparisons among cultures on the development of politeness are still missing and much work should be done to fill this gap.

The fourth criterion is that "A theory must take into account man's primate ancestry and consider the manner in which the evolution of primates and of man impose a pattern on his growth" (Bruner, ibidem). This criterion is not easy to fulfill by a psychological inquiry. Yet our analysis of politeness puts forward the suggestion that politeness may be interpreted as a culturally based means to reduce intra-specific aggression. From this point of view, politeness operates much in the same way as biologically inherited rituals do among animals, although much ethological work should be done to sketch the evolutionary line which may link rituals of non-social and social species to human politeness.

The main criteria for a developmental theory have now been reported. However, there is a final point which Bruner thinks worth adding:
Once we have formulated a view of man's intellectual growth that takes into account the formal properties of the products of thought, considers the instrumental nature of thought, responds to cultural patterning of intelligence, and places man in an evolutionary context, let us also ask whether we have contributed to our understanding of how to educate man to the point where he can use his intellectual heritage to the full. For if a theory of the growth of mind cannot help in that enterprise, nor contribute to the understanding of education, it must surely be at fault. (Bruner, 1973, p.316).

The present work is specifically aimed at describing the development of linguistic politeness. As no general theory about this issue can be found in the literature, attention will be focussed mainly upon the description of a possible model for describing and interpreting the growth of politeness. Such a model should be able - in principle - to describe the acquisition of politeness at any age and for every culture. The major aim of the present work is thus to propose a model for the development of politeness and to test it by means of empirical studies. The main issue addressed here is thus related to what Bruner proposed as the first criterion for a developmental study: the formal description of the development of the mental operations needed to be polite. This is the first point from both theoretical and logical points of view because the empirical studies needed to fulfill the further requirements of a developmental theory (i.e., cross-cultural and ethological studies) must be oriented by a theoretically based developmental description of the phenomenon in question.

The task of describing the mental operations involved in the development of politeness must be split into two related points. First of all, we need an empirically based description of the development of politeness. Second, the description of how children master politeness at various ages may subsequently offer some ground for a model of the underlying mental operations. From the model, in turn, further empirical hypotheses can be drawn. Of course, it may well be either that the existing evidence is not sufficient for the task of model-building or that no developmental effect can be found as far as politeness is concerned. Thus, the aim of the following pages will be to answer two related questions. First, how does politeness develop? Second, can we find a formal model which has the potential to describe the mental operations involved in such development?

**How does linguistic politeness develop?**

To facilitate an answer to the first question, a computer search of the literature was carried out. It soon become clear that little has been reported about the development of politeness. Most studies refer to the linguistic or social aspects of politeness. Many of them have been referred to in the previous chapter. Nothing was found about the
development of politeness in adults - an issue which might be discussed in terms of why some people are more polite and some are less so, independently of their social circumstances. It is an everyday observation that among people of the same social stance and gender, some are keen to take care of the other person's feelings while others seem rather insensitive to feeling states. The issue, however, is not discussed in the literature on politeness.

To come straight to our point, that is, to discuss how politeness develops, our attention will be focussed primarily on the existing literature. Evidence regarding the development of politeness can be divided into three major headings. The first concerns children's use and metalinguistic knowledge of politeness markers and/or politeness formulae. As already mentioned, the evidence on this point is not much. Thus, more information was sought in a field of investigation which is separate from but somewhat related to politeness phenomena, namely the development of indirectness in children's speech and especially in children's requesting strategies. The relation between indirectness and politeness is still under debate among linguists (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1987), yet from a developmental point of view it may be of interest to look at children's ability to modify their speech to suit conversational purposes. The literature reported under the second heading will then discuss some of the most relevant studies on children's speech modifications in requesting. The third source of information may come from the study of psychopathological development. Evidence of children with linguistic or mental impairments may cast further light on the normal development of politeness.

Politeness in children

The interest of psychologists in children's ability to be polite first emerged during the mid-seventies. This is not surprising, since in those years a great deal of attention was devoted to developmental pragmatics, and much emphasis was put upon the role of pragmatic aspects in language acquisition. In 1976, Elisabeth Bates published a book on the acquisition of pragmatics (Bates, 1976a) in which two chapters were concerned with the acquisition of polite forms. Bate's work is of special interest for the present study because her original research was carried out in Italy with Italian children. Bates reports two studies on the development of politeness. The first is longitudinal and involves two children from their second to fourth years of life. The main results are that: a) verb inflections are mastered late by Italian children, b) from their first words children can express imperative intentions. Around the age of two and a half, both Italian children started using "please" and reducing the dimension of a request. "This development suggests a shift from an efficiency dimension to some kind of politeness dimension" (Bates, 1976a, p.283). The ability to perform indirect commands progressed between three and four years, but neither child used very indirect hints.
From her results, Bates drew a three-stage model which is based upon the form-content distinction. In the first stage, "the child decides which aspect of his desire he wishes to encode in a given utterance, and the mapping mechanism automatically transforms the selected components into their appropriate surface form" (p. 291). This stage is characterized by "wish statements" which may be more or less linguistically elaborated. Examples of simple wish statements are the following: "Mine! To me!", "Sugar to me!", "More!". Examples of more elaborated wish statements are: "I want wine, 'cause I am thirsty", "I want to try a little bit myself"", "I don't want to do this one, I don't care". However, the polite expression "I would like to..." was never used by children.

In the second stage, the children can use many linguistic means to convey their intentions. They separate form (surface syntactic devices) from content although they are not able to manipulate simultaneously form and content or be very indirect. In this stage, children express their wishes more politely than in the first stage because they can present their wishes as requests. Examples are the following: "We go car?", "Will you-all let me talk?", "You give me the bracelets a minute please, Virginia, you give 'em to me?"

At the third stage, the child is able to mask both form and content to achieve his aims. He can express indirect commands, implied threats and promises. An example is "Did you see how a sommersault is done?".

The model was tested in a further cross-sectional study, involving 60 children between the ages of 2;10 and 6;2. Three tasks were given to the subjects by means of role-playing situations with puppets: Judgments of degree of politeness in requests; Reasoning about politeness in requests; Production of "nice" requests. For the first two tasks the experimenter had two puppet frogs uttering a request each. Eight couples of requests were examined. In each couple one request was more polite than the other one, for some dimension. For example, "Dammi un dolce" (give me a candy) vs "Dammi un dolce, per favore" (give me a candy, please); "Posso avere un dolce?" (can I have a candy?) vs "Potrei avere un dolce?" (could I have a candy?). The child's task was to give a candy to the frog who spoke in the "nicest" way. In addition, the experimenter asked the subject to give reasons for his choice ("Why was this one nicer?", "Why did he say that was better?"). The overall performance in the first task showed that children start to choose above chance level according to politeness level of request at the age of four and a half or five years. In addition, some kinds of pragmatic judgments are acquired before and others later. For example, the presence of "please" is a powerful indicator for politeness ("gentilezza") even in very young children, while the use of the conditional is so only for 6-year-olds. As for the judgements about politeness in requests, the results showed that only 58% of 6-year-olds correctly identified politeness markers. This
percentage, however, gradually decreased with decreasing age; for example, only 2% of 3-year-olds were able to identify politeness markers.

The most interesting part of Bates's study relates to children's own requests. The experiment was arranged as follows. The child was confronted with a doll representing an old lady and told that the lady would give him a candy if he asked her. After the child's first request, the experimenter pretended to whisper something to the doll and, then said: "Mrs. Rossi said that she will surely give you a candy. But, you know, she's a bit old and she likes it when children are VERY very nice. Ask her EVEN MORE NICELY ("ancor più gentilmente") for the candy". Results showed that older children were generally more polite than younger ones; in particular, older children used interrogative forms and "please". However, in second requests elicited by the experimenter, both younger and older children were significantly more polite than in their first, more spontaneous requests. Bates interpreted the above cross-sectional results as confirming her three-stage model. Some results of her work were confirmed by further research. For example, McCloskey (1986) studied children's knowledge of intonational and linguistic markers of politeness. She examined 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds with a methodology similar to that adopted by Bates. Children had to judge which of two puppets was "nicer" when requesting food from them. The requests uttered by the puppets were manipulated in terms of presence or absence of "please" and type of intonational contour (rising or falling). This study found age-related differences in the ability to discriminate among requests according to politeness level. Younger children were less accurate than older ones. One interesting result was that 4-year-olds rely more upon the presence or absence of "please" to judge politeness than on intonational contour, while 5-year-olds, like adults, consider intonation more important than the linguistic message when intonation and message are in conflict. For example, they consider a request with rising intonation but without "please" more polite than a request with "please" but with falling intonation. This result is interesting because for young children it is not easy to pay much attention to the locutionary aspects of speech. For example, Ackerman (1981) studied children's understanding of ambiguous referential communication under the hypothesis that young children fail to interpret ambiguous communication in referential tasks because they respond to the illocutionary performative force rather than to the locution content of communications. He found that kindergarten children improve their understanding of ambiguous messages when experimental circumstances enabled them to respond to the locutionary rather than the performative force of communications. Parsons (1981) addressed the problem of the growth of politeness beyond the age of four-five. He compared three age groups, 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds. Each child took part in one of two experimental conditions: compliant vs non-compliant listener. First the children observed a doll addressing requests in a foreign
language to a puppet-listener. Then, the puppet showed either compliant or non-compliant behaviour (for example, either "Yes" or "No!"). Subsequently, the child's task was to address five requests to the same puppet. Results showed first that politeness in requests regularly increased beyond the age of five, and second that in all age groups the non-compliant listener was addressed more politely.

An important aspect of politeness is its relation to the social context. James (1978) studied 5-year-olds' ability to modify the level of politeness in their requests according to social circumstances. She manipulated both listener age and type of request to be addressed. In other words, James examined two factors of politeness: P (power) as expressed by age of addressee (adult, peer, younger child) and R (cost) as expressed by the difference between commanding and asking for a favour. Again, a role-playing situation involving dolls was used. The child had to make the speaker doll address three other dolls which represented listeners of different ages. Results showed that the effect of the listener's age was evident in the command situation - the adult receiving the greatest amount of politeness; the peer, next; the younger child the least politeness. However, these effects were reduced in the situation of asking for a favour. In this case, children were equally polite to all their listeners, independently of their age. A further aspect of social intercourse which may influence politeness is people's emotional condition. Camras (1984) was able to show by a naturalistic study that in a conflict situation children's use of politeness varied with their affective state. In addition, in an experimental study, Camras, Pristo and Brown (1985) found that first-grade children attribute less polite directives to angry speakers and more polite directives to happy or neutral speakers. An interesting study by Nippold, Leonard and Anastopoulos (1982) examined children's understanding of polite forms and the relation between these abilities and role-taking abilities in 3-, 5-, 7- and 25-year-olds. They found that, in both comprehension and production tasks, the development of politeness can be viewed as an increasing tendency to master a progressively wider number of different verbal expressions of politeness. They also found that the use and understanding of politeness in speech was related to an emerging ability to adopt the perspective of another person only at the age of three. Instead, the development of politeness beyond this age was related only to a form of perspective taking in which knowledge of social roles plays a part.

Some further light on children's understanding of politeness comes from studies concerned with children's sensitivity to conversational rules. For example, an experimental study by Conti and Camras (1984) showed that there is a regular increase in the ability to understand conversational principles beyond the age of four-five years. The above authors presented preschool, first- and third-grade children with stories which ended with a verbal statement by one character of the story. This statement either violated
a conversational postulate (Grice, 1975), a request condition (Gordon and Lakoff, 1971) or it did not. The child's task was to indicate the "funny or silly" endings. Accuracy increased with age: 19% among preschoolers, 83% among first-graders, and 100% among third-graders. This type of development was paralleled by development in apologies and restitutions. Sell (1987) studied first-, fourth-, and seventh-grade girls' repairs in two conditions: Severity of the violation (serious/less serious) and type of victim (mother/best friend). It was shown that first-graders used significantly more single apologies than older girls, who used restitutions in combination with other apologies. In addition, first graders did not take into account the severity of violation (R), while older girls did. Sensitivity to one own's listener is shown by young children in natural situations. For example, Konefal and Fokes (1984) analysed 5- and 6-year-old children's conversational repairs. In spontaneous conversations, sometimes the communication between speaker and listeners breaks down because the message is not clear. In this case, the speaker usually attempts to reformulate his or her message in order to continue the exchange. Konefal and Fokes found that both 5- and 6-year-olds use conversational repairs when not understood, but younger children show more idiosyncratic preferences for repairs, while older children do not. Pellegrini, Brody and Stoneman (1987) showed that the number of violations of Grice's maxims decreases in natural conversations with parents from the age of two to that of four. Results similar to these just reported were obtained in an interesting study by Miller, Lechner and Rugs (1985) on preschool responsiveness to the listener during conversations. Preschool children of various ages were video-recorded while an adult speaker was talking to them about his experiences. There were two significant differences related to age. First, older children gave more non-verbal cues of responsiveness, such as smiling, gazing and nodding, than younger ones. Second, older children gave more relevant verbal comments than younger ones. In addition, children who were more responsive by non-verbal means also tended to engage in more responsive verbal behaviour.

One important aspect of politeness acquisition may be parents' attempts at influencing it. We have reason to think that parents both engage their children in politeness routines and prompt them to be actively polite. For example, Blank Greif and Berko Gleason (1980) found that although children's spontaneous use of "hi", "thank you" and "goodbye" is low, they usually comply with their parents' prompts. Berko Gleason, Perlmann, and Blank Greif (1984) observed natural interactions at the dinner table in middle-class American families with preschool children. They found that politeness routines (e.g., "please", "thank you", etc.) were pervasively used and that the majority of parents use routinized prompts for eliciting politeness from their children (for example, "What do you say?"; "What's the magic word?"). Pellegrini, Brody and Stoneman (1987) reported the interesting fact that in dyadic contexts fathers were more
directive than mothers when their children violated conversational postulates, but that in triadic situations no difference emerged between fathers and mothers regarding reactions to children's violations. A further interesting piece of evidence comes from the study by Bates and Silvern (1977) who controlled for several variables in the use of politeness among preschool children. The most important result was that, even at this early age, the use of politeness was influenced by both the social class and social adjustment of children. In addition, the understanding of polite behaviour by children was related to their sensitivity towards adults' expectations.

To summarize, the above studies show that by the age of four or five children are sensitive to several aspects of politeness phenomena, including some understanding of the social context (e.g., speaker's and listener's statuses, emotional conditions, conversational situations, etc.). They can also use appropriate speech styles from the same age (see also Sachs, Devin, 1976). However, young children's sensitiveness to politeness in speech seems to be reduced to the most elementary markers (i.e., intonation - which in Italian may be the only marker for the interrogative form - and "please"). The above literature, however, mostly refers to development up to the age of six years. In addition, in the majority of studies, children's performance was observed under experimental conditions, in which children's attention was focussed upon language by the situation itself. This fact may have enhanced young children's understanding of linguistic phenomena, if compared to what happens in natural social circumstances in which the locutionary component of language is only one of many components of the social context. The above studies leave at least two areas unexplored (or only slightly explored). The first is what happens beyond the age of five/six? Is it really reasonable to expect that politeness is fully mastered by this age? The second area refers to the spontaneous behaviour of children: when and how are children polite in natural circumstances when no pressure is put upon them, and no hint about politeness is offered by adults?

Children and requests

Some further light on the development of linguistic politeness comes from the vast literature on the development of requests. As the evidence on this issue is large, only studies relevant to our major issue will be discussed here. An examination, however brief, of the development of requests focusses attention upon the question of how children come to master and to understand the locutionary and illocutionary components of the speech act of requesting.

Ervin-Tripp's (1977) theory, which much owes to Searle's notion of indirectness, has inspired much developmental research. For example, Mitchell-Kerman and Kernan (1977) observed that from the age of seven children master all the types of requesting
described by Ervin-Tripp (i.e., Need Statements, Imperatives, Imbedded Imperatives, Permission Directives, Question Directives, Hints), adopting them in the appropriate social contexts. The main developmental prediction which can be drawn from Ervin-Tripp's work is that children's requests progress from directness towards indirectness, as the latter requires more sophisticated cognitive control. The evidence on this point, however, is not straightforward. For example, Spekman and Roth (1984) examined 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds' production and comprehension of different directive forms and found no overall age related differences. However, they found that the most indirect forms (Questions directives and Hints) were complied with and performed less frequently than more direct directives. They concluded that this result brings indirect support for the notion that indirect forms are acquired later than direct ones. Rappaport-Liebling (1988) found that during the elementary years children significantly increase their ability to comprehend, produce, and reason about the pragmatic implications of directives. The results of the above two studies, taken together, indicate that, in production and comprehension of requests, age-related differences are less consistent during preschool years and more consistent during primary school years. To substantiate this hypothesis, more evidence may come from studies focussing on directive production. For example, Read and Cherry (1978) studied preschool children's production of requests and found that although older children relied more on verbal than on non-verbal communication (gestures) than younger ones, no age-related difference could be found for verbal production of expressions of need and "please". Bock and Hornsby (1981) did not find age-related differences in children between the ages of 2;6 and 6;6 in an experiment which elicited production of requests following instructions to "ask" or "tell". All children used more frequently "please" and interrogative forms under the instruction "ask" and less so under the instruction "tell", which elicited more imperatives and less frequent use of "please". They concluded that before the age of 7 children are sensitive to differences in the illocutionary force of utterances which have the same communicative intention. Evidence on this point is also offered in an observational study by Newcombe and Zaslow (1981) who found that children as young as 2 years and a half can produce question directives and hints. Although children's intention to express politeness by these verbal devices may be questioned (for example, if the adult did not comply, the next directive was often less polite), the study does show that the verbal agenda for subtle politeness is an early acquisition. Conversely, an experimental study by Dennis, Sugar and Whitaker (1982) showed an increase in children's production of tag questions from 6 to 8 years, but not thereafter. Some syntactic rules for the production of tag questions were a later acquisition, suggesting that linguistic skills involving simultaneous manipulation of various syntactic features are acquired late in language development. Similar results were obtained by Wilkinson-Cherry, Wilkinson, Spinelli and Young
(1984) in a role playing study with 5- to 8-year-old children. The subjects had to produce requests in hypothetical classroom contexts and also to judge the appropriateness of requests. Several age-related differences were found. Older children produced more indirect requests than younger ones. In addition, older children referred to pragmatic violations as a basis for their judgements of inappropriateness of requests, while younger children were less likely to do so. The main conclusion of this study was that by the age of entering school children do have some pragmatic and metapragmatic knowledge, but it increases in the first few years of schooling. Becker (1986) asked 5-, 10-year-olds and adults to produce "bossy" or "nice" requests to imaginary peers. She found that all age groups differentiated the two types of requests in terms of syntactic or semantic indirectness. However, the number of syntactic devices used increased with age. Once more, it was shown that preschool children have a basic knowledge of the pragmatic use of requests and that this knowledge further develops with increasing age. For example, Bernicot and Mahrokian (1989) found that, in role-playing conditions, 7-year-olds are more able to reformulate requests after refusals that 6-year-olds. Interestingly enough, Wilkinson, Calculator and Dollaghan (1982) found individual differences in requests and responses among first-grade children's spontaneous behaviour. Studies on the development of verbal persuasive skills which adopted role-playing, experimental conditions showed a regular increase in performance from first- or second-grade to ninth-grade children (Clark, Delia, 1976; Pichè, Rubin, Michlin, 1978). However, Jones (1985) observed kindergarten, second- and fourth-grade children's spontaneous behaviour in a task involving sharing in competitive conditions with either a friend or an acquaintance. She did not find age-related differences in persuasive appeals, nor differences in appeals to friends or acquaintances. However, refusal to friends were more extended than refusals to acquaintances.

It is difficult, and perhaps incorrect, to summarize evidence coming from studies adopting different strategies and methods. Yet, even with a brief review of the above results on children's production of requests, one feels that the ability to produce indirect requests is an early acquisition which is well-established during preschool years. Further developments are mostly concerned with syntactic elaboration on one hand, and metapragmatic knowledge on the other.

Similar results were obtained in studies concerned with children's comprehension of requests. For example, Carrell (1981) examined 4- to 7-year-olds and adults and found that even young children can understand a wide variety of indirect forms, that there is a general developmental pattern of acquisition, and that the relationships between type of request and ease of comprehension is very similar for both children and adults. Bernicot and Legros (1987) found that although 5- and 6-year-olds understood requests better than 3- and 4-year-olds, younger children showed overall good comprehension.
By analogy, Bernicot (1991) found that 5-year-olds showed some metapragmatic knowledge which increased with age, and that the linguistic form of the request (direct request; conventional indirect request; non-conventional indirect request, hint or justification) affected the level of metapragmatic judgments. These results are somewhat challenged by two earlier studies. The first showed that children between the ages of 17 and 28 months perfectly understand both direct and very indirect requests for action uttered by their mothers during natural play sessions (Shatz, 1978). The second compared 3- to 6-year-old children's comprehension of both conventional directives (CD), based upon the imperative form, and non-conventional indirect directives (NID), which omit the desired action and its agent. No age-related difference was found, showing appropriate reactions to both conventional and non-conventional directives (Elrod, 1983). Again, one might conclude that in certain circumstances even very young children can understand indirect requests, yet better metapragmatic understanding and syntactic refinements are progressively achieved with increasing age.

The evidence reported in this section shows that, as far as indirectness in requests is concerned, children can produce and understand indirect requests during preschool years. Few age-related differences emerge among young children (3 to 5 years). More developmental differences are observed at later ages, especially when both syntactic elaboration and metapragmatic knowledge are involved. The age of 6/7 years seems to be the turning point on this issue. The above evidence has one point in common with the evidence about politeness: By the age of 5/6 years children have the basic agenda of the linguistic devices needed to be both indirect and polite. Unfortunately, the literature on the development of indirectness undergoes the same type of criticism put forward for the literature on the development of politeness: Most studies are run in experimental, role-playing conditions and children's spontaneous behaviour (in this case, production and comprehension of requests) has not been widely analysed. In addition, although many contextual factors have been analysed in the various studies, not enough stress has been put upon children's understanding of the social circumstances of speech.

**Psy*opathological development**

Research on learning disabled children shows that, although they are developmentally delayed and show deficits in linguistic competence when compared with normal children, they can indeed understand the pragmatic implications of speech acts. For example, Abbeduto (1984) studied non-learning disabled and learning disabled kindergarten children in the production of requests in role-playing situations. He manipulated the context in which requests should be produced according to addressee age, cause of directive, and purpose of directive. He found that the linguistic means adopted were not the same, but that both groups of children followed the same rules for
politeness in requests according to context. Abbeduto, Davies and Furman (1988) analyzed non-learning disabled and learning disabled individuals' comprehension of question directives. As already mentioned, question directives require contextual inference to be understood as directives, otherwise they may be interpreted as questions. For example, I have often noticed that when a young child answers the phone and is asked the question directive "Is your mummy there?", the most typical response is "Yes", followed by a polite silence. For the competent hearer, a question is judged according to the "answer obviousness". If the answer is not obvious to the speaker, the utterance is interpreted as a request for information (for example, can you drive?). Instead, if the answer is obvious to the speaker, the utterance is interpreted as a question directive (for example, can you drive me back home?). Abbeduto and his colleagues manipulated answer obviousness by varying both the context and the linguistic properties of the interrogative. Their subjects were children whose mental ages were 5, 7, and 9 years, matched with retarded individuals with the same mental ages. Interestingly, both children of all ages and individuals with developmental delay understood the obviousness rule and used the contextual and linguistic cues available.

These results are similar to those obtained with learning disabled children who do not show developmental delay. For example, Dudley-Marling (1981) studied the ability to vary the degree of politeness in requests according to age, status, and familiarity of speaker and listener in both normal and learning-disabled children at three age levels: 8, 9, and 10 years. He adopted the two tasks which are most commonly used in this field, multiple choice and role-playing situation. He did not find any significant differences between normal and learning-disabled children in either task, nor age-related differences. All children were able to judge appropriately the amount of politeness needed in the various social contexts. Also, learning disabled children could modulate the level of politeness across social contexts when producing requests. A study by Donahue (1981) only partially confirmed the above data. She compared learning disabled with normal children in the production of requests in role-playing conditions. Again, the ability to vary the degree of politeness according to various contexts was confirmed for both groups of children. However, learning disabled girls were overall more polite than normal girls, whereas learning disabled boys produced less appropriate requesting strategies than normal boys, although their repertoire for politeness was good. Lastly, Simon (1982) observed both learning disabled and normal children's spontaneous behaviour. She compared three groups, highly popular nondisabled, less popular nondisabled, and learning disabled children, under the hypothesis that highly popular children would show a higher level of role-taking in persuasion than the other two groups. Politeness in speech was also assessed. The striking results were that between the three groups no differences were found, either in total amount of persuasive strategies.
adopted, or the percentages of specific persuasive strategies produced, or in politeness forms. Highly popular children differed from the other two groups only in that they apparently possessed a higher number of persuasive strategies but used them like the other children.

So far, it has been shown that learning disability apparently does not much impair children's use and understanding of politeness. It remains to be seen whether linguistic deficits have any effect. Once more, the evidence on the issue is little and mostly led by the form/content distinction reported above (Printz, 1982). Printz and Ferrier (1983) investigated the comprehension, production and judgement of directives in 30 language-impaired children between the ages of 3 and 9 years. Three conditions were adopted: operating in dyads in role-playing situations; production of requests in a role-playing experiment; understanding of requests in experimental role-play. The results showed that language-impaired children predominantly used direct forms, with some progression towards more indirect forms only in the oldest subjects. However, in the experiment, it was shown that language-impaired children could compensate for the lack of more sophisticated linguistic means by more frequent use of the syntactic devices they already possessed. In addition, they could discriminate between requests on the basis of politeness around the ages between 5 and a half to 6 and a half. Rimac (1986) also examined the production and comprehension of politeness in requests among language-impaired children. He compared language-impaired children with normal children of the same age and with younger children with the same linguistic level. The first two groups had an age range from 5;5 to 8;0 years; the third group had an age range from 3;2 to 5;2 years. Interestingly, the language-impaired children performed with less politeness than normal children of the same age, but with more politeness than younger children equally proficient in language.

Although the evidence is not much and one feels the need to have more information on the issue, the main conclusion drawn from psychopathological development is that learning disability have little effect on pragmatic understanding and politeness. Apparently, even linguistic disability minimally affects children's production and comprehension of politeness in requests. These results are intriguing because they show that to be polite is different from being intelligent or skilful in language. If children are lucky and are given the endowment offered by normal human development, they certainly have some advantages as far as politeness is concerned. Yet more disadvantaged children can cope all the same. What may this mean? The first response which comes to mind is that to be polite is very easy for all human beings. However, one wonders why, generally speaking, so little trouble is taken by people to be constantly so. As has already been discussed in Chapter 1, people feel the need to be polite in just a few specific circumstances ("universals"). A developmental inquiry should be able to show not only
how children learn to be polite in everyday circumstances, but also which are the "deep moral" (as Goethe said) and cognitive bases for politeness.

Questions on the development of politeness

Drawing together all the results reported and discussed in this chapter, we can obtain a developmental description of only some of the psychological requirements for politeness reported at the end of the second chapter.

1. The basic agenda of conventional polite speech acts is achieved during preschool years. During primary school children undergo syntactic developments which enrich their agenda for linguistic politeness.

2. From an early age, children know that requests and directives must be "mitigated". Metapragmatic awareness is achieved later, around 5 or 6 years of age.

3. Around the age of 5 years, English speaking children master some basic politeness rules related to the social context in experimental, role-playing conditions.

However, there are a few points which cannot be reliably described on the basis of the existing literature.

a) First, not much is known about children's use of politeness in the everyday, natural environment. Experiments indicate that children can use basic, conventional politeness from the age of 4/5 years. Yet, why are children polite? In other words, to what purpose is politeness used by children to act upon the natural social context?

b) Second, most literature is concerned with English-speaking children. The second question, although scarcely developmental, is an important one: Which are the contextual rules of politeness and the verbal means adopted to convey politeness for Italian children beyond the age of five? Is contextual politeness usage really "universal" from childhood?

c) Third, related to the above, there is the problem of how children learn the universal rules for politeness usage. Although use of "please" and "thank you" are explicitly taught in Western cultures, most rules of politeness are not directly taught, and we use them without being well aware of what we are doing. In general, politeness rules must be inferred by the encounters with the social environment. The process of mastering the rules for politeness requires some cognitive effort. When are children able to make cognitive inferences about polite speech?

d) Fourth, in this work it has been suggested that it would be wise to pay much attention to the perlocutionary effects of politeness, as the principal theorists of politeness agree on the notion that politeness promotes the emotional comfort of other people ("make your partner feel good"). This aspect has been little explored in the developmental literature. Thus, when do children become aware of the social effects of politeness?
e) Fifth, the literature presented and discussed in this chapter mostly focussed upon negative politeness and "redressive" language. Apparently, little is known about children's understanding and use of positive politeness. When and how do children become aware that flexible, positive politeness can be used in social intercourse to ease people's feelings, especially when a Face Threatening Act is at stake?

Other questions could be added to the above ones. Yet these seem to be the most relevant, at present. In order to explore the above five areas, it is necessary to translate the questions into empirical hypotheses. Following Bruner's suggestion, the process is better guided by a formal, logically based model of the development of politeness. The following pages are devoted to the description of a developmental model which has the potential to orient empirical research.
CHAPTER 3

A developmental model

A model for social interaction

As anticipated at the beginning of the previous chapter, a developmental theory should be able to formulate a formal model describing the mental operations involved in the phenomenon under observation. The literature on children and politeness told us that the turning-point in development may be located around the sixth year of age. Younger children may have a basic agenda of polite speech, but cannot be very indirect. Also, they show little metapragmatic awareness. So, what makes older, primary school children more polite and/or more indirect than younger, preschool ones? Older children may be more polite simply because their linguistic repertoire is larger. Yet the evidence so far available on linguistically impaired children show that linguistic deficits per se do not interfere with the ability to be suitably polite. Thus, the size of people's repertoire may be just one part of the whole picture. What else is in there?

The discussion of politeness phenomena in Chapter 1 showed that much attention should be devoted to the acts of social understanding involved in politeness usage in natural situations. Thus, both theoretical considerations and empirical evidence apparently invite us to focus upon the cognitive components which are responsible for the ability to perform polite speech acts. To discuss this point from a developmental point of view, it is useful to consider Flavell's theory on social cognition (Flavell, 1985). Flavell proposed an interesting model for social cognition, shown as summarized version in Figure 3.1. In this model, both social cognition and action are present.

Figure 1: Flavell's model
The dashed arrows represent the acts or products of social cognition, while the continuous arrows represent observable social behaviour. So far, most developmental studies on politeness have focussed more on polite behaviour than on the mental processes involved in it. Flavell's distinction is thus extremely useful. The model has further characteristics. First, the dashed arrows "penetrate" into the minds of the people involved in the interaction: Acts of social understanding are inferences. Second, an interaction is defined by both a) the social actions/inferences carried out by the two (or more) participants and b) the social context (represented here as the continuous square line drawn around the participants). Third, the interaction is not simply carried out, but also involves the presence of self-reflection. The following is how Flavell presents his model:

At least part of what social cognition includes is schematized in Figure 1. S means the Self and O means another person or group of persons. The dashed arrows represent acts and products of social cognition. They mainly include the person's inferences, beliefs or conceptions about the inner psychological processes or attributes of human beings, and are therefore represented in Figure 5-1 as penetrating into the interior of their targets. The solid arrows represent overt social acts rather than covert mental ones, and consequently they cannot "penetrate" their objects in quite this sense. For instance, I may be able to infer what is going inside your head if given enough clues (social cognition), but I can affectionately pat only the outside of it (social act). The top part of Figure 5-1 shows that the self can have all manners of cognition about the self as well as about another person or group of persons. The bottom part shows that social cognition can also encompass various relationships and interactions among individuals or groups (Damon, 1977; Selman and Byrne, 1974). It further shows that the self can be one of the interacting individuals the self is mentally representing, and that the interactions represented can themselves include covert social cognitions (Flavell, 1981b) as well as overt social acts. Thus, I may think about myself in isolation, about you in isolation, and also about the social acts and the social cognitions each of us may carry out with respect to the other. (Flavell, 1985, p.120)

Flavell further specifies this model by proposing three general preconditions for the execution of any act of social cognition. The first is Existence, which refers to a person's knowledge that a particular social phenomenon does exist. Flavell suggests that this point is not a particularly profound one. Yet this is the beginning of any story and the developmental psychologist will see the need to consider it fully.

The second precondition is Need, which refers to a person's disposition to try an act of social cognition. "She might not think to, may not want to, or may not see any point to making such an effort" (Flavell, 1985, p.121). In the case of politeness, this is not a simple precondition, but a real matter of choice. Also in Flavell's opinion, where social understanding is concerned, it is better to distinguish among the first understanding
and the wish to progress with further mental operations. A motivational component, in fact, is present in any human enterprise, however tiny, irrelevant or common.

The third precondition is Inference, that is, the ability to carry out the needed act of social understanding. As far as politeness is concerned, social inferences are needed to match the recognized social context with the appropriate polite lexicon. Further inferences are needed if the speaker wants to say something which is particularly fit for his or her hearer's positive face.

Adopting Flavell's point of view, the type of social cognition involved in a polite speech act could be described as follows:

1. Existence: Recognition of a situation requiring an act of politeness. In general, the speaker must be able to recognize very quickly that the ongoing situation is one in which politeness is conventionally used. For example, the speaker knows that his addressee has power over him (P), or that they are not familiar with each other (D), or that what he is about to say may hurt his addressee's face (R). In other words, the speaker knows of the existence of politeness conventions.

2. Need: Sensitivity to the other person's feelings and motivation to take care of them.

3. Inference: Mental effort needed to decide the level of politeness more suitable for the occurring situation. Inference is needed to select the polite strategy most appropriate to social context. The cognitive enterprise for being polite usually goes beyond the recognition of the conventional level of politeness needed in a given circumstance. It will be remembered that politeness occurs in Discourse, a dialogical social intercourse in which both participants talk. The speaker may start with what he thinks is the conventionally appropriate level of politeness, but in the course of the dialogue he may become aware of the need to change it. In a dialogue, the level of politeness may be alternatively raised or lowered, according to circumstance. Besides, the addressee's reactions will make the speaker aware of the fact that positive politeness may be preferable to negative politeness - or the reverse, etc..

How can a speaker tune politeness to the circumstances? He can do so only by making continuous inferences about the other person's state of mind. The sequence existence-need-inference needs to keep running throughout any dialogue. It is the constant monitoring that underpins effective polite interaction.

From the above point of view, Flavell's model may be viewed as a general model for the cognitive entities (dashed arrows) needed in the acts of communication (solid arrows) between human beings. It may easily be applied to politeness. Let us see an example. In the following example, only spoken words, actions, and facial expressions are overt behaviour, while covert cognition is described in parentheses.
Two friends are talking in a pub.
A says: "Would you give me that newspaper, please" (existence of FTA, conventionally mitigated)
B shows a brief expression of surprise and displeasure, gives the newspaper
(A thinks: "Something is wrong" (inference + existence of a new FTA)
"I must do something: what can be wrong?" (need)
"It looks as if something has hurt him" (inference)
"Did I behave wrongly?" (Self-reflection)
"He might have thought that I was not interested in what he was saying" (Inference)
A says: "Sorry. Thank you. I'll keep it beside me so that I won't forget to look at today's exchange rate before we leave. ...You were saying?".

The final sentence encompasses both conventional and sympathetic politeness. In this, as well as in any polite exchange, there is continuous cognitive monitoring which has the purpose of allowing the right decisions for the next verbal action, so that the social "face" can be protected. The cognitive entities involved are:

a) attempt at finding a meaning for the ongoing situation, especially for the other person's behaviour (R), but also for degree of familiarity (D) and power (P) (existence):

b) inferences about the other person's mental state (inference about the other):

c) Self-reflection (inference about the Self in relation to the other).

In other words, politeness in discourse involves a cognitively recursive situation of the kind: "I think of you" (existence), "I think of you thinking of me" (inference), "I think of me thinking of you thinking of me" (Self-reflection).

A developmental model for politeness

The above analysis of Flavell's model suggests that there are various sources for development of politeness in childhood. The first is related to the ability to recognize the ongoing social situation as a suitable one for the use of politeness (existence). The literature reported in the previous chapter shows that, in general, children seem to be able to recognize the existence of the social contexts requiring politeness only from the age of 5. Although it is a well documented fact that children can make verbal requests from late infancy, little politeness is embedded in very young children's speech acts. This means that children need a few years to develop the ability to mitigate their requests by means of some politeness. However, one must stress the fact that the developmental evidence on politeness is mostly based upon children's behaviour in simplified, role-playing conditions. Such conditions require little "mind reading" or inferences about the other person's internal state because the social situation is clearly displayed by the role-playing situation itself. The role-playing condition requires the ability to match the given situation with the conventional rules for politeness. Thus, it assesses more children's knowledge of socio-linguistic conventions for politeness (existence) than their management of politeness as a tool for communication. Flavell's model suggests that
two types of acts of social understanding are needed for politeness use in discourse. The first is *Existence*, or recognition of the situation suitable for politeness. The second is *Inference*, or an attempt at understanding the other person's state of mind. A study of the development of politeness should - at least in principle - assess both.

Thus, a second source for development of polite speech acts becomes apparent. It is the ability to make inferences about the ongoing social situation, by matching overt behaviour (i.e., language, non-verbal communication) with covert mental states (i.e., emotions, thoughts, values, wishes, etc.). Inferences must be carried out to use politeness to redress any possible face threatening act which have might occurred during the verbal interaction. Inferences are especially needed if the speaker wants to use positive politeness, which involves understanding of the mental world of other people. A third source of development for the use of politeness is Self-reflection, an ability which is necessary for the recursive thinking needed for any act of social communication. Self-reflection may be considered as a special type of inference, in which the subject's mental state and/or behaviour is related to the other person's mental state and/or behaviour. Among others, examples of polite speech acts in which Self-reflection is needed are apologies and repairs (for a developmental cognitive study of repairs see Karmiloff-Smith, 1986).

In conclusion, three types of preconditions are required for politeness: a) linguistic competence; b) competence about social conventions for politeness (existence); c) socio-cognitive competence for communication, in particular, the ability to make those inferences about the self and the other person's state of mind which are needed for polite communication (inference).

The developmental literature has not paid much attention to the inferences needed for polite behaviour. This is because, with a few exceptions, people have been more interested in children's use of negative and conventional politeness than in their use of positive and sympathetic politeness. The same reason may explain why most studies rely upon role-playing situations, which present children with the social conventions for politeness. A consequence is that not much is known either about children's spontaneous use of politeness or the development of mental operations needed for polite behaviour. In contrast, the main concern of this work is on the mental operations which characterize the recursive thinking needed to "make people feel good". The question now is: Can we describe the development of politeness as the development of the ability to make inferences about the social situation?

To answer this question, let us again consider Flavell's model presented in Figure 1. The model shows how a mature, competent social thinker's mind works during communication. He is aware of the situation he is in (existence), he wants to carry on acts
of understanding about the Self, the Other, and the situation (need), and he is able to do so successfully (inference). His mind provides all the recursive thinking needed to face the situation (I think of me, thinking of you, thinking of me in the present circumstances). How can a child reach this stage?

One way of describing the development of the ability to make the inferences needed in social communication can be drawn from Ballmer and Brennensthul's theory of speech acts. It will be remembered that, in their linguistic theory, lower linguistic functions were considered as embedded in higher ones. In particular, Discourse (the highest) involves Interactions which, in turn, involve both Appeals and Expressions of emotion. As has been shown above, Flavell's model describes all the social thinking needed to perform a Discourse, that is, the most advanced function for speech acts (to which politeness belongs). It is possible to use the various components of Flavell's model to describe not only Discourse, but also Interaction, Expression and Appeal. From this description, it will become apparent that the type and amount of social thinking needed for each function progressively grows and matures, closely following the hierarchy for speech acts proposed by Ballmer and Brennensthul.

Unlike the original model, here only the speaker's point of view is considered. Figure 2A represents the social situation in Expression of emotion. It shows that the speaker scarcely considers the other's presence.

![Figure 2A](image)

The speaker just expresses his feeling states. Thus, as far as politeness is concerned, the speaker does not care about the possibility of a Face Threatening Act. Expression of emotion does not involve any consideration about politeness.

If one adopted a Piagetian point of view, it would be sensible to expect young children to be predominantly expressive in their use of language (Piaget, 1923). However, the whole bulk of the developmental literature on language and communication shows that early language is not exactly so. Only very young babies can be considered as purely "expressive". Yet from the second half of the first year of life, babies become active and intentional, if not competent, partners in dyadic non-verbal interactions (Kaye, 1982). When infants learn to talk, they show communicative intentions (Camaioni, in press). Dunn's work also showed that, from their first years of life, children are sensitive and competent partners in social intercourse with the members of their families.
(Dunn, 1988). In addition, considering development of language, no evidence is so far available to show that young children are more likely to produce need or wish statements than older ones. Thus, expression may be considered as a function which, present at all age levels, occurs when the social context is of little importance to the speaker.

![Figure 2B: Appeal](image)

Figure 2B describes a speaker talking (speech "act", solid arrow) without any further attempt at understanding the other's mind or the situation. In this case, the speaker simply "acts" within any social context. In Ballmer and Brennenstuhl's terms this is the Appeal function. As regards politeness, this situation can occur at least in three circumstances: a) the speaker does not recognize the existence of a Face Threatening Act; b) the speaker recognizes the possibility of a Face Threatening Act, but decides to carry it out straight away; c) the speaker recognizes the possibility of a Face Threatening Act, but does not have an agenda for polite speech available. Thus, apart from motivational reasons (need), an Appeal may come either because the speaker does not try or fails the needed act of social understanding, or because s/he has no appropriate verbal means.

Figure 2C adds two further elements to the previous one, as it intends to describe Interaction. The added elements are: a) the line encircling the two participants, which symbolizes the context and b) the dashed arrow from the speaker to the inside of the other. Interaction is made up of three models: Struggle model, Institutional model (adopting, following or violating its norms or rules) and Valuation model (valuation of actions, persons, etc.). The line signalling context is added because of the presence of Institution, with its norms and rules, while the dashed arrow signalling social inference is added because both verbal struggle and valuation require reading the mind of one's opponent - or partner.

![Figure 2C: Interaction](image)

As for politeness, Figure 2C might describe the mental operations needed for conventional politeness. The speaker recognizes the case for a potential Face Threatening Act, basing upon both understanding of the context (line) and inference about his partner's feelings relating to face. Yet, at this stage the speaker is not keen (or able) to
carry out all the recursive thinking needed to develop the interaction into a cooperative discourse. Thus, the speaker applies the level of politeness required by the circumstances, but he is not very flexible in his use of the full potentials of politeness. He will not care (or will not be able to care) about his partner's reactions, which would need further inferences to be understood. Thus, positive or sympathetic politeness will scarcely be used, as it is based on quick understanding of what most pleases the other's positive face at a given moment. Instead, conventional politeness requires less mental effort, being conventionally represented into language to mitigate potential offences to negative face. Conventional politeness simply requires understanding of the context (to suit the amount of politeness needed by the P, R, and D factors) and understanding of potential hurting of the other person's feelings regarding freedom of action. It does not require much flexibility, hence recursive thinking.

Things are different when all the mental operations needed for Discourse are present. Figure 2D again shows Flavell's original model, with three new elements added. The Speaker is able (or wishes) to carry out two further social inferences: one relating to Self (dashed arrow inside the Self) and the other relating to the ongoing Interaction. In parallel, the speaker is carrying out all the thinking and acts needed by the interaction. This is a graphical description of the recursive thought: "I think of me, thinking of you thinking of me". When compared to the previous models, the most important additions are Self-reflection and monitoring of the interaction.

![Figure 2D: Discourse](image)

The full potentials of politeness are achieved when all the mental operations involved in Flavell's original model are present. The speaker is not only able to consider the ongoing interaction, that is, to recognize the Face Threatening Act and deal with it by appropriate words, but is also capable of self-reflection. Self-reflection is a sophisticated form of cognitive perspective-taking. Essentially, it is the ability to consider the Self as if it were another, separate person. Self-reflection is a sort of meta-cognitive perspective-taking. It appears to be essential when the speaker feels the need to attempt the acts of
social understanding which are required by positive politeness. By means of self-reflection, the speaker is able to look at the interaction from an external point of view, and can thus try to monitor or influence it. Should a potential for a Face Threatening Act arise, the speaker can use various politeness strategies to monitor the interaction. He can make ample (and wise) use of the perlocutionary effects of politeness to resolve the potential or actual conflicts in social interaction. He can remember that negative politeness grants people's rights while positive politeness symbolically (i.e., by means of language) "gives" what people wish. Positive politeness has a powerful perlocutionary effect in making people feel good.

From the above analyses, a developmental sequence for politeness usage can be proposed. This sequence starts with children possessing at least the rudiments of polite language. The rationale for this choice is that the following hypothetical model tries to fill the gaps in the existing developmental literature, which has been devoted more to the study of the acquisition of a polite linguistic repertoire than to that of the acquisition of the ability to be polite. The development of the ability to be polite might be described as follows:

1. Linguistic repertoire level

   The child has a repertoire of polite speech acts, but scarcely uses it. At this stage, the child may be polite in highly facilitating circumstances (i.e., role-playing) or under direct instruction (the "what is the magic word?" phase). Little spontaneous use of politeness is observed. It is hypothesized here that this type of behaviour has a cognitive explanation: The child seldom attempts the acts of social understanding needed for politeness or fails them. In particular, the child does not recognize the existence of the situation for a polite speech act, no recursive thinking is present. This is the Appeal phase.

2. Knowledge of conventions level

   The child successfully recognizes the need for politeness in spontaneous interactions (existence). The child is sensitive to the conventional side of politeness and appropriately uses the right amount of negative politeness. Yet few attempts at pleasing the hearer's positive face are observed. The child confines himself to conventions. It is hypothesized that at this level the child will not carry out many inferences beyond the initial one needed to recognize the existence of a Face Threatening Act. Thus, no recursive thinking will be present. This is the Interaction phase, in which knowledge of conventions (Institutional Model), inferences about the other one (Valuation Model) and instrumental use of language (Struggle Model) are present.

3. Sympathetic politeness level
The child is able to manage both negative and positive politeness. The child shows self-reflection and understanding of the hearer's mental states, and understands the perlocutionary effects of politeness on the hearer's feelings. Both existence and inference are present in a recursive way of thinking, thus enabling the child to monitor a discourse by means of politeness. This is the Discourse model, in which all the full potentials of politeness are displayed in order to make people feel good.

The model proposed here differs from Bates's three-stage developmental model for three main reasons. The first is that, while Bates's model was more concerned with children's ability to conceal their intentions, the present model is more interested in children's full use of all politeness potentials, that is, in their ability to make people feel good. The second difference is that while Bates considered politeness as mostly related to language, this model considers politeness as mostly related to social understanding. Lastly, the model presented here has the advantage of extending our knowledge of children beyond the age of five or six. The main hypotheses of all the studies reported in the second part of this work are derived from the above analysis.

Plan of empirical studies

In order to test the above model, one should be able to show that:
1. as regards polite speech acts, children of different ages behave differently in the same natural social circumstance;
2. there is growth in the ability to make inferences about politeness;
3. conventions for politeness usage are achieved earlier than sympathetic use of politeness;

It will be remembered that the analysis of the literature in Chapter 2 identified a few unexplored areas which were found worthy of further investigation.

First of all, it has been shown that the literature on the development of politeness mostly focused upon negative politeness and "redressive" language. Apparently, little is known about children's understanding and use of positive politeness. Thus, more work should be devoted to understanding when and how children learn to use positive, non-conventional politeness. According to the above analysis, it is proposed that more than linguistic proficiency is necessary to be suitably polite in a given social context. The main background hypothesis of this work is that more social understanding is necessary for positive than for negative politeness, because the former must be suited to the specific social circumstances while the latter is more conventional and general. If this were true, we should be able to demonstrate that it is possible to find a systematic developmental
gap between negative politeness (occurring first) and positive politeness (occurring later). Thus, all the studies reported here are especially interested in children's use of positive, sympathetic politeness. The main question is: When do children master positive politeness? This question is addressed in six studies adopting different methods: naturalistic observation, experimental observation, role-playing experiment, attribution-task experiment, interview.

Second, lamentations have been repeatedly made that not much is known about children's use of politeness in their everyday, natural environment. As discussed above, politeness is a socio-linguistic tool used to protect people's feelings when the circumstances might harm them. The full use of politeness potentials requires cognitive inferences about the hearer's mental states. The role-playing experiments reported in Chapter 2 told us that children can use some basic, conventional politeness in requests from the age of 3 or 4. Yet it is expected here that young children might not be fully aware of the perlocutionary effects of politeness. If the analysis of Flavell's model is correct, there should be a developmental gap between possessing a polite repertoire in long-term memory and being able to use it appropriately in natural contexts. Thus, one important question in the present work is: What is children's spontaneous use of politeness? Our main developmental, cognitive-based hypothesis predicts that children use politeness in natural circumstances later than the age of 3 or 4. To discuss this point, three studies were carried out. The first investigated the spontaneous verbal strategies adopted by children at three age levels (4, 6, and 8 years) in persuading their mothers to buy them a toy. The children and their mothers were observed in a store, and their conversations unobtrusively recorded. The aim of this first, observational study was to collect spontaneous use of politeness in requests, according to different age levels, and was designed to describe the general frame of development. A second study presented children at the same age levels with the same social circumstance (i.e., persuading mum to buy a toy) in a role-playing experiment. A comparison of children's behaviour in the two situations will shed more light on the differences between children's use of politeness in natural or in role-playing circumstances. A third study introduced some experimental control on observation of spontaneous behaviour. In particular, it examined how children use politeness in dealing with the different perlocutionary effects of their requests. In this study, the experimenter's behaviour stressed children's Face Threatening Acts in various ways. Children's spontaneous verbal behaviour occurring in these circumstances was observed. It was expected that the results of these three studies will confirm the main hypothesis and shed some light on the natural growth of politeness in childhood.

Third, the above model on the development of politeness stressed the importance of the ability to make inferences about the social circumstances involved in polite speech
acts. Thus, an important question is: *When are children capable of making inferences about politeness?* An experiment investigated 5-, 7-, and 9-year-old children's ability to make inferences about the social context appropriate to respectively polite and impolite directives. A second study replicated the experiment with 5- and 8-year-old British children. The main hypothesis was related to the above presented model; in particular, a developmental gap in the process of inference making about politeness was expected. Fourth, a final study was designed to bring together many of the questions addressed (or raised) in the above studies by means a general question: *What do children know about politeness and its social effects?* In this study, children of three age levels (5, 7, and 9 years) were interviewed about several aspects of politeness. The main hypothesis was that, in children's representation of politeness, three developmental levels, mirroring the above presented formal model, could be identified. In addition, evidence for recursive thinking, including Self-reflection, was expected to be found only in older children.
PART II

EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE
CHAPTER 4

Children's use of politeness in natural contexts

The aim of this chapter is to bring empirical evidence to describe the ways in which politeness is used by children in their everyday lives. This description will give reasons for accepting or to rejecting the main developmental hypothesis presented and discussed above. For this aim, children's requests to adults will be examined - the rationale for this choice being that, since more politeness is due to persons of superior status than to equals (factor P), children are probably more polite to adults than to peers. As will be detailed later, each study will address a set of specific questions, all deriving from the above theoretical discussion on the development of politeness. A further aim of the present chapter is to present three possible methods by which children's use of politeness can be studied and to discuss their relative merits and limitations. In brief, the materials presented and discussed in Chapter 5 have the potential of "setting the scene" for further study in two ways. First, the results of the study should be able to verify the main developmental hypothesis. Second, the discussion of such results should pose new problems or, more simply, reveal new ways of looking at old ones.
Study 1
Children's directives to familiar adults: Naturalistic observation

Design and hypothesis

The main aim of this study is to describe children's spontaneous use of speech acts in an everyday life situation. In particular, the main question of this study is whether a developmental sequence can be found in spontaneous use of language when the child intends to influence other people's behaviour. The child's ability to "get things done by language" (Bruner, 1983) is under focus here.

For this aim, children and their relatives were observed in the toy department of a big store. All subjects were totally unaware that an observer with a hidden tape-recorder was close to them. Children's spontaneous verbal behaviour aimed at persuading an adult relative to buy them a desired object was fully recorded and later transcribed. When the conversation was over, the observer talked to the adult, explaining what had been done and the purposes of the study, and asking for his or her degree of kindred to the child. Permission to use the recorded conversation and the child's age was requested on that occasion. People were generally amused and interested, all of them granting permission to use the "candid" recorded materials for research purposes.

Children's spontaneous verbal behaviour was analysed according to two different levels of analysis. The first level took into account the developmental sequence proposed in the previous chapter, which described a general model for the development of mental actions needed for increasingly complex verbal communication: Expression, Appeal, Interaction, Discourse. The first hypothesis of this study is that Interaction and especially Discourse are managed only by older children. To test this hypothesis the whole child-adult exchange was taken into account. The rationale for this choice was that both Interaction and Discourse reflect the speaker's ability to deal with the other person's reactions, as described by Figures 2C and 2D reported in Chapter 3. In particular, in Interaction the speaker carries on a more or less ritualized (or conventional) verbal struggle. By contrast, in Discourse the speaker's principal aim is cooperation, which implies respect for the other person's point of view, feelings, wishes, etc..

The second level of analysis is mostly concerned with Italian children's verbal means adopted to express politeness. The main question was whether the analysis of speech acts proposed by Ervin-Tripp for American-English, which has been applied also to different cultures (Bernicot, Marokhian, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1989), applies also for Italian children. For that aim, only the first utterance addressed by the child to the adult
was taken into account. It was expected that older children would use more politeness in their requests than younger ones.

The design of this study was very simple, like the method adopted. The independent variable was subjects' age, divided into three age levels (4-, 6-, and 8-year-olds). The dependent variable of the first analysis was children's style of verbal requesting strategy. As anticipated, it was expected that lower-order functions would appear earlier than higher-order ones: Expression, Appeal, Interaction, Discourse. The dependent variable of the second analysis was the level of politeness in children's first requests to the adult.

This opening study has three major characteristics. First, the hypothesized developmental sequence is theoretically based. Second, in contrast with most of the existing evidence, the present study is concerned with development of speech acts beyond the first five years of life. Third, it observed children's verbal behaviour under naturalistic conditions, although some control was introduced in the situation: all children were observed in the same place and two important factors of politeness (P and D) were fixed. In particular, only children addressing a familiar (D) adult (P) were observed. This was an initial assumption. Unfortunately, it was not possible to control type of stimuli (toy), nor adults' reactions to children's requests.

Method

Subjects and Procedure

Subjects were 88 children belonging to three age groups: 31 four-year-olds (mean age 4.6, range 2.9 to 5.11), 29 six-year-olds (mean age 6.8, range 6.0 to 7.8), and 28 eight-year-olds (mean age 8.4, range 8.0 to 9.6). The first age group consisted of 17 girls and 15 boys, the second of 15 girls and 14 boys, the third of 14 girls and 14 boys.

The children were observed in the toy department of a large store located in a middle-class area of Ravenna (Italy). All children were with a close relative. In particular, 58 children interacted with their mothers, 18 with their fathers, 1 with both, 9 with their grandmothers, and 2 with their grandfathers. It is important to note here that the toy area in the store had to be crossed in order to reach the supermarket. Thus, the adults almost never took the children to the toy department with the definite purpose of buying them a toy. In two cases, the parent intended to buy a toy for the child. These two protocols were omitted from further analysis. As reported above, verbal exchanges were tape-recorded and permission to use the materials was requested from subjects' relatives. After recording each exchange, the observer noted the child's name and age, relationship to the
adult, and the desired object, when this was not clear from the content of the child's speech.

Results

Analysis of conversations

Scoring procedure

The 88 conversations were transcribed and their contents analysed. The content categories were four.

Expression, the child simply expresses his or her appreciation for a toy; he does not explicitly address the adult.

Appeal, the child tries to get direct control over the adult; he does not take into account the adult's reactions; speech acts are simple and unidirectional.

Interaction, the child tries to get control over the adult, but he takes into account the adult's objections; the exchange is mostly competitive; the child "bargains".

Discourse, the child tries to overcome the potential conflict and to orient the exchange towards cooperation; the child is sensitive to the adult's objections and tries to put himself from his hearer's point of view.

Each conversation was analysed as a whole, including both children's verbal behaviour and adults' replies. Only once did the relative fulfil the child's wish without resisting it. Only in a few cases (6), did the child get the desired object.

The first problem was that children displayed more than one linguistic function. In particular, Appeals could turn into Interactions or Discourse under the influence of the adult's reply. It was decided to score the conversations under the most advanced verbal behaviour displayed by the child. Examples are reported below.

A second problem concerned Expressions, since it was not possible to find pure examples for this category. The type of social situation probably prevented children from private, monological expressions. Children always introduced the expression of their feelings or wishes by the imperative "Guarda!" (Look!), which is a speech act aimed at drawing the hearer's attention to a common object of interest. "Guarda" is an Appeal. It was thus decided to score all conversations starting with "Guarda" (Look) under the most advanced verbal behaviour, that is Appeal. A third problem was to find unambiguous features distinguishing Interaction from Discourse. This problem was hard to solve because the child's response might have been influenced by the adult's type of reply or rejection. It must be stressed that only in one case did the adult fulfil the child's request at once. In the vast majority of cases, adults resisted children's requests. This being the case, the responsibility of finding cooperative behaviour (Discourse) mostly fell on the
The distinguishing feature for Discourse was thus the children's explicit attempts at accepting the adult's point of view. Examples are reported below. However, the question "does the adult's style in rejecting the child's request influence the child's reaction?" remained unanswered in this study because the number of verbal means employed by the adults to say "no" was too high to be implemented. The question will be addressed in a further experiment.

The conversations were analysed by two independent judges. The overall inter-rater agreement was 85.8%. Category inclusions of dubious cases were resolved by discussion with a third person. Examples for each category are reported below:

**Appeal (inter-rater agreement 88.3%)**

Marco (4,7): "Guarda mamma!" (Look, mum!).
Mother does not respond.

Giovanna (6,4): "Guarda mamma, che belle le Barbie. La voglio" (Look, mum, what beautiful Barbies. I want one)
Madre "Dai, andiamo" (Come on, let's go).

The child and his father are looking at toy cars.
Arturo (7;6): "Guarda babbo che belle queste" (Look, dad, aren't these lovely).
Father: "Dai, va là, la compriamo per l'uovo di Pasqua" (Come on, we will buy it for Easter).
Child: "No, adesso" (No, now).

Luca (6;0): "Mamma guarda questi Lego! a me mi piacerebbe averlo!" (Mum, look at these Legos! I'd like to have one!).
Mother: "Ma questo costa tanto" (But this one is too expensive).
Child: "Ma io devo averli tutti i Lego" (But I must have all the kinds of Legos!).

**Interaction (Inter-rater agreement 83.7%)**

Enrico (9;2): "Mamma, mi servono dei quaderni a quadretti" (Mum, I need some exercise book).
Mother:"Dai, Enrico, che abbiamo fretta" (Come on, Enrico, we are in a hurry).
Child:"Ma mamma, li ho quasi finiti" (But, mum, I've almost used them up).
Mother:"Va bé, allora prendine uno, uno solo eh?" (All right then, buy one, but only just one eh?).
Child: "Sì, prendo uno di questi grossi" (Yes, I'll buy one of these big ones. then).

Fabrizio (9,2): "Mi prendi il costume?" (Will you buy a swimsuit for me?)
Mother: "Ma ce l'hai già" (But you've already got one)
Fabrizio: "Non mi va mica più bene quello dell'anno scorso" (The one I wore last year doesn't fit me any more)
Mother starts to examine the swimsuits and buys one.

Marta (8,6): "Allora mi prendi la maschera?" (Will you buy me a diving mask?)
Mother: "Perché ce l'hai già" (Why? you have one already)
Marta: "Ma con la mia non respiro" (But I can't breathe with it)

Discourse (Inter-rater agreement 85.5%)

Child and mother are looking at dolls.
Angela (8;2): "Questa quanto costa? un sacco di soldi, eh?" (How much does this one cost? a lot, eh?).
Mother: "Eh sì, questa è proprio un'esagerazione" (Eh, yes. this one really costs too much).
Child: "E questa?" (And this one?).
Mother: "Anche" (That one too).

Andrea (9,6): "Mamma aspetta. Hai 500 lire?" (Mum, wait. Do you have 500 lire?)
Mother. "Sì" (yes)
Andrea: "Perché, guarda, sono indeciso tra questo che costa 3000, questo che costa 4000 e questo 4500 (Because, look, I can't decide between this one which costs 3000, this one which costs 4000, and this one which costs 4500). Apparently the boy has only 4000 lire. The conversation now revolves around the most expensive toy, for which a contribution from mother is required.
Mother: "Non l'avevi già questo tu?" (Haven't you got one of these already?)
Andrea: "No"
Mother: "Sì" (yes)
Andrea: "No"
Mother: "Ah già, era quello più grande" (Ah yes, the one you had was bigger)
Andrea: "Se no, prendo questo e questo, cosa dici?" (Otherwise, I'll take this one and this one too, what do you think?)
The boy is offering to buy two identical, less expensive toys for 4000 lire
Mother: "Vuoi prenderne due uguali così?" (Do you want both of them the same?)
Andrea: "No, non lo so cosa volevo prendere...a me piaceva questo" (No, I don't know which one I wanted to take...I liked this one)
The boy indicates the most expensive toy again
Mother: "E allora prendilo, sei tu che devi decidere, deve piacere a te. Dai andiamo" (Well then, take it. You are the one who must decide, you are the one who must like it. Come on, let's go).

Each conversation was assigned to one mutually exclusive category. Results are reported in Table 1.1. The Chi-square test applied to the data confirmed a significant age-related difference ($\chi^2 = 32.43, 4\text{df}, p<.001$). Figure 1.1 reports the percentages of Appeals, Interactions and Discourses at the three age levels.

Figure 1.1:
Percentages of Appeals, Interactions, Discourse at three age levels
TABLE 1.1

Three linguistic functions at 4, 6 and 8 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functions</th>
<th>4-yr-olds</th>
<th>6-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appeal</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourse</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results confirm the developmental hypothesis derived from the analysis of Flavell's model. As can be seen in Figure 1.1, the Appeal function predominates in the youngest age group, Discourse in the oldest group. Interaction consistently appears in all age groups, but more frequently among 6-year-olds. The above distribution is highly significant. Thus, the naturalistic observations indicate that there is a development in children’s spontaneous use of illocution, corresponding to three different levels. At the first level, socially entrenched but monological functions predominate. Children try to influence their hearers by means of direct appeals. At the second level, children’s speech is more dialogical but still self-centered (private). They engage themselves and their partners in verbal struggles or competitions. Such functions are still present at the third level, but children can also adopt the dialogical, socially entrenched dimensions which are typical of Discourse. Children typically accept their hearers’ point of view, often anticipating it.

Analysis of first requests

While whole child-parent conversations are influenced by the adults’ reaction, children’s opening requests are not necessarily so. For this reason, it was of interest to verify whether age influenced politeness in children’s unbiased verbal behaviour in the above circumstances. Children’s first utterances were thus analysed in order to give a description of their spontaneous use of politeness in requests to a familiar adult in everyday circumstances. First Ervin-Tripp's (1976) categorization of American-English directives was considered. It will be remembered that Ervin-Tripp found six types of directives: need statements, imperatives, imbedded imperatives, permission directives, question directives, and hints (see Chapter 3). The present corpus of data was thus examined to search for the above six types of requests. Examples for three categories were easily identified: need statements ("Mum, I need some exercise books"), imperatives ("Come on, mum, buy me this toy-car!") and imbedded imperatives ("Would you buy me some tennis balls?"). However, no permissions or question directives were found. In addition, children exhibited verbal behaviours which were not mentioned by
Ervin-Tripp. One frequent behaviour was drawing mother's attention to the desired object without further comment (Look, mum!). Although it was not easy to classify the function of this behaviour, since it showed little syntactical elaboration, it was considered similar to the gesture of indication, a sort of verbal "proto-imperative". A second, somewhat surprising, verbal behaviour consisted in praising the value and desirability of the object. The children did not make their wish to have the object explicit, confining themselves to comments on its desirability (e.g., "Look what a beautiful Barbie!"). It is interesting to note that this type of strategy is very similar to the kinds of persuasion strategies adopted by TV or press advertisements. For example, on some occasions children remarked on the rarity of the desired object (e.g., "They never sell such small toy cars!") or, in contrast, stated that everybody had one - both effective persuasion strategies, as advertising people well know. This verbal behaviour may be close to hints, yet we cannot exclude that it was just a sophisticated form of indication. Due to this ambiguity, such utterances were collected into a separate category ("advertisements"). In contrast, closer to hints was the behaviour of asking about the price of the object as a first move. In this case, the requestive illocution is present but masked by a second speech act.

A further problem was posed by imbedded imperatives, among which two types of utterances were found. The first were plain utterances with simple interrogative forms (e.g., "Mum, buy me that toy-monster?"). It must be remembered that, unlike English, the Italian interrogative form needs no syntactical modification: rising intonation is sufficient. Although such utterances are not imperatives, they are very direct - the imperative intention being only slightly "embedded" in the syntactical form. In contrast, the second type of imbedded imperatives identified here showed more syntactical modifications than the first one, including auxiliary verbs and politeness formulae (e.g., "I would like to have this, mum, please"). Due to differences in syntactical complexity, the above two types of imbedded imperative scarcely appear to belong to the same category. So, two categories were adopted in these cases. The first contained children's direct requests, in which the only modification was the interrogative form/intonation; the second all syntactically modified requests. Hints were also included here, because this category was considered as the most polite one. Although idiosyncratic factors due to specific context might have influenced children's requesting behaviour, it must be noted that Ervin-Tripp's categorization did not fully apply to the range of spontaneous requests produced by children. This result alone would suggest caution in adopting without modification categories of linguistic behaviour identified for different languages and cultures.

To summarize, children's first requests were categorized into six mutually exclusive categories, as follows:
**Indication:** the child brings the adult's attention to an object, without any further comment. For example: "Guarda!" (Look!), pointing to an object; "Guarda, mamma!" (Look, mum!); "Guarda le palline!" (Look at the little balls!).

**Imperative:** for example, Anna (7,3): "Mamma, veh (= Vedi, guarda), compriamone un astuccio!" (Look, mum, let's buy a pen-case!).

**Advertisement:** the child tries to increase the value of the desired object by Praising it. For example: pointing at toy cars Arturo (7,6) said "Guarda babbo che belle queste!" (Look, dad, aren't these lovely!). Michele (7,0): "Mamma, aspetta. Guarda (indicando dei mostri) ce li hanno tutti!" (Mum, wait. Look...(pointing to some monsters) Everybody's got them!); Silvia (9,3) touches a small puppet: "Guarda, mamma, così piccoli non li vendono mai" (Look, mum, they never sell such small ones).

**Need statement:** the child expresses his need for the object. For example: "Mamma, mi servono i quaderni a quadretti" (Mum, I need some exercise-books).

**Interrogative:** the child formulates a plain, direct request. From a syntactic point of view such requests only have the interrogative form and do not incorporate any other linguistic device which may convey politeness. For example, approaching a doll's pram, Alessandra (2,9) said: "Mamma, mi compri questa?" (Mum, you buy this for me?).

**Polite request,** when the child incorporates some politeness (politeness markers, syntactical elaboration, hints) in the request. For example: Marco (10,0) said "Guarda le racchette! oh, per favore, ti prego, me le prendi?" (Look at the tennis rackets! Oh, please, please mum, will you buy them for me?). The rest of the interaction is also of interest. Mother: "Le vuoi?" (Do you want them?). Marco: "Siiii!" (Yeees!). Mother: "Allora prendile" (Well, take them then). Marco: "Oh, grazie!!" (oh, thank you!). Picking a toy-car Franco (6,2) said: "Mamma, ti devo dire una cosa. Io vorrei questo" (Mum, I must tell you something. I would like to have this). Some children are really very indirect. For example: Laura (8,6): "Nonna, guarda i libri. Non ne cercavi uno?" (Granny, look at the books. Weren't you looking for one?). In this request the fact that the book would have been for the girl remains unsaid, but the rest of the verbal exchange soon clarifies the point. Addressing his father and referring to a toy, Corrado (8,0) said: "Quanto costa? eh? quanti soldi ci vogliono?" (How much does this cost? Eh? How much money is needed?).

Two independent judges categorized all subjects' first requests, that is, children's first utterances. Overall agreement between judges was 96%. (Indication 98%, Imperative 100%, Advertisement 88%, Need statement 93%, Interrogative 100%, Polite request 95%). Table 1.2 reports the results. The differences in age distribution is significant ($\chi^2 = 19.52, 10df, p<.05$).
TABLE 1.2
Categories of spontaneous requests at three age levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>4-yr-olds</th>
<th>6-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indication</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite Request</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As expected, indications substantially decrease with increasing age. Imperatives are more frequent among 6-year-olds. Advertisements are more frequent in older than in younger children. Need statements do not change with age. Interrogative forms substantially increase among older children. Polite requests proportionally increase with age, as expected. Figure 1.2 shows the percentages of polite requests at the three age levels.

![Chart showing percentages of polite requests at three age levels](chart.png)

The following figures show children's verbal behaviour separately at each age level.
Figure 1.2a shows that, in the vast majority of cases, the youngest children use indications and that they scarcely use the other categories of response. This result confirms our hypothesis that Indications, however verbally expressed, are a primitive form of requesting, close to gestual indication. It remains to be seen whether young children adopt this form of requesting even with unfamiliar adults.

Instead, the results reported in Figure 1.2b show that 6-year-olds adopt a variety of verbal means to express their request intentions. Indications still predominate, but all the categories of requesting are present at about the same level, including some polite requests.

Lastly, the results reported in Figure 1.2c show that 8-year-olds behave differently from younger children. In this age group, standard forms of requesting are the most frequently employed. In particular, both interrogatives and polite requests are the most used.
Overall, the above results show that age affects the way in which children address requests to familiar adults. Older children mostly use the elaborate verbal means offered by their culture, while younger children content themselves with pure verbal indication.

In addition, a variety of verbal means seem to be managed by Italian children starting at the age of six. In this respect, it is interesting to note that a few children (8 out of 88, 9.1%) used techniques which are normally used as advertising strategies in TV or in the press.
Discussion

The main result of this study is that the developmental sequence presented by the formal model proposed in Chapter 3 has been confirmed by the naturalistic observation of children's spontaneous behaviour in the everyday environment.

The second result is that politeness in requests increases as a function of age. Some caution must be taken with this result, because polite requests cover at most 20% of children's spontaneous verbal behaviour and those only among older children. Apparently, although older children can manage politeness better than younger ones, they do not use it constantly.

An unexpected result of this observational study was that Italian children use request strategies which are not similar to those found in English-speaking ones. In particular, 4-year-old children rely enormously on pure verbal indication - which is a primitive, very impolite strategy of requesting. This behaviour is not reported in the literature. In addition, one strategy which has never been documented in the literature on English-speaking children was found. A few children (9.1% overall) used advertising strategies to persuade their relatives to buy them a toy. Although the phenomenon does not concern our main issue, it is noteworthy because it may be related to the extent to which Italian children watch TV and their subsequent learning of "how to get things done by language". Generally speaking, Italian children were found to be quite impolite to their relatives. It remains to be further investigated whether this phenomenon is due to children's lack of linguistic competence or to other factors, for example, the high degree of familiarity between child and adult (factor D).

The above results give rise to a number of questions, among which the following four appear to be the most important ones. The first three questions are related to children's verbal behaviour in role-playing conditions, extensively used in previous studies. First, if the same social context (i.e., a child asking his mother for a toy in a store) is presented to children in a role-playing condition, will children show a level of politeness in requests comparable with the one exhibited in natural circumstances (that is, little politeness)? Second, will the increase in politeness level according to age found in an everyday context also be found in role-playing conditions? Third, will children show the same variety of verbal means shown in everyday context also in role-playing conditions? To address these questions, a role-playing study was designed (Study 2: Children's directives to familiar adults: Role-playing condition). It will be reported immediately after the present study, since the design is the same.

The fourth question is related to children's use of politeness in everyday life situations: How will the adults' reply to the child's first request influence the child's subsequent verbal behaviour? This question was addressed in a further study in which
children's spontaneous behaviour was observed under naturalistic conditions but adults' replies were experimentally manipulated. (Study 3: Children's requesting and re-requesting in natural interactions).

In conclusion, the results of Study 1 gave support to the general model for the development of cognitive skills needed for communication reported in Chapter 3 and indicated that more politeness can be found at the Discourse level. From this basis, the three-stage model for the development of politeness acquires more strength, as it is derived from the above theoretical analysis. It was hypothesized that the development of politeness can be described as follows: linguistic repertoire, conventional politeness, and sympathetic politeness levels. All the following studies will take into account this hypothesis for the development of politeness. They are aimed at producing different sources of evidence to test the hypothesis.
Study 2
Children's directives to familiar adults: Role-playing condition

Design and hypothesis

This study presented children with the same social problem observed in the naturalistic study: children were now presented with drawings and asked to say what, according to them, the main character (a child) would have said to persuade his or her mum to buy a toy. Subjects were also asked what the main character could do if mum refused to comply.

Again, the design of the study was very simple. The independent variable was the subjects' age, divided into the same three age levels (4-, 6-, and 8-year-olds) as in Study 1. The main dependent variable was children's level of politeness in requests. The second dependent variable was the type of reported verbal strategies to deal with refusal to comply from the adult.

The general aim of the present study is to verify whether a role-playing situation can be used as a reliable indicator of children's actual behaviour in their everyday lives. This study was designed to answer the first three questions raised by the discussion of the results of Study 1. It will remembered that the first question was: Will children show the same level of politeness in requests in both natural and role-playing circumstances? This is an important question because much of what we know about the development of politeness has been derived from role-playing studies. However, differences in children's use of politeness between the two situations - spontaneous vs experimentally induced behaviour - were expected. The reasons for this expectation are two. The first is that any role-playing condition will facilitate the task of producing requests suitable to the context. Role-playing conditions both draw all the child's attention to linguistic performance and presents only the essential information (usually by drawings or toy-actors). This is vastly different from what normally happens in the circumstances of everyday life. The second reason is that, from a child's point of view, the role-playing condition may involve pleasing an unfamiliar adult in a task resembling a school task. If the child has some vague notion of the social use of politeness, the situation itself seems to suggest an increase in politeness in this context. The presence of an unfamiliar adult (i.e., the experimenter) adds weight to the factor D (social distance) which in turn will focus more attention on politeness.

This study aims at answering two further questions. The first is developmental; that is, will older children also be more polite than younger ones in role-playing conditions? Referring to the evidence reported in Chapter 2, one would indeed expect this to be so.
The second question is more concerned with linguistic aspects; that is, what linguistic means will children use in role-playing conditions? It is not possible to make predictions for this question, as no evidence is available for Italian children for a similar problem. It will be remembered that in Bates's work (Bates, 1976), children were asked to be polite.

**Method**

**Subjects**

Fifty-seven children were interviewed. They were divided into three age groups: 4-year-olds (mean age, 4;0; range 3;6 to 4;5), 6-year-olds (mean age, 6;6; range 6;0 to 6;10); and 8-year-olds (mean age, 8;2; range 7;10 to 8;9). In the first group there were 16 children (11 males and 6 females), in the second group 20 children (12 males and 8 females) in the third group 20 children (14 males and 6 females). The children either attended the kindergarten or primary school which were both located next to the store where the naturalistic observations of Study I have been carried out.

**Material and procedure**

Two pictures were employed, one for boys and one for girls. In both pictures a mother with, respectively, a boy or a girl was shown near a rack of toys in a shop. In the first vignette, a big model car was in evidence, in the second a Barbie doll. Two gender-oriented toys were adopted, as previous research had indicated that Italian children (especially boys) prefer toys which are appropriate for their gender by the age of 5/6 years. The experimenter said to the subject: "Look, in this drawing there is a mother with her boy (girl) in a store for shopping. They pass through the toy department and the boy notices this beautiful car (the girls notices this beautiful Barbie). S/he would so much like to have it. What will he say to his (her) mother to persuade her to buy it for him (her)?". After the child's response, he was asked: "If mum says 'No', what will the boy (girl) say?". The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed.

**Results**

**Production of requests**

In the first analysis the requests produced by children were classified according to the same categories adopted in Study 1: i.e., Indication, Imperative, Advertisement, Need Statement, Interrogative, and Polite Requests. Two independent judges evaluated children's requests. Their agreement was very high (98%). Only in one case a child said "He shows the car to his mum", which was categorized as "Indication". Table 2.1
reports that in this corpus of data it was possible to find only Imperatives (e.g., "compramela", "buy it for me"), Interrogative forms (e.g., "mi compri la macchina?", "Buy me the car?"), and Polite requests, which incorporated both interrogative form and one or more linguistic markers of politeness (e.g., "Mi compri la macchinina, per piacere?", "Will you buy me that toy car, please?"). No hints were found, politeness being expressed only by the following linguistic means: Use of please, for example, "Buy me that toy-car, please?" (13 subjects on 56, 23.21%); Auxiliary verb, for example, "Can you buy me that Barbie doll?" (23 on 56, 41.07%); Conditional, for example, "Would you buy me the Barbie?" (5 on 56, 8.93%). In one case (1.78%), a 8-year-old boy added a justification to his request, "Can you buy me that toy-car? I like it".

TABLE 2.1
Categories of requests in role-playing condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORIES</th>
<th>4-yr-olds</th>
<th>6-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertisement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need Statement</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite Request</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data reported in Table 2.1 were grouped into three categories: Imperative (which also included one child who said, "He shows the car to his mum"), Interrogative and Polite Request. The Chi-square test was applied to the data reported in Table 2.2 and showed a significant difference across ages ($\chi^2 = 9.57, 4$ df, $p<.05$).

TABLE 2.2
Categories of requests at 4, 6 and 8 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>4-yr-olds</th>
<th>6-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imperative</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrogative</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite Request</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, if Imperatives and Interrogatives are grouped together as Impolite Requests to contrast requests expressing politeness (Polite Requests), the age effect increases ($\chi^2 = 7.79, p<.025$). Figure 2.1 reports the percentages of polite vs non polite requests at the three age levels.

Figure 2.1: Polite and impolite requests in role-playing at three age levels

The above data show two main results. The first is that, generally speaking, younger children are significantly less polite than older ones. The second is that about 50% of both 4- and 6-year-olds can be polite in role-playing conditions. Also, the vast majority of 8-year-olds are polite. Thus, on one hand, the fact was confirmed that politeness in requests increases with age; on the other, that very young children can indeed be polite under facilitating circumstances. Figure 2.2 compares the percentages of polite children in natural (Study 1) and role-playing (Study 2) conditions. The differences are striking. First, as expected, in the role-playing condition children are vastly more polite than in natural situations. Second, in natural conditions the growth of politeness is more apparent between the ages of 4 and 6, while in role playing conditions it is more apparent between the ages of 6 and 8.
Dealing with the adult's refusal to comply

A second analysis was carried out on subjects' responses to the question, "If mum says 'No', what will the boy (girl) say?". Subjects' responses were classified into five mutually exclusive categories:

No response: subject says "I don't know" or keeps silent.

Cry: subject says that the main characted will cry (e.g., "Piange" he cries).

Obedience: the subject tells that the character will accept the adult's decision without protesting it; for example, "Vanno via" (They go away) or "Non lo compera" (She doesn't buy it).

Insistence: subject says that the character will insist in his or her request, for example by saying "Dai, mamma" (Oh, mum...).

Polite insistence: again subject says that the character will insist in his or her request, but saying "Per piacere"; for example, "Per piacere, mamma" (please, mum).

Two independent judges categorized children's responses, their agreement being over 93%. Table 2.3 reports the results.
TABLE 2.3
Reported reactions to mother's refusal to comply

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported reaction</th>
<th>4-yr-olds</th>
<th>6-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I don't know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cry</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insistence</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Please&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Surprisingly, the Chi-square test did not reveal any significant differences between ages. After having observed children's spontaneous behaviour in naturalistic conditions, it is difficult to believe that no age-related difference can be found in the verbal means adopted for dealing with a refusal. Thus, this lack may simply mirror children's lack of motivation in role-playing conditions.

Discussion

The major result of this study is that children behave differently in role-playing and in natural conditions. The results reported in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 show that, in role-playing situations, children of all age levels use standard, explicit ways of requesting. The results reported in Figure 2.1 also show that children are quite polite at all age levels, and maximally so at 8 years of age. Instead, in naturalistic situations children show a greater variety of linguistic means than in role-playing conditions (see for example, Figures 1.2 to 1.2c). Also, they are not very polite, as may be observed in Figure 2.2.

If it is not stretching these results too much, one could observe that in natural situations the child's social problem (as defined by Humphrey, 1976) is to have things done by language (for example, getting a toy). By contrast, in the role-playing situation the child's real social problem is to persuade the experimenter that he is doing well. To a child's eye, the social task may be how to formulate the request which will best please the adult. This interpretation is sustained by three facts. First, although not prompted to be polite, children of any age are overall much more polite in role-playing conditions than in natural situations. Second, children use only explicit, standard requests in role-playing conditions, but a greater variety of linguistic means in natural situations. Third, in role-playing conditions only 15 children out of 57 (26.3%) try a second request after a refusal, while the vast majority of children in natural situations do so. In conclusion, it
may be said that role-playing conditions focus the child’s attention on the linguistic devices of politeness in requests. If one is interested in children’s locutionary competence for politeness, role-playing conditions represent a good method. If one is interested in children’s performance in real life, results obtained by role-playing conditions are less valid.

However, an important objection may be put forward to the above interpretation. It cannot be excluded that the children in Study 2 were more polite than in Study 1 because the social context was different. While in Study 1 children had to deal with a very familiar adult, in Study 2 they had to deal with a very unfamiliar one (the experimenter) - the latter being a social context asking for more politeness than the former. A third study was thus designed to remove the ambiguity from the problem.

In conclusion, Study 2 was designed to show that the development of linguistic competence for politeness is not identical to that of the ability to make use of politeness in spontaneous conversations. Comparison between the results of Study 2 and Study 1 revealed a developmental gap between the ability to produce polite requests in role-playing and everyday life situations respectively. This evidence supports the three-stage developmental model for politeness. In particular, it shows that it is possible to find a developmental level in which children possess a linguistic repertoire for politeness but do not use it spontaneously. The "linguistic repertoire level" must thus be separated from further developments. Such developments will be better investigated in the following Study 3.
Study 3
Children's directives to an unfamiliar adult, experimental observation

Design and hypotheses

The present study was designed to answer a few questions raised by the previous results. First, it was observed that, while in spontaneous interaction with familiar adults children are not very polite, in role-playing situations - in contrast - they are consistently polite. It cannot be excluded that the factor degree of familiarity with adults may have influenced the observed differences in level of politeness of children's requests. In the present study, children were asked to address requests to an unfamiliar adult in naturalistic conditions. If, again, children were quite impolite, the previous differences in politeness found between the results of Study 1 and 2 may plausibly be attributed to differences in children's behaviour in respectively natural and role-playing conditions. On the contrary, if in the present study children were polite to an unfamiliar adult, there may be reasons for believing that children's use of politeness is greatly influenced by the degree of familiarity with the adult (factor D).

Second, in Study 1 it was not possible to cross-compare type of adults' reactions and type of children's re-requesting strategies because of the great variety of the adults' verbal behaviour. On that occasion, the whole child-parent interaction was categorized, based upon the child's predominant strategy. Study 3 was designed for the purpose of studying the effects of the type of adult's reactions to the level of politeness in children's re-requesting strategies. In particular, as will be better detailed in the Method section, children had to deal with two different types of "resistance" to their requests: silence from the adult and motivated refusal. The questions are: Will children raise the level of politeness after the adult's refusal to comply? Will children react differently to different types of resistance to comply with their requests? Which strategy of politeness will they use, negative or positive? How will age affect children's behaviour?

In this study three age levels were compared, namely 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds. The design of this study involved two factors: Age and Type of Resistance to the child's first request. The dependent variable was the level of linguistic politeness. In addition, first requests and requests after resistances were compared. Age-related differences in children's level of politeness after resistances were expected to be found.

In particular, our developmental model for politeness predicts that: a) 5-year-olds will not make use of politeness to solve communicative difficulties; b) 7-year-olds will mostly use conventional, negative politeness; and c) only 9-year-olds will show some ability to use the positive, sympathetic aspects of politeness to restore a cooperative
discourse between the experimenter and themselves. It was also expected that the type of resistance would influence children's subsequent verbal behaviour. In particular, silence should elicit conventional politeness because it stresses social distance and has no politeness, while motivated refusal should elicit sympathetic politeness because it embeds some positive politeness in the Face Threatening Act. The rationale for this expectation comes from the "cost-benefit" theory of politeness presented in Chapter 1. Clark and Schunk (1980) observed that the degree of politeness in the responses was related to the degree of politeness in the requests. For example, a polite request elicits a polite response while an impolite request elicits an impolite response. Transposing these observations to the present case, silence after the child's first request indicates that something was wrong in communication. The child may think that his request was not appropriate and consequently try to "redress" the offence by more negative, conventional politeness. In contrast, a motivated refusal to comply expresses some positive politeness, thus asking for some positive politeness in the replay.

Method

Subjects

Three age groups were formed: (a) 18 children of mean age 5;1 (range 4;8 to 5;9); (b) 20 children of mean age 7;1 (range 6;0 to 7;10); (c) 20 children of mean age 9;3 (range 8;7 to 9;10). Half the subjects in each age group were male, the other half female. All the children lived in the same area of Padua, a large town in northern Italy. Children attended two adjacent schools (kindergarten, primary school) and belonged to middle-class families.

Materials and procedure

Materials were two plastic pegboards, and a bag containing pegs of four colours. The subject was asked to sit at a table in a quiet room of his or her own school. The experimenter sat opposite. After a short conversation intended to put the child at ease, the experimenter introduced the materials and asked if the child wanted to use the pegs to make a figure on the pegboard. If the answer was affirmative, the experimenter said she would make a figure on her own pegboard at the same time, adding, "I'll keep the pegs—when you want one, ask me." The experimenter's status was thus higher than the child's because of both age and control of the pegs. At this point, the experimenter began to concentrate on her peg figure but was prepared to respond to the child's requests. When the subject appeared to have become familiar with the situation and the spirit of the game,
two "resistances" were introduced. Their purpose was to signal to the child that his request may have been interpreted as a threat to the interlocutor in some way (in sense used by Brown & Levinson, 1978). In the case of "deaf ear" resistances, the experimenter simply behaved as if she had not heard the child's request. If the child made the request again, as a way of checking whether he had been heard correctly, the experimenter continued the same behaviour. Further requests were normally satisfied.

In the second case, the experimenter did not satisfy the request but supplied some motivation such as, "I can't give you a red peg, because I'm using the red ones." The motivation was rather arbitrary, since the child knew very well that there were plenty of pegs. This kind of resistance was called "motivated refusal", as the force of the Face Threatening Act was mitigated by some positive politeness (justification). Each type of feedback was aimed at eliciting a new request. Thus, subjects were not asked directly by the experimenter to increase the level of politeness of their requests, as Bates's (1976a) subjects were. In fact, children were presented only indirectly with the need to change their previous requests and had to make social inferences about how best to do so from contextual information.

Verbal expressions were recorded. Three samples of request were considered: the first request by the subject and the first re-requests after each of the two resistances. As regards "deaf ear" resistances, the first re-requests, that were the exact repetition of the unfulfilled request were not taken into account, since these may be considered cases in which children wished to ascertain whether they had been heard. The order of resistances was counterbalanced across subjects.

Results

The experimental design included three comparisons among data: between first requests and requests after the first resistance (within subject), among age-level groups for requests after "motivated refusal" (between subject), and among age-level groups for requests after "deaf ear" resistances (between subjects).

First request

First, subjects' first requests were classified into two categories: (1) Impolite requests, that is indications ("Un giallo", "A yellow one") and imperatives ("Dammi un giallo" "Give me a yellow one"); and (2) Polite requests, which had at least one element of linguistic politeness, for example, interrogative form, conditional verb, "please", etc. ("Mi dai un blu, per piacere?" "Give me a blue one, please?"). Requests were rated by two independent judges who knew neither the sex nor the age of the subjects. Agreement between judges was 94.8%. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.
The data reported in Table 3.1 show that children's first requests were predominantly impolite at all age levels. It will be remembered that for each child one request was examined, thus each child could be either polite or impolite.

**TABLE 3.1**

Levels of politeness in first requests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politeness level</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite children</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Requests after resistances

Repetitions of first requests aimed at checking whether the adult had heard them were not considered. Re-requests made after resistances were classified into five categories:

- **Silence**: Subjects did not know how to deal with the situation and kept silent.
- **Maintenance**: Subjects either formulated the request in the same way or reinforced it by raising their voice or adding new imperative words. For example, "Rosso" (red). Resistance. "Uno rosso voglio" (I want a red one).
- **Reduction of request**: Subject lowered their voices or only modified the content of their requests, that is, asked for a peg of a different colour while maintaining the same surface linguistic structure. For example, "Dammi un chiodino verde" (Give me a green peg). Resistance. "Dammi un chiodino blu" (Give me a blue peg).
- **Conventional politeness**: Subjects modified the surface linguistic structure of their previous requests but maintained the same content. Mitigators were inserted in the form of courtesy formulas: "Il giallo" (The yellow one). Resistance. "Il giallo per piacere" (The yellow one, please). Or mitigators could appear with the introduction of an interrogative form, for example, "Uno rosso" (A red one). Resistance. "Me ne dai uno rosso?" (Will you give me a red one?). Or they could include a conditional, for example, "Uno verde" (A green one). Resistance. "Uno verde vorrei" (I would like a green one). In any case, children used conventional, deferential politeness.
- **Sympathetic politeness**: Subjects produced requests that, although not necessarily deferential, took into account the interlocutor's behaviour and also assured her that her refusal to satisfy their requests had not caused any problems. For example, the children did not change the content of their previous requests but tried to maintain a good interaction by various verbal means. Here are two examples: Resistance.
Child: "Qual'è quello che ti serve che non mi ricordo?" (Which one do you need. I don't remember?).

Child "Un altro blu" (Another blue one).

Resistance.

"Allora basta...un altro me ne serve e basta" (That's enough then; I just want one more, that's all).

In this category requests in which the children modified the content of previous requests but also tried to reassure their addressee were also included. For example.

Child: "Dammì un chiodino verde" (Give me a green peg).

Resistance.

Child: "Ah be', non importa, dammi un chiodino blu" (Oh well, it doesn't matter, give me a blue one).

In the above examples, the expressions of politeness are not conventional, but qualify themselves for the attention to the other person's will and feelings. In this case, politeness is sympathetic.

The last two were considered to be the only categories of linguistic politeness. In contrast, maintenance was considered typically impolite. Silence and reductions showed that subjects were aware of some obstacle in the interaction but were unable to cope with it by polite linguistic means. For this reason they were considered impolite. Thus, categories 1, 2, and 3 were impoliteness categories, while categories 4 and 5 were politeness ones.

Requests after resistances were rated by two independent judges with the same procedure used for rating subjects' first requests. Agreement between judges for requests after "deaf ear" resistances was 84.3%; for requests after motivated refusal it was 82.71%. Disagreements were resolved by discussion.

Table 3.2 reports the distribution of polite and impolite subjects at each age level after the first resistance. Again, for each child one request was examined, so that each child could be either polite or impolite.

**TABLE 3.2**

Levels of politeness after first resistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Politeness level</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite children</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite children</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The MacNemar Test for dependent samples was applied to the results for first vs request after resistance for each age level. The results show that 5-year-olds almost never
increased politeness level after resistances (MacNemar non significant). Figure 3.1 reports the percentages of polite and impolite requests before and after the adult's resistance for 5-year-olds.

Figure 3.1: Percentage of polite and impolite 5-year-olds

By contrast, 7-year-olds did increase the level of politeness after resistance (first request compared to requests after resistances for two politeness categories: McNemar Statistic = 7.11, p<.01). Figure 3.2 reports the percentages of polite and impolite requests before and after the adult's resistance for 7-year-olds.
Nine-year-olds also increased politeness (first request compared to requests after resistances for two politeness categories: McNemar Statistic = 7.36, p<.01). Figure 3.3 reports the percentages of polite and impolite requests before and after the adult's resistance for 9-year-olds. These results show that it is only from the age of 7 that children can use the polite register to overcome interaction difficulties when the interlocutor raises the cost of request accomplishment.
The results up to now described will be reported dividing children's reactions into respectively "motivated refusal" and "deaf ear" resistances. In the following tables the groups are slightly smaller than those in Table 3.1, because six subjects were not able to continue the interaction after the first resistance, producing reactions of silence and embarrassment. The results reported in Table 3.3 illustrate children's ability to react verbally to motivated refusals at different age levels.

**TABLE 3.3**

Re-requesting after motivated refusal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>5-yr-olds</th>
<th>7-yr-olds</th>
<th>9-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a significant difference among age groups in the use of politeness after motivated refusal (three age groups compared for two politeness categories: \( \chi^2 = 14.00, 2\text{df}, p<0.001 \)). In general, there were hardly any polite requests in the 5-year-old group; they began to appear in 7-year-olds and became predominant in 9-year-olds.

Table 3.4 reports the results after "deaf ear" resistance.

**TABLE 3.4**

Re-requesting after "deaf ear" resistance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>5-yr-olds</th>
<th>7-yr-olds</th>
<th>9-yr-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was also a significant difference among the three age groups in the number of polite requests after "deaf ear" resistance (three age groups compared for two politeness categories: \( \chi^2 = 6.22, 2\text{df}, p<0.05 \)). Here too, although 5-year-olds did not increase their politeness, 7-year-olds did. Nine-year-olds behaved like 7-year-olds. The results reported in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 confirm the general analysis reported in Table 3.2, showing that the type of resistance has no effect on age in level of politeness.
Comparison of children's reactions to the two resistances

In each age group, polite and impolite requests after the two resistances were also compared. Data are reported in Tables 3.5 to 3.7. In these the behaviour of all subjects is reported and, of course, the samples for "motivated refusal" and "deaf ear" are not independent. Statistical analyses were not carried out on the data presented in the Tables. In order to have two independent samples, each age group was subdivided into subjects who had received a "motivated refusal" first and those who had received a "deaf ear" resistance first. The reduction in the number of subjects made Fisher's exact probability test preferable to the chi-square test. The rejection region for these analyses was alpha = 0.05.

**TABLE 3.5**
Five-year-olds' reactions to different resistances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Motivated refusal</th>
<th>&quot;Deaf ear&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3.6**
Seven-year-olds' reactions to different resistances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Motivated refusal</th>
<th>&quot;Deaf ear&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 3.7**
Nine-year-olds' reactions to different resistances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Motivated refusal</th>
<th>&quot;Deaf ear&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results show that 5-year-olds hardly ever used politeness, so that no significant difference in their behaviour was found. Seven-year-olds also did not show different reactions when the experimenter's resistance changed, but they used politeness in about 50% of their requests. Also for 7-year-olds, no statistically significant difference was found. In contrast, 9-year-olds were significantly more polite after a motivated refusal than after a "deaf ear" resistance (two resistances for two politeness categories: Fisher's exact probability test: p<.05).

The data were subjected to post-hoc analysis to see if the types of polite (Conventional and Sympathetic) and impolite (Maintainace and Reduction) requests varied with the different types of resistance ("motivated refusal" and "deaf ear"). The two politeness categories (Conventional and Sympathetic) appeared to be used in different ways according to type of resistance. Nine-year-olds tended to use Conventional politeness if no answer was given to their first request and Sympathetic politeness when faced with a motivated refusal (Conventional and Sympathetic politeness for two resistances: Fisher's exact probability test: p<.01). Although less strongly, 7-year-olds were oriented in the same way. Yet 5-year-olds hardly ever used polite requests but tended to maintain the same request after "deaf ear" resistance, only modifying it after motivated refusal ("Maintenance" and "Reduction" categories for two resistances: Fisher's exact probability test: p<.025). The following figures (Figs. 3.4 to 3.6) show the percentages of subjects falling into each category after the two resistances.

![Figure 3.4: 5-yr-olds' verbal strategies after two resistances](image-url)
The questions raised in the design section can be answered on the basis of the present results. First, it was again observed that children's first requests to adults are quite impolite at any age level in natural conditions. In general, children are rather impolite to both familiar and unfamiliar adults. Thus, it may be concluded that it is the role-playing situation which enhances the level of politeness of children's requests.
Second, it has been shown here that children do raise the level of politeness after the adult's resistance, although this effect can be observed only from the age of 7 onwards. Five-year-olds are apparently not able to use politeness to deal with difficulties in the interaction. It will be remembered that there is general consensus among developmental psychologists that by the age of 5 years children master the basic linguistic skills for politeness. The results obtained in Study 2 also confirm this view: 50% of 4-year-olds produced polite requests in role-playing conditions without being prompted to do so. Yet in natural situations neither 4- nor 5-year-olds use politeness to circumvent difficulties - as observed in both Studies 1 and 3. These results confirm the hypothesis proposed in Chapter 3 that to be suitably polite is a social as well linguistic skill and that development in the former is delayed with respect to the latter.

Third, the results of the present study show that children are very sensitive to the type of resistance introduced by the adult at any age level. Five-year-olds tend to maintain their request when the adult keeps silent, but reduce them when faced with a motivated refusal. Seven-year-olds tend to reduce their requests after any kind of resistance on the adult's part. Yet they also offer some sympathetic politeness after a motivated refusal, but are more conventionally polite in the presence of a silent adult. Nine-year-olds both reduce their requests and are conventionally polite after a "deaf ear" resistance, but most of them are sympathetically polite after a motivated refusal.

The results of this study bring further evidence in support of the above developmental model which predicted that development would progress from possess of a polite repertoire accompanied by poor use of it, to predominant use of conventional politeness, to use of both conventional and sympathetic politeness.

In addition, the present results may add some information about politeness itself. It has been observed here that conventional politeness is mostly used when the addressee is impolite and stresses social distance. Faced with this situation, younger children just insist (a phenomenon also observed in Study 1), while older children reduce the strength of the Face Threatening Act either in content (reduction) or by some conventional politeness. Children's use of conventional politeness is clearly aimed at the addressee's negative face. Children behave as if the addressee had signalled a need for more deference. From these developmental results, one might suggest that the genesis of conventional politeness is rooted in aggression. Faced with slightly aggressive behaviour (breaking the interaction by silence), older children try to "placate" their addressee with "mitigated" words. Conversely, sympathetic politeness appears to be rooted in the wish to keep the social link between speaker and addressee untouched. Even the youngest children reduce their requests after a motivated refusal, showing that they can make some inferences on the situation at hand when the adult gives polite refusals to comply. Oldest children respond to the implicit offer contained in the motivated refusal with words
explicitly aimed at reinforcing the social link (see examples above). One might conclude that, generally speaking, sympathetic politeness may signal social approach, while conventional politeness denotes withdrawal. A further observation is that even slightly aggressive behaviour in the adult's communication stops the process of mind-reading in the youngest children and produces conventional and formal reactions in older ones. In contrast, even slightly polite behaviour in the adult's communication helps the process of inferential thinking about the situation at all age levels. The growth of social cognition enables the child to select the most appropriate words to enhance the Discourse level of the exchange.

**General Discussion**

The results of the first three studies may be summarized in two main points.

First, Study 1 gave support to the model of development of social understanding derived from Flavell's model. In addition, Study 3 supported the hypothesis of the development of politeness derived from that model. It may be concluded that the development of politeness as expressed in children's spontaneous behaviour in naturalistic circumstances follows at least three steps. During the first, the youngest children (aged 4 and 5) do not use politeness, either for persuasion purposes or for dealing with difficulties in the interaction. A second step is achieved by 6- and 7-year-olds, who indeed use politeness in its most conventional aspects. At this age, they incorporate some linguistic markers of politeness in their speech that function as "mitigators" and stress deference (negative politeness). The second step is also characterized by the ability to modify ongoing verbal behaviour to fit the demands of the interaction better. Yet children appear to be mostly concerned with their own point of view. The third step is achieved by the age of 8 or 9, when children use sympathetic aspects of politeness to deal with interaction difficulties. At this stage, children appear to be sensitive to the need to keep a good interaction by monitoring it with some sympathetic politeness. Thus, they both pay verbal homage to the other person's wishes or needs and minimize offence from their interlocutor, strengthening social links. Language is flexible and less routinized. In brief, naturalistic observations support the main developmental hypothesis, showing that politeness grows both quantitatively and qualitatively as a function of age.

A second set of results is related to the differences observed between children's use of politeness in natural versus role-playing circumstances - the latter greatly enhancing the level of politeness in children's requests. One would like to conclude that a difference between polite competence (role-playing condition) and polite performance (everyday life) might have been observed here, the role-playing condition facilitating the task of
being suitably polite. The result is interesting for planning further research because it indicates that role-playing conditions allow children's linguistic competence about politeness to be investigated reliably. A number of questions may thus be experimentally addressed in this way. Role-playing conditions appear to be a controlled and economic way of pursuing such an investigation - although it must not be forgotten that children's behaviour in natural conditions may be substantially less polite. A further observation about role-playing experiments is that responding to vignettes facilitates the child's recognition of the demand characteristics of the exchange. Thus, he is prompted to reflect on the hypothesized exchange and this in turn leads to awareness of the social demands signalling the need to employ politeness. In real-life situations, the child is a participant. Younger children seem less able (or motivated to) take on their hearers' perspective and thus recognize the need to engage the polite register. The child might be too engrossed in the action to reflect upon it. In other words, in role-playing conditions it may be the situation itself which presents the child with all the monitoring and self-reflection which must be autonomously carried out in real-life circumstances.

In conclusion, the results of the studies presented in this chapter have the potential for setting the scene for further study. Comparison of children's behaviour in naturalistic (Studies 1 and 3) versus role-playing (Study 2) circumstances has shown that the task of being polite requires more social understanding than linguistic proficiency. The former is a later acquisition with respect to the latter. It has been demonstrated that only by the age of 6 and 7 years can children be polite in different circumstances.
CHAPTER 5

Development of social cognition and politeness

The aim of the present chapter is to find empirical evidence on the cognitive aspects of the development of politeness. The studies presented here are guided by the results of the studies presented in Chapter 4. Three main findings became apparent from analysis of children's verbal behaviour in naturalistic everyday contexts. The first is that 4/5-year-olds do not use politeness spontaneously - although they possess an repertoire for polite speech acts which can be elicited in role-playing conditions. The second is that children start to use politeness spontaneously around the age of 6/7, but they mostly confine themselves mostly to conventional politeness. The third is that 8/9-year-olds can insert politeness in cooperative Discourse. Sympathetic politeness can be observed mostly at this age. Thus, several age-related developmental differences were observed in children's spontaneous polite behaviour. The major question addressed in the present chapter is: Can such developmental differences be interpreted according to parallel developments in social cognition?

To answer this question, let us turn back briefly to the discussion of Flavell's model presented in Chapter 3. It will be remembered that one main cognitive pre-condition for social cognition in communication is ability to carry out all the inferences needed for monitoring the ongoing communication. It was then proposed that children should first become able to carry out Inference regarding their partner's state of mind (Figure 2C) and that only later should they be able to carry out full recursive thinking, involving Self-reflection (Figure 2D). Some support for the above distinction may be inferred by the development from Appeal to Interaction to Discourse observed in Study 1, as well as by the developmental gap between use of conventional politeness and sympathetic politeness to deal with difficulties in communication observed in Study 3.

However, the above evidence is related to children's overt behaviour and does not directly address their covert mental operations. It may be said that the above studies offer evidence for the solid arrows in Flavell's model, but they do not do so for the dashed arrows. Thus, the studies presented in this chapter will address a few questions mostly related to the covert mental operations graphically represented in the model.

The first is: When are children able to make inferences and to use recursive thinking in polite communication? The second question takes into account a further pre-condition for successful social thinking: Existence, which refers to the speaker's knowledge of the existence of the class of social phenomena which are involved in the ongoing exchange. Thus, the second question is: What is the content of children's knowledge.
about politeness (existence)? and, third, how does it develop? Three studies were carried out to answer these questions. The first two bring evidence regarding the development of the inferential processes involved in polite communication. The third, and final, study describes the development of children's representation of politeness, in contents as well as in organization.

**Study 4**

**Inferences about politeness**

**Design and hypothesis**

Two related studies are now presented - both dealing with children's ability to make inferences about politeness. The results of the studies presented so far indicate that in natural situations children make use of the full potentials of politeness only at the age of nine, although their linguistic competence on politeness is achieved much earlier. It is suggested here that a possible explanation for such a developmental gap may be found in the ability to make inferences about the social context involved in communication. Thus, an experimental situation was designed presenting a task which can be solved only by recursive thinking on communication. The experimental situation involved a main character (a child or an adult) uttering one polite and one impolite directive (one for each presentation). The subject's task was to determine the addressee of the directive by choosing between two possible addressees, a child and an adult respectively. For example, "An adult enters a room in which an adult and a child are sitting on a sofa watching television. He says "Move over". Who is the addressee?". A second example: "A boy enters a room in which an adult and a child are sitting on a sofa watching television. He says, "Would you move over, please?". Who is the addressee?". Three types of abilities are needed to solve this kind of task.

1. First, the subject must be able to distinguish the level of linguistic politeness (linguistic competence).

2. Second, the subject must be aware of the social conventions for politeness; in this case, the Power rule predicts that the polite utterance is addressed to the person of superior status and the impolite utterance is addressed to the person of inferior status (knowledge of social conventions).

3. Third, the subject must be able to carry out recursive thinking (socio-cognitive competence for communication).
For example, if the speaking character is Character S and the recipient of the directive is Character A, the subject must think of Character S thinking of Character A, thinking of Character S. This reasoning must be carried out for all characters who may be listening to Character S. To clarify this point better, let us look at the above examples.

Example 1
An adult (Character S) enters a room in which an adult (Character A1) and a child (Character A2) are sitting on a sofa watching television. He says, "Move over". Who is the addressee?

To make his choice, the subject must be able to carry out the following recursive thoughts: "Character S (adult) thinks that Character A1 (adult) expects some politeness from a person of the same status (Character S)"; "Character S (adult) thinks that Character A2 (child) will not expect much politeness from a person of superior status (Character S)". The subject's final inference is that "Character S is impolite, so he is addressing the child".

Example 2
A boy enters a room in which an adult and a child are sitting on a sofa watching television. He says "Would you move over, please?". Who is the addressee?

To make his choice, the subject must be able to carry out the following recursive thoughts: "Character S (boy) thinks that Character A1 (adult) expects politeness from a person of inferior status (Character S)"; "Character S (boy) thinks that Character A2 (child) will not expect much politeness from a person of the same status (Character S)". The subject's final inference is that "Character S is polite, thus he is addressing the adult".

The results of Study 1 showed that Discourse is achieved only at the age of 8. The results of Study 3 showed that only 9-year-olds are able to use sympathetic politeness to repair difficulties in the interaction caused by the other person's behaviour. It has previously been hypothesized that such types of overt behaviour in communication can be carried out only when the full range of recursive thoughts represented in the final stage of Flavell's model (Figure 2D) is present. Thus, it is expected here that only 9-year-old children can to carry out all the thinking needed to solve the "sofa" task. One might object that this task may be solved by a simple non recursive rule such as "Adults must be polite to adults, he is polite (impolite), therefore he is (not) speaking to adult". Literature in Chapter 2 and previous studies of Italian children (Axia, 1991; Axia et al., 1989) showed that children know the socio-linguistic conventions for status at the age of 6/7 years and even before. If the above objection were true, children should be able to solve our task as soon as they have the knowledge of conventions appropriate for this situation (P rules), that is at the age of 7. In contrast, if recursive thinking is needed to solve the task, they should be able to solve the task only at the age of 9. If so, some evidence will be
provided supporting that the full range of mental operations needed for polite usage is achieved only at the age of 8/9 years.

Study 4 was carried out with 5-, 7-, and 9-year-old Italian children. It was replicated in Great Britain with 5- and 8-year-old children (Study 5).

Method

Subjects

Subjects were 64 children divided into three age groups: (a) 25 subjects of mean age 5;4 (range 4;4 to 5;10); (b) 20 of mean age 7;0 (range 6;2 to 8;0); (c) 19 of mean age 9;6 (range 9;0 to 10;0). Group (a) had 13 males and 12 females, groups (b) and (c) had 10 males and 10 females each. All children belonged to middle-class families, lived in Padova, and were normally proficient in language, as assessed by their teachers.

Material and Procedure

The materials included one picture showing an adult and a child sitting on a two-place sofa in front of a television. One of two other pictures showing an adult and a child respectively, could be inserted into the principal scene. All characters were male.

Subjects were presented with one scene and asked to say what it represented. This was done in order to make sure that they had correctly understood the roles of the participants (adult-child) and the purpose (watching TV). At this point one of two other characters (adult or child) was inserted and, through the experimenter's voice, spoke one of the following sentences: "Spostati!" (Move over!) or "Vorresti spostarti per favore?" ("Would you move over, please?") The first request contained no linguistic element of politeness, while the second had four elements of politeness (interrogative, auxiliary verb, conditional tense, please). The two requests had the same content and intention, but different politeness levels. The four experimental conditions were 1. adult uttering impolite request, 2. adult uttering polite request, 3. child uttering impolite request, 4. child uttering polite request. Every subject was presented with one character uttering one request. Immediately following the request, the experimenter, pointing to the character who had spoken, asked: "Who is he speaking to?". Each subject was asked to indicate the addressee (adult or child) in one of the above conditions.
Results

The full design of the experiment involves three independent variables (Age, Level of politeness of the request, Status of the Speaker) and one dependent measure (Status of the Addressee). Because the aim of this experiment was to check children's ability in making inferences on linguistic politeness as influenced by addressee's status, results were scored according to this variable only - Status of the speaker was not taken into account. Each subject produced only one response, thus Fisher's exact probability test was used for each age group. The rejection region for these analyses was $a = .05$. The results are presented in Table 4.1.

TABLE 4.1
Number of subjects attributing polite or impolite requests respectively to adult or child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUEST</th>
<th>ADDRESSEE</th>
<th>5-yr-olds</th>
<th>7-yr-olds</th>
<th>9-yr-olds*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $p<.05$ (Fisher exact probability test)

No difference was observed in the attribution of polite and impolite requests at the ages of 5 and 7. The first significant difference occurred at the age of 9. At this age the polite sentence tended to be spoken to adults and the impolite one to children (polite requests compared to impolite requests for two addressees' statuses: Fisher exact probability test, $p < .05$). To clarify the results presented in Table 4.1, if the same task had given to 20 adults one would expect the following distribution: Polite request: Adult 10, Child 0; Impolite request: Adult 0, Child 10.

The results are graphically presented in Figures 4.1, 4.2, 4.3. It can be observed that 5-year-olds tend to think that both polite and impolite requests must be mostly addressed to the adult; 7-year-olds attribute requests in the right direction but still at a chance level; while only 9-year-olds consistently think that the polite request must be addressed to the adult and the impolite requests to the child.
Figure 4.1
Attribution of requests in 5-year-olds

Figure 4.2:
Attribution of requests in 7-year-olds
The above results show that only 9-year-olds significantly discriminated between the four experimental conditions, but that 5-year-olds attributed most requests as addressed to the adult, independently of their politeness level. Apparently, children of this age level consider the adult a better recipient of a request than a child. They might have applied the simple rule which they probably use for themselves: "If you want anything, ask an adult for it". Better comprehension of the task is shown by 7-year-olds, whose responses are in the expected direction but still do not reach significance. Only 9-year-olds clearly attributed the polite request as addressed to the adult, and the impolite request as addressed to the child.

These results support the hypothesis that the age of nine is critical for full mastery of politeness phenomena. In particular, they show that the ability to carry out recursive thinking about polite communication is achieved at this age level by most subjects, thus confirming our hypothesis on the development of socio-cognitive competence for communication.
Study 5
Inferences about politeness: A replica with British children

Study 4 was replicated with a sample of British children, adopting the same materials and procedure. The rationale for this study was to check for the cross-cultural stability of children's understanding of the social conventions of politeness. To our knowledge, this is the first study to adopt the same method to study the development of linguistic politeness in two different cultures. If the results of the study with British children go in the same direction as those obtained with Italian ones, two things will be confirmed. The first is that the P rule of politeness is shared by children of two different cultures and languages. The second, and more important, is that recursive thinking about polite communication is a developmental acquisition which is not really culturally bound. In addition, the results will indicate whether this strategy of research can be pursued or whether the differences between cultural determinants of language are too strong to enable direct comparisons in the field of children's understanding of politeness.

Method

Subjects were 42 British children, divided into two age groups. The first was composed of 24 children aged 5 (mean age, 5;2, range 3;8 to 5;6). The second group was composed of 18 children aged 8 (mean age, 8;6, range 7;10 to 9;2). Each group was composed of an equal number of boys and girls. The children came from Guildford, belonged to middle-class families and did not have any linguistic problems.

The material and procedure closely followed those used for the Italian sample.

Results

The same type of analysis adopted in Study 4 was carried out. Data are reported in Table 4.2. The Fisher Exact Probability Test revealed that only 8-year-olds correctly identified the recipient of respectively polite and impolite requests (p<.05), while 5-year-olds' responses were distributed at random.
TABLE 4.2  
Number of subjects attributing polite or impolite requests to adult or child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUEST</th>
<th>ADDRESSEE</th>
<th>5-yr-olds</th>
<th>8-yr-olds*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polite</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05 (Fisher exact probability test)

Discussion

The results of Study 4 indicated that it is only at the age of 9 that children can carry out all the recursive thinking needed to attribute requests according to level of politeness and social circumstances. The results of Study 5 showed that, for British children too, a developmental gap in this ability can be found between the ages of 5 and 8, thus confirming a general culture-free trend of development. The latter conclusion is not strong because the age levels did not completely overlap in the British and Italian samples, due to difficulties in having the same native English-speaking experimenter for all the British subjects.

A further objection for the above studies could be made about the nature of the task proposed here. It might be observed that only 9-year-olds can solve the task, not because of the amount of inferences needed but because the conventional rules for the use of politeness in a social context are mastered only at the age of 9. If this were true, we would only have observed that children's knowledge of politeness rules for status develops around the age of 8/9 years. As no other measure was taken for the subjects of Studies 4 and 5, it is not possible to reject this interpretation on the basis of the above results only. However, several sources of converging evidence in the literature indicate that children know the conventions of politeness for status of participants around the age of 6. Why, then, does knowledge of the conventions involved in the "sofa" task appear here with such a developmental delay in comparison with the existing evidence? The reason is that our task involves both knowledge of conventions and the ability to make social inferences. The results presented in this chapter bear more upon developmental differences in the ability of making the inferences needed for recursive social thinking than upon knowledge of conventions. The experimental evidence reported here supports the view that the ability to make inferences about polite communication is acquired in late
childhood, around the age of 8/9. It is noteworthy that it is only at this age level that children use discourse strategies (Study 1) and sympathetic politeness (Study 3) in natural interactions with adults.

In conclusion, the results of all the studies presented so far indicate that age significantly affects the amount of politeness verbally expressed by children. Three important facts were empirically observed. First, it has been shown that 4- and 5-year-olds do not use polite speech acts in spontaneous situations, although they show possession of polite speech markers which can be elicited in facilitating circumstances such as role-playing conditions. Second, by the age of 6/7, children spontaneously use some conventional politeness. Lastly, evidence was found showing that sympathetic politeness appears in children's spontaneous speech acts only by the age of 8/9. Thus, the three-stage developmental sequence (linguistic repertoire; knowledge of conventions, sympathetic politeness levels) proposed at the end of Chapter 3 has been confirmed as far as children's overt spontaneous behaviour is concerned. The same sequence was graphically presented in Figures 2B, 2C, and 2D of Chapter 3. However, these figures represent both overt social behaviour (solid arrows) and covert mental operations about the social situation (dashed arrows). So far, little has been shown about covert cognition regarding politeness. If we turn our attention to the complete model presented in Figure 2D, it is easily seen that up to now we have information only regarding the recursive thinking represented by the dashed arrow entering the continuous line encircling the reciprocal inferences between Speaker and Other. Studies 4 and 5 showed that the ability to carry out the recursive thinking needed for polite communication appears at the age of 8/9. Thus, at least two further parts of Flavell's model are not yet investigated. We still need to describe the content of children's knowledge of conventions for polite speech acts, graphically represented by the area defined by the continuous line which encircles both Speaker and Other. In other words, the development of children's knowledge about conventions for polite communication must be described. The second part of the model which needs more attention is Self-reflection, graphically represented by the Speaker making Inferences about the interaction between Self and the Other as well as thinking about himself (dashed arrow starting from and entering the Speaker). The next study is specifically devoted to these two issues.
Study 6

Children's understanding of politeness

Design and hypotheses

The aim of Study 6 is to bring empirical evidence supporting two aspects of Flavell's model which have not yet been investigated: a) the development of children's knowledge about conventions for polite communication; b) the growth of Self-reflection.

As for the development of knowledge about politeness, it has been said that any act of social communication starts with recognition of the situation as suitable for politeness (existence). Recognition has previously been defined as the ability to match the ongoing social situation with the social information stored in long-term memory. It is only knowledge about politeness stored in long-term memory which can inform the child about the type of social situation he is in. So far, children's representation of politeness phenomena and how it changes over time has not been investigated. The developmental analysis of Flavell's model presented in Chapter 3 predicts that children show some appreciable knowledge about politeness at the Interaction level (Figure 2C), that is - based upon the results of Studies 1 and 3 - around the age of 7. As for the development of Self-reflection, the developmental analysis of Flavell's model presented in Chapter 3 predicts that children show Self-reflection at the Discourse level. The results already presented in this chapter showed that the whole range of mental inferences needed for Discourse are achieved at the age of 8/9. Thus, children are expected to show some ability of Self-reflection about politeness only at the age of 9.

In order to test the above hypotheses, 5-, 7- and 9-year-olds were interviewed about politeness. The interview covered four areas of information. The first focused on the definition of politeness (what), the second on the rules of politeness usage (when), the third on involvement of self in polite communication (Self), and the fourth on the perlocutionary effects of politeness (feelings). It was expected that the age-related differences described above in both content and general organization of children's representation of politeness would be found. Children's responses were thus analysed in two ways. First, all responses to each question of the interview were content-analysed according to subjects' age. Second, the factorial structure of the whole amount of content categories found in the first analysis was investigated in relation to age (correspondence analysis).
Method

Subjects

Subjects were 60 Italian children living in Padova. They were divided into three age groups composed of 20 subjects each (10 boys and 10 girls): 5-year-olds (mean age, 5.4; range 4.5 - 5.10), 7-year-olds (mean age, 7.4, range 6.11 - 7.11), and 9-year-olds (mean age, 9.4, range 9 - 9.11). All children came from middle-class families and had normal linguistic ability, as reported by their teachers.

Material

The interview was composed of 17 questions. Their linguistic formulation was refined by informal conversations with children other than the subjects until it was considered that all the questions were perfectly understandable for young Italian children. The interview covered four areas: definition of politeness (1, 2, 3, 8), need for politeness usage (5, 6, 16), politeness and difficult interactions (10, 12, 14, 15), and people's feelings and politeness (4, 9, 11, 13, 17). The text of the interview is reported below:

1. Sai cosa vuol dire essere cortesi? (Do you know what being polite means?)
2. Dimmi delle volte in cui tu sei cortese (Give me examples of when you are polite)
3. E (dimmi) delle volte in cui gli altri sono cortesi con te (And (give me) times when others are polite to you)
4. Come ti sei sentito quando gli altri sono stati cortesi con te? (How did you feel when others were polite to you?)
5. Ci si può dimenticare di essere cortesi? (Can one forget to be polite?)
6. Quando bisogna proprio essere cortesi? (When is it really necessary to be polite?)
7. Ci sono modi diversi di essere cortesi? (Are there different ways of being polite?)
8. Ci sono parole speciali per essere cortesi? (Are there special words for being polite?)
9. Come si sente una persona quando tu sei cortese con lei? (How does a person feel when you are polite to him?)
10. Se tu sei cortese con qualcuno e ancora questa persona non vuole fare quello che vuoi tu, cosa si può fare? (What can you do if you are polite to someone and this person still does not want to do what you want him to do?)
11. Come ti sei sentito quando qualcuno è stato scortese con te? (How did you feel when someone was impolite to you?)
12. Come puoi capire se sei stato scortese con qualcuno? (How can you know if you have been impolite to someone?)
13. Come si sarà sentita questa persona quando sei stato scortese con lei? (How did that person feel when you were impolite to him?)
14. Si può riparare alla propria scortesia e come si fa? (Can you repair your impoliteness and how?)

15. Cosa si può fare con la gente che è scortese? (What can you do with impolite people?)

16. Ci sono delle volte in cui si può essere scortesi? (Are there occasions when one can be impolite?)

17. Quando uno è scortese come si sente dentro, cosa prova? (When one is impolite, what does he feel?)

**Procedure**

The order of the questions was changed on occasion, when the child's response gave easy access to one of the planned questions. Prompts were also used if necessary in order to help children to clarify their thoughts (for example, "and then...?", "why?", etc.). When no reply was given to a question, the experimenter repeated the question once more, inserting it later in the interview.

The children were individually interviewed in a quiet room of their schools by a trained experimenter. Interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

**Results**

**Scoring system**

Categorization of responses was developed in three steps.

1. Preliminary categories. The full range of responses to each question given by 9 children, 3 of each age group, was extracted. Responses were categorized into 108 mutually exclusive categories.

2. Final categories. The preliminary categories were applied to about 30% of interviews (20 subjects). In the process, many categories were grouped or changed and a total of 67 mutually exclusive categories remained. They covered all responses produced by subjects to the 17 questions. For each question, all possible responses could fall into one of four mutually exclusive categories (16 questions x 4 categories = 64 categories). Only question n.14 had three mutually exclusive categories of response (3 categories plus 64 categories = 67 categories). Some questions had the same categories of response (for example, 1,2,3,8). In most cases each question had categories which were different from those of the other questions. Categories with examples drawn from the interviews are reported below.

3. Scoring. This categorization was applied to the 60 interviews by two independent judges. Overall mean inter-rater agreement was 92.8%. Inter-rater agreement for each question is reported below. Responses whose content could belong to more than
Content of children's knowledge about politeness

Analyses of responses to each question

As the data were scored on a nominal basis, $\chi^2$ tests were applied to subjects' responses to each question for the three age groups. For each question the following results are reported: a) inter-rater agreement; b) mutually exclusive categories of response; c) examples for each category of response; d) a Table with the nominal distribution of responses in the categories for each age level; e) $\chi^2$ statistics. In the end, a brief comment draws together the main results for each of the four areas of the interview.

Definition of politeness

This section reports children's responses to the five questions which bear upon a conceptual definition of politeness. Two questions require the child to define what politeness is (Do you know what to be polite means? Are there different ways of being polite?). Two questions ask children to give examples of polite behaviour (Give me examples of when you are polite; Give me times when others are polite to you). One question is related to polite language (Are there special words for being polite?).

Responses to the question: "Do you know what being polite means?" (Agreement, 98%) were categorized into the following categories:

No definition,
- e.g. "non lo so" (Don't know).

Being kind or good in general,
- e.g. "essere gentili, essere buoni" (being kind, being good), "vuol dire essere gentili con gli altri, volergli bene" (it means being kind to others and loving them);
Saying polite things or avoiding rude language;
e.g., "essere cortesi vuol dire che io a te non ti rispondo male, ti dico ciao", come stai? non ti senti bene? o ti senti bene?, hai voglia di giocare con me?" (being polite means that I don't answer back rudely, I say to you "Hallo, how are you? don't you feel well? or do you feel well? do you want to play with me?),

Acting pro-socially,
e.g. "essere gentili, aiutare una persona in difficoltà" (being kind, helping a person in trouble).

Data are reported in Table 6.1 In this as well as in all the following tables, the first number is the percentage of subjects whose response fell into that category, while the second number (in parenthesis) is the absolute number of subjects. They show an age-related significant difference for the definition of politeness ($\chi^2 = 13.49, 6$ df, $p<.05$).

**TABLE 6.1**

Do you know what to be polite means?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kind or good</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying polite things</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-social action</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In particular, 5-year-olds have more difficulty in defining politeness than older children. The definition of politeness is related to kindness in all age groups and, especially for 7- and 9-year-olds, it is related to pro-social behaviour.

Responses to the question "Give me examples of when you are polite" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 96%):

No examples,

Being kind or good in general,
e.g., "delle volte faccio il bravo e non faccio arrabbiare la mamma" (sometimes I am good, and I don't make mum angry)

Saying polite things or avoiding rude words,
e.g., "quando uno ti chiede una cosa non devi essere scortese e dire 'non ho tempo'" (when someone asks you for something you must not be impolite and say "I have no time")
Acting pro-socially
e.g., "quando aiuto i miei amici" (when I help my friends), "quando aiuto i miei genitori oppure aiuto delle persone in autobus, gli lascio il posto perché sono più vecchie di me e allora hanno meno forze per stare in piedi" (when I help my parents or someone in the bus, I give up my seat because they are older than me and so they are less able to stand for a long time)

The data reported in Table 6.2 show that the examples of children's own politeness are mostly pro-social actions at each age level. The $\chi^2$ did not reveal any significant difference for age.

**TABLE 6.2**
*Tell me examples of when you are polite*

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kind or good</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying polite things</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-social action</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>80 (16)</td>
<td>90 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to the question "**And (give me) times when others are polite to you**" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 90%):

No examples, "Don't know"

Being kind or good in general,
e.g., "quando certe volte le persone mi vedono con la faccia bella" (when sometimes people see me looking nice)

Saying polite things or avoiding rude language,
e.g., "quando per esempio uno dice:"per piacere, mi puoi fare questa cosa?"" (when, for example, someone says: "Can you do this for me, please?")

Acting pro-socially,
e.g., "quando magari mi faccio male, chiamano la maestra" (if I hurt myself, they call my teacher)

Data are reported in Table 6.3.
TABLE 6.3  
Tell me times when other people are polite to you

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>49 (9)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kind or good</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying polite things</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-social action</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>70 (14)</td>
<td>90 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistical analysis showed a significant age-related difference in offering examples of other people's politeness ($\chi^2= 16.25, 6$ df, p<0.025). In particular, 5-year-olds offered fewer examples than 7- or 9-year-olds. Again, the majority of examples are pro-social actions.

Responses to the question: "Are there different ways of being polite?"

(Agreement, 98%)

"Non lo so" (Don't know),
Being kind or good in general,
e.g., "essere ubbidienti, buoni e essere gentili con gli altri" (being obedient, good and kind to others),
Saying polite things or avoiding rude language,
e.g., "sono quelli là di dire a una persona "ciao, come stai? grazie"...e dopo si può dire "prego" (they (i.e. "ways") are those that say "hallo, how are you? thank you"...and after you can say "It's nothing")
Acting pro-socially.
e.g., "sì, aiutando le persone malate" (yes, by helping ill people), "sì, dare un conforto se per caso è successo qualcosa" (yes, by offering consolation if something upsetting happens), "sì, per esempio negli antichi tempi alzare la sedia a una signora" (yes, for example, in the old days by bringing up a chair for a lady).

The data reported in Table 6.4 show that most 5-year-olds cannot describe different ways of being polite, while about half the 7- and 9-year-olds can. This age-related difference, however, is not significant.
TABLE 6.4
Are there different ways of being polite?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>79 (15)</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kind or good</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying polite things</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-social action</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the question: "Are there special words to be polite?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 100%)

No definition,
  e.g. "Don't know";

Avoiding rude words;
  e.g., "Non dire parolacce" (not saying bad words)

Politeness formulae;
  e.g., "grazie" (thank you), "prego" (my pleasure), "scusi" (sorry)

Non-conventional, sympathetic speech acts.
  e.g., "come stai?" (how are you?), "Vuoi un biscotto?" (do you want a biscuit?), "vuoi che ti aiuti?" (can I help you?)

The data reported in Table 6.5 do not show age-related differences in the ability to identify "special words" to convey politeness. About half the children of all ages cannot identify such words. Nine-year-olds mention speech acts expressing sympathetic politeness more consistently than the other two groups.

TABLE 6.5
Are there special words for being polite?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>65 (13)</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding bad words</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness formulae</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathetic speech acts</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.5a reports the mean of mentioned "special words" over number of subjects for each age level. The "politeness formulae" category includes: "per piacere" (please), "grazie" (thank you), "prego" (my pleasure / you're welcome), "scusa" (sorry), "permesso" (do you mind...), "arrivederci" (see you later), and "va bene" (all right). The "sympathetic speech acts" category includes: "come sono andate le vacanze?" (how did you enjoy your holidays?), "vuoi che ti dia un biscotto?" (would you like a biscuit?), "ti voglio bene" (I love you), "sei un grande amico" (you're a great friend), "come stai?" (how are you?), "ti sei fatto male?" (did you hurt yourself?), "vuole che Faiuti?" (may I help you?), etc. Seven-year-olds mention more formulae than sympathetic speech acts, while 9-year-olds mention both kinds of linguistic formulations to the same extent.

**TABLE 6.5.a**
Means of conventional and non conventional polite speech acts reported by children of three age levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of polite speech act</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional (formulae)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-conventional (sympathetic)</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In conclusion, the definition of politeness is related to kindness for all age groups, and, especially for 7- and 9-year-olds, it is related to pro-social behaviour. The majority of examples of politeness are pro-social actions. In general, only a few children are aware of polite language, but most children represent politeness as a set of kind actions. Five-year-olds are hardly able to define politeness and are less able to offer examples of other people's politeness compared with 7- and 9-year-olds. About half the children of all ages cannot identify special words to convey politeness. Nine-year-olds mention sympathetic polite speech acts more consistently than the other two groups. These results show that the turning-point for the conceptual definition of politeness comes around the age of 7. Thus, these results support the hypothesis that knowledge of politeness develops at the Interaction level (Figure 2C), at the age of about 7.

**Conventions for politeness usage**

In this section children's answers to three questions (When is it necessary to be polite? Can one forget to be polite? Are there occasions on which one can be impolite?) are reported. The first question is broad. The second refers only to speaker's internal, psychological states while the third refers to all circumstances which may justify impoliteness. The aim of these questions was to investigate what kind of strictness was attributed by children to politeness rules and whether age-related differences could be
found in the representation of politeness as a set of social conventions. The three questions bear upon the "Need" or motivational aspect of Flavell's model on social cognition.

The responses to the question: "**When is it necessary to be polite?**" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 92%)

Don't know

To comply with rules  
e.g., "perché uno è cortese, sì, però quando bisogna... uno ci sta anche male quando bisogna per forza, perché uno è cortese sempre però se tu gli dici 'guarda che oggi devi essere cortese' allora lui ci sta male e non è cortese" (because one is polite, yes, but when it is needed...you feel bad when you're made to, because one is always polite, but if you say 'Look, you must be polite to-day', then you feel bad and are impolite), "basta essere gentili e rispettare le regole del mondo" (you simply have to be kind and respect the rules of the world)

To help someone  
e.g., "aiutando" (helping)

To share a good interaction, to reciprocate  
e.g., "per esempio, uno di giorno è di buon umore e ci sono dei bambini che richiedono delle cortesie e allora lui è cortese, ma ci sono dei giorni che non si è proprio di buon umore..." (for example, there are days in which you are in good mood and there are children who ask for favours and then you are polite, but there are other days when you are not exactly in a good mood...), "perché se lui mi invita a casa sua a mangiare qualche dolce per il suo compleanno, io lo devo pur invitare a casa mia e fargli mangiare dei dolci" (because, if he invites me to his home to his birthday-cake, I must invite him back to my home and give him cake)

The results are reported in Table 6.6.

**TABLE 6.6**

**When is it necessary to be polite?**

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To comply with norms</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To help someone in need</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a good interaction</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The \( \chi^2 \) did not show any age-related difference for this question. Half the children of all ages were not able to answer this question. It is noteworthy that about 20% of children of all ages mentioned the necessity of politeness as a means to create a good interaction.

Responses to the question: "\textbf{Can one forget to be polite?}\" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 77%)

- Don’t know
- Never
  - e.g., "no"
- For psychological reasons
  - e.g., "perché magari qualcuno gli ha fatto dei dispetti e un giorno quella persona...anche se gli ha chiesto scusa...e chissà, magari gli chiede qualcosa e di fargli un piacere, così non glielo fa perché si vendica" (because someone might have teased him and one day...even if he said he was sorry...and, who knows, he might ask him for something and to do him a favour and he refuses because he is taking revenge), "sì, se uno ti è antipatico" (yes, if you don't like someone)
- In quarrels, in play
  - e.g., "sì, una volta con dei miei amici ero un po’ arrabbiato perché ero cascato e mi ero sporcato di fango e allora dopo mi hanno chiesto una gomma, mi pare sì, e io non gliel’ho data perché ero arrabbiato" (yes, once I was angry to some friends of mine because I had fallen down and got dirty with mud and then later they asked me for an eraser, and I refused because I was angry with them)

The data are reported in Table 6.7.

\textbf{TABLE 6.7}

\textbf{Can one forget to be polite?}

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For psychological reasons</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quarrels, in play</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show a significant age-related difference on children’s opinions about forgetting to be polite \((\chi^2 = 23.66, 6 \text{ df, } p<.001)\). The youngest children either do not
know when politeness can be forgotten or mention psychological reasons, such as anger or distraction. Remarkably enough, 40% of 7-year-olds think that politeness can never be forgotten. As a group, 9-year-olds are well aware that politeness can indeed be forgotten, mostly in quarrels or during play.

Responses to the question: "Are there occasions when one can be impolite?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 96%)

Don't know
Never
e.g., "no", "credo di no" (I don't think so)
To reciprocate impoliteness
e.g., "se magari uno ti ha fatto un dispetto grande grande" (if someone annoys you very much)
In quarrels, in play
e.g., "vuoi dire in cortile quando si gioca?" (do you mean in the yard when we play?)

The data are reported in Table 6.8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>65 (13)</td>
<td>65 (13)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reciprocate impoliteness</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In quarrels, in play</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The statistical analysis did not show any age-related differences. The majority of 5- and 7-year-olds and 50% of 9-year-olds cannot identify occasions on which impoliteness is justified. A few think that impoliteness is never justified, others mention play, quarrels or an impolite partner as occasions which justify impoliteness.

In general, about half the children of each age level were not aware of occasions on which it is really necessary to be polite or, conversely, of ones on which impoliteness is allowed. Thus, children's knowledge about the strictness of politeness rules is not extensive. These results may help to understand why children are not very polite in natural situations. Possibly, the "need" for politeness is not fully understood by many children. There are age-related differences concerning the possibility of forgetting politeness. Only 9-year-olds have a realistic attitude to this issue and recognize that politeness can be overlooked during quarrels or for psychological reasons such as
distraction or anger. This is an example of successful Self-reflection. It is noteworthy that, as expected, it appears at the age of nine.

**Politeness in action**

This section reports responses to four questions: How can you know if you have been impolite? How can one repair impoliteness? What can you do if you are polite to someone and this person still does not want to do what you wish? What can you do with impolite people?. All the questions present various difficulties of social interaction related to politeness. The task was to represent ways in which the problem can be solved by means of verbal action. The first two questions bear upon the child's ability for Self-reflection, the second two questions the child's ability to monitor the interaction. It will be noted that both abilities are represented by the full version of Flavell's model for discourse (Figure 2D). It is expected that both abilities are more frequent among 9-year-olds.

Responses to the question: "**How can you know if you have been impolite?**" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 95%)

Don't know
From adults
  e.g., "Io dice la mamma" (mother says so)
From the other's behaviour
  e.g., "Dall'espressione che fa la faccia dell'altro" (from the expression on the other's face), "che quella persona non viene più da te" (that person does not come to see you any more)
From self-reflection
  e.g., "Se sono arrabbiato." (if I feel angry), "dal mio modo di parlare" (from my way of speaking)

The data are reported in Table 6.9.

**TABLE 6.9**

**How can you know if you have been impolite?**

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From adults</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From the other's behaviour</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From self-reflection</td>
<td>5 (3)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show a significant age-related difference in the ability to identify one's own impoliteness ($\chi^2 = 20.25, 6 \, \text{df}, \, p < .005$). All 9-year-olds think that they can understand if they have been impolite to someone. They indicate two sources of information, i.e., the other person's behaviour, and self-reflection about their internal emotional states, for example, angry feelings. When they are able to identify their impoliteness, 7-year-olds mostly rely on the other person's behaviour. More than half the 5-year-olds are at a loss to identify their own impoliteness. As expected, Self-reflection consistently appear at the age of 9.

Responses to the question: "How can you repair your impoliteness?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 90%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kinder</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking, apologizing</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>70 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate that there is a significant age-related difference in children's knowledge about how to repair impoliteness ($\chi^2 = 14.78, 4 \, \text{df}, \, p < .01$). All 9-year-olds report strategies to repair impoliteness, while 50% of 5-year-olds and 35% of 7-year-olds cannot do this. In addition, only 9-year-olds consistently report that there are linguistic means of repairing impoliteness (apologies) and that a good strategy is to talk about the problem.

Responses to the question: "What can you do if you are polite to someone and this person still doesn't want to do what you want him to do?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 90%)
I don't know
Abandoning the interaction, asking for adults' help
  e.g., "dipende, perché se io glielo chiedo tante volte e lui non lo fa, allora non
  sono più cortese con lui" (it depends, because if I ask him many times and he
  refuses, then I stop being polite to him), "andare a dire alla maestra" (go and
tell the teacher)
Insisting, increasing politeness
  e.g., "lasciarlo stare o insistere" - "quale funziona di più?" - "insistere" (leave
him alone or insist - which one works better? - insisting), "facendogli capire
che questa persona la voglio aiutare per farla calmare e poi facendogli vedere
che sono suo amico" (letting him know that I want to help him to calm down
and showing him that I am a friend)
Talking about the problem
  e.g., "potrei fargli capire che lui deve essere gentile con me non solo io con
lui" (I could make him understand that he must be polite to me too, not only I
to him)
The data are reported in Table 6.11.

**TABLE 6.11**
What can you do if you are polite to someone and this person still doesn't
want to do what you want him to do?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoning, asking for help</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insisting</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the problem</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results did not show any age-related differences. About half the children of
all ages reported strategies to persuade people when politeness fails, insisting or talking
about the problem. The latter strategy is more frequent in 9-year-olds. Half the children in
all age groups cannot indicate effective, personal strategies.

Responses to the question: "**What can you do with impolite people?**" were
categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 93%)

Don't know
Abandoning, asking for adults' help
  e.g., "non si può far niente" (you can't do anything), "cerchi di non stargli
tanto addosso" (try not to be around him too much)
Being more polite
e.g., "Potresti continuare a fargli favori facendogli capire che li devono fare anche loro" (you could go on doing them favours, making them to understand that they should do the same)

Talking about the problem
e.g., "aiutarla ad essere cortese, insegnandogli i modi giusti" (helping them to be polite by teaching them the right manners)

The data are reported in Table 6.12

**TABLE 6.12**

*What can you do with impolite people?*

Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>60 (12)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abandoning the interaction</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being more polite</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about the problem</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
<td>65 (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results indicate a trend towards an age effect in the reported ability to deal with impolite people: $\chi^2 = 12.45$, 6 df, near $p=0.05$ (12.59). If the first two categories are grouped (failure: "Don't know", "Abandoning the interaction") and confronted with the second two (attempts: "Being more polite", "Talking about the problem") the statistics reach significance: $\chi^2 = 8.17$, 2 df, $p<0.025$. The interactive strategy "Talking about the problem" seems to be typical of 9-year-olds. More than 50% of both 5- and 7-year-olds do not report effective strategies to deal with impolite people. These results confirm that the knowledge needed to monitor a difficult interaction by means of language is achieved by the age of nine.

In general, age-related differences consistently appear when children are asked to think of politeness and impoliteness within social interactions. Significant age-related differences were found in both questions requiring some Self-reflection. In particular, 9-year-olds think that they can understand if they had been impolite from the other person's behaviour or from their own emotional state. Seven-year-olds mostly rely on the other person's behaviour, while more than half the 5-year-olds have no means of understanding if they have been impolite. About half of the 5- and 7-year-olds have difficulties in repairing their impoliteness, while 9-year-olds consistently report that there are linguistic means of doing so. These results offer more evidence on the developmental model discussed so far. In particular, they indicate that Self-reflection (and consequent
verbal action) is frequently represented in children's minds as a good strategy only by the age of 9.

Most 7-year-olds cannot report strategies to deal with impolite people, while 9-year-olds report that the best way of dealing with impolite people is talking about the problem. No age differences were found in the task of convincing people when politeness fails, which was difficult for about half the subjects in all three age groups. The differences in the two questions about monitoring the interaction may be due to different degrees of difficulty of the two social situations presented. While the question "What can you do with impolite people?" focuses the child's attention on the Other person's behaviour, the question "What can you do if you are polite to someone and this person still does not want to do what you want him to do?" focuses the attention on both Speaker and Other. Thus, the task presented by the first question can be represented in Figure 2D as the Self trying an act of social understanding which penetrates into the area in which Speaker and Other are both acting and thinking. The task presented by the second question can be represented in Figure 2D as the Self both thinking about himself and trying an act of social understanding which penetrates the area in which Speaker and Other are both acting and thinking. Also, it is not surprising that children of all ages had some difficulty with a task which involves a sort of "second level" recursive thinking: "I must think of me (representation) thinking of me thinking of you thinking of me".

Politeness and feelings

In this final section, children's responses to five questions are reported. All the questions are related to people's feelings at politeness and impoliteness. Children's understanding of the perlocutionary effects of politeness upon both other people's feelings and the Self are investigated. The questions are: "How did you feel when others were polite to you?", "How did you feel when others were impolite to you?", "How does a person feel when you are polite to him?", "How does a person feel when you are impolite to him?". Children's responses to all the questions were categorized into four mutually exclusive categories: Don't know; simple labelling of emotional state of the target person; elaborated labelling of the emotional state of the target person; reference to both participants and focus upon the relationship between speaker and addressee. There was a final question about the feelings of impolite people: "When one is impolite, what does he feel inside?". Responses to this question were categorized differently from responses to the previous questions.

Responses to the question: "How did you feel when others were polite to you?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 86%)

Don't know
Simple labelling
e.g., "normale" (ordinary), "mi sento felice" (I feel happy)

Elaborated labelling

e.g., "dentro di me provo fantasia" (I feel fantasy inside)

Focus upon the relationship

e.g., "Sento un senso di amicizia, sento che mi vogliono bene" (I have a feeling of friendship, I feel that they love me), "sento che vogliono stare con me" (I feel they want to be with me)

The data are reported in Table 6.13.

**TABLE 6.13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How did you feel when others were polite to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple labelling</td>
<td>60 (12)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated labelling</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus upon the relationship</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>60 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show a significant age-related difference in reporting one's own feelings in response to politeness from other people (χ²= 19.20, 6 df, p<.005). Most children of all ages can identify their own feelings in this context. However, while 5- and 7-year-olds simply label their feelings, the majority of 9-year-olds focus their report on the whole interaction, also involving consideration of their partner's feelings.

Responses to the question: "**How did you feel when someone was impolite to you?**" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 93%)

Don't know

Simple labelling

e.g., "male" (bad)

Elaborated labelling

e.g., "Mi sono sentito buttato là come uno straccio" (I felt as if I had been thrown down in a corner like a rag)

Focus upon the relationship

e.g., "mi sono sentita anch'io un po' colpevole, perché magari non gli ho fatto un favore" (I felt a bit guilty, because I might have not done him a favour)

The data are reported in Table 6.14.
TABLE 6.14
How did you feel when others were impolite to you?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple labelling</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>75 (15)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated labelling</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus upon the relationship</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results show a significant age-related difference in the ability to report one's own feelings at impoliteness from other people (χ² = 30.66, 6 df, p<.001). About half the 5-year-old subjects cannot identify their feelings at impoliteness from others, while 75% of 7-year-olds label them simply. Nine-year-olds are better at reporting such feelings than the other two age groups. Again, 9-year-olds tend to focus on the relationship between the two partners more than younger children.

Responses to the question: "How does a person feel when you are polite to him?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 88%)

Don't know
Simple labelling
   e.g., "bene" (fine)
Elaborated labelling
   e.g., "che si senta bene, che sia più tranquilla, che si calmi un pochino" (that he feels fine, that he is more relaxed, that he calms down a little)
Focus upon the relationship
   e.g., "Si sente felice e spera che io sia ancora cortese con lei" (he feels happy and hopes I will be polite to him again), "si sente che anche lei è gentile con me" (he feels that he is being kind to me too)

The data are reported in Table 6.15.
TABLE 6.15
How does a person feel when you are polite to him?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple labelling</td>
<td>55 (11)</td>
<td>65 (13)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated labelling</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus upon the relationship</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results did not show any age-related significant differences in the description of the other person's feelings at politeness from the subject. Most children in all age groups can identify the feelings of the recipient of their politeness, at least at the simplest level. Although the difference is not significant, 9-year-olds mention the relationship between the two partners more often than 5- and 7-year-old children.

Responses to the question: "How did this person feel when you were impolite to him?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 96%)

Don't know
Simple labelling
e.g., "male" (bad)
Elaborated labelling
e.g., "un po' arrabbiata, ma poi si è calmata" (a bit angry, but then he calmed down)
Focus upon the relationship
e.g., "un po' delusa dal mio comportamento" (a bit disappointed by my behaviour)

The data are reported in Table 6.16.

TABLE 6.16
How did this person feel when you were impolite to him?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>30 (6)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple labelling</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
<td>60 (12)</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaborated labelling</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus upon the relationship</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>5 (1)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
<td>100 (20)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results show no significant age-related differences in the description of the other person's feelings at impoliteness from the subject. Half the youngest subjects were not able to respond to this question. The proportion of children who were able to identify the addressee's unpleasant feelings at impoliteness from them increases with age, although this difference is not significant.

Responses to the question: "When one is impolite, what does he feel?" were categorized into the following categories (Agreement, 100%)

Don't know

Aggressive feelings
  e.g., "pensa di non essere gentile perché è arrabbiato e non vuole più essere con gli altri" (he feels that he has been impolite because he's angry and does not want to stay with the others any more), "pensa a un drago cattivo" (he thinks of an evil dragon)

Sense of guilt
  e.g., "momenti brutti! pensa a cosa gli succederà dopo!" (bad moments! he thinks of what is going to happen afterwards!)

Other psychological interpretations
  e.g., "pensa ad altre cose" (He thinks about other things = he is not paying attention)

The data are reported in Table 6.17.

**TABLE 6.17**
When one is impolite, what does he feel?
Percentages of response at three age levels (number of subjects per cell in parenthesis)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>5-year-olds</th>
<th>7-year-olds</th>
<th>9-year-olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>50 (10)</td>
<td>35 (7)</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive feelings</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>40 (8)</td>
<td>45 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of guilt</td>
<td>20 (4)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
<td>10 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other interpretations</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>15 (3)</td>
<td>25 (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (20)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (20)</strong></td>
<td><strong>100 (20)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results did not show any age-related significant differences in the identification of the feelings of impolite people. Aggressive feelings are more frequently reported by 7- and 9-year-olds, but the difference from younger children is not statistically significant.

In general, significant age differences were found in the identification of the child's own feelings over both politeness and impoliteness from others. Although most children of all ages can identify their own feelings about politeness, only 9-year-olds focus their report on the whole interaction, also involving the partner's feelings. Half of
the 5-year-olds cannot identify their feelings at impoliteness. Most 7-year-olds can label their feelings at impoliteness from others only simply, while 9-year-olds can both label their feelings in complex ways and focus upon the relationship. Most children in all age groups can identify the feelings of the recipient of both their politeness and impoliteness, at least at the simplest level, although differences between ages are not significant. No age difference emerges in the identification of the feelings of impolite people.

In summary, age-related differences can be found in the identification of the perlocutionary effects of politeness upon the Self, but such differences cannot be found in the identification of the perlocutionary effects of politeness upon the Other. To clarify this point better, it may be of interest to compare the proportions of each category of response in the four social context presented by the first four questions. The percentages in Tables 6.13, 6.14, 6.15, and 6.16 were thus reorganized according to type of context and type of response category and presented in four figures. The four contexts are indicated in the figures as follows:

SP+: subject's feelings when other is polite to him
SP-: subject's feelings when other is impolite to him
OP+: other person's feelings when subject is polite to him
OP-: other person's feelings when subject is impolite to him

The samples presented in the figures are not independent, so a few qualitative observations about the distributions are proposed.

Figure 6.1 shows that the response "Don't know" predominates among 5-year-olds in all contexts. In addition, 5-year-olds seem to be more at a loss in understanding
the perlocutionary effects of impoliteness than the perlocutionary effects of politeness. The amount of this type of response is similar in the two subsequent age levels. Children of all age groups find that the most difficult task is to understand (or report) the effects of their own impoliteness upon their partner's feelings.

Figure 6.2 shows that the ability to find a simple label for the perlocutionary effects of politeness predominates in 7-year-olds, closely followed by 5-year-olds. This strategy is less adopted for the identification of subject's feelings when others are polite to him than for the remaining contexts. Among 9-year-olds, simple labels show linear growth across the four contexts. Are the above contexts increasingly difficult to represent?
Figure 6.3 presents the data for elaborated labelling. It is apparent that this strategy predominates among 9-year-olds. No 5-year-old child used elaborate labels to represent the perlocutionary effects of politeness. Among the oldest children, elaborate labels are more frequently adopted when impoliteness is concerned.

Figure 6.4 presents the data for focus upon the relationship. This strategy is also prominent among 9-year-olds. It is interesting to note that the proportion of this strategy is higher among 9-year-olds than among 5- and 7-year-olds. The high proportion of focus upon the relationship among 9-year-olds may be attributed to their greater ability to reflect on their own social interactions. This ability appears to be enhanced by their greater understanding of the components of politeness, which may be better described through a more abstract representation of the relationships between the components of politeness. In order to overcome the limits imposed by the apparent limitations of research.
Figure 6.4 shows that the ability to speak about both participants in the interaction when describing the perlocutionary effects of politeness predominates among 9-year-olds. In addition, the description of subject's feelings when others are polite to him is the social context which more frequently elicits this behaviour in all age groups. The description of the other person's feelings when the subject is polite to him is the second context which induces this behaviour. The description of the other person's feelings when the subject is impolite to him is the context in which focus on the relationship is least frequent.

Drawing all the above observations together, it may be said that the four contexts present varying degrees of difficulties for the child's mind. The easiest task seems to be representation of the subject's feelings when others are polite to him and the most difficult task seems to be representation of the other person's feelings when the subject is impolite to him. This difficulty may be related to the difficulties shown by children in identifying when one can be impolite (see results of Table 6.8). Children of all age groups find representation of the other person's feelings when the subject is polite to him quite easy. The task of understanding the subject's feelings when others are impolite to him is difficult, especially for 5-year-olds. To summarize, the perlocutionary effects of politeness appear to be more easily understood by children than the perlocutionary effects of impoliteness. The subject's own feelings seem to be more richly represented than the other person's feelings.

This study was undertaken in order to test two hypotheses generated by analysis of Flavell's model on communication. The first predicted that children show Self-reflection at the Discourse level (Figure 2D), that is - based upon the results of Studies 4 and 5 - around the age of 8/9 years. The second predicted that children show some appreciable knowledge about politeness at the Interaction level (Figure 2C), that is - based upon the results of Studies 1 and 3 - around the age of 7 years. As regards the first hypothesis, the analysis of children's responses presented so far has shown that Self-reflection is consistently present only among 9-year-olds - thus confirming our developmental hypothesis (see for example Table 6.9). The second hypothesis also appears to be confirmed by the present data (see for example Table 6.3). So far, the components of children's representation about politeness have been separately analysed, and the analyses have shown several age related differences. However, they did not draw together all the components of children's representation of politeness. Thus, it remains to be better assessed whether the age of 7 is indeed the crucial age for cognitive understanding of politeness phenomena. In addition, a better description of the components of knowledge about politeness at each age level may be useful for further research. In order to overcome the limits presented by the separate analysis of children's
responses to each question, a further analysis was carried out. It will be described in the following pages.

The factorial structure of children's representation of politeness

A correspondence analysis was applied to 67 variables x the three age groups (Greenacre, 1984). It will be remembered that we had 17 questions, each question having four mutual exclusive categories of response (3 categories only in one case). This gives a total of 67 categories: \((16 \times 4) + (1 \times 3) = 67\). Each response could fall only in one category. For example, Jane's response to "Do you know what politeness means" was "Don't know". This response falls into category 1 for question 1. John's response to the same question was "Being kind". This response falls into category 2. It was computed how many 5-year-olds, 7-year-olds and 9-year-olds fell into each category. This gives three figures for each category. Thus, the categorization of responses has 3 columns (age groups) and 4 rows (categories) in 16 cases, and 3 rows in 1 case. All this has been presented in detail in the \(\chi^2\) analyses, question by question.

The objective of further analysis is to verify whether the 3 columns of numbers (age) would group together in one factor or would separately group in different factors - the latter case providing evidence for an overall age effect on children's representation of politeness. The second objective of the analysis is to identify factors grouping categories of response which, in turn, may correspond to the expected age factors. The type of correspondence analysis selected for our purposes can work on the same nominal basis adopted for the question-by-question analyses. In addition, it can both factor analyse the 67 categories on the basis of the number of subjects falling into them and relate such factors to a second variable, in this case age of subjects. Thus, for each of the 67 categories, three numbers were fed into the program: 1) number of 5-year-olds falling into that category, 2) number of 7-year-olds falling into that category, 3) number of 9-year-olds falling into that category. It was expected that a consistent amount of information about politeness phenomena should correspond to the age level of 7.

The results show that the best solution is the one-coordinate solution which accounts for 74.01% of inertia (Chi-square = 167.57, 69 df, \(p = 0.00001\)). The two-coordinate solution which accounts for 25.99% of inertia (\(\chi^2 = 55.64, 67 \text{ df, } p = .84\)) was not accepted.
Figure 6.5
Correspondence Analysis: Plot of the column variates (Age)
Figure 6.6
Correspondence Analysis: Plot of the row variates (Categories of response)
The plot of the column variates (Age) shown in Figure 6.5 indicates that each of
the three age groups occupies a different area of the space along a one dimensional,
significant solution. This indicates that Age is the significant factor for this analysis. A
second dimension slightly distinguishes the three age groups for a factor other than age,
but it does not reach significance.

The plot of the row variates (categories of response) shown in Figure 6.6 indicates
that the space can be divided into the three one-dimensional areas differentiated by Age
along a left-right direction: left, central, right. This result alone is very important because
it indicates that the components of children's knowledge of politeness do vary according
to age.

Description of the components of children's knowledge about politeness in each
age group will clarify the point better. The categories corresponding to the numbers of the
plot in Figure 6.6 are reported below.

**Left area: Ignorance**

The Left area is composed of 19 items, mostly referring to subject's ignorance of
politeness phenomena:

- R26, Politeness must never be forgotten. (very isolated item)
- R5, I don't know of any examples of my politeness.
- R45, I don't know how to treat impolite people.
- R50, Simple labelling of subject's feelings at politeness from others.
- R65, I don't know the feelings of impolite people.
- R13, I don't know different ways of being polite.
- R61, I don't know how a person feels when I am impolite to him.
- R67, Impolite people feel guilty.
- R49, I don't know how I feel at politeness from others.
- R25, I don't know if politeness can be forgotten.
- R53, I don't know how I felt at impoliteness from others.
- R6, Examples of subject's politeness are to be kind or good in general.
- R1, I don't know what politeness is.
- R41, I don't know how to repair impoliteness.
- R33, I don't know how I can understand if I have been impolite.
- R34, I can understand if I have been impolite because mum says it.
- R11, Examples of others' politeness are to say polite things.
- R47, Be more polite in dealing with impolite people.
- R10, Examples of others' politeness are to be kind or good in general.
It can easily be seen that the components of children's knowledge of politeness are very few, at the age of 5 years. At this age level, children know that politeness belongs to the general effort "to be good" and that it can be of use in dealing with impolite people. They are aware of the existence of linguistic politeness only if it is uttered by other people. They also have some knowledge of the perlocutionary effects of politeness upon people's feelings. Yet, such understandings may be likened to brief spots of lights in the darkness as most categories grouped together for this age group are the "Don't know" type of response.

Central Area: "The basics of politeness"

The central area is composed of 25 items referring to basic knowledge of politeness usage.

R19, Special words for being polite are politeness formulae.
R37, I don't know how to persuade people when politeness fails.
R54, Simple labelling of subject's feelings at impoliteness from others.
R46, No personal means for treating impolite people (abandoning the interaction, asking for adults' help).
R58, Simple labelling of addressee's feelings at politeness from the subject.
R24, Politeness is needed to share a good interaction.
R62, Simple labelling of addressee's feelings at impoliteness from the subject.
R29, I don't know if impoliteness is justified at times.
R39, When politeness fails, insist and be more polite.
R22, Politeness is needed to comply with adults or social rules.
R4, Politeness is acting pro-socially.
R35, One's own impoliteness can be understood from the other's behaviour.
R66, Impolite people feel aggressive.
R16, Different ways of being polite are pro-social actions.
R12, Examples of others' politeness are pro-social actions.
R8, Examples of subject's politeness are pro-social actions.
R31, Impoliteness is justified to reciprocate impoliteness.
R38, No personal means for persuading people when politeness fails.
R68, Psychological interpretations for impolite people's behaviour.
R44, To repair impoliteness, talk about it (or say sorry).
R28, Politeness can be forgotten for psychological reasons (anger, distraction).
R23, Politeness is needed to help someone in trouble.
R32, Impoliteness is justified during play or in quarrels.
R18, Special words for being polite mean avoiding bad words.
The contents of the above factor are very different from those of the previously described one. At the age of 7, children do possess information about the most important features of politeness. They can identify all the perlocutionary effects of both politeness and impoliteness upon people's feelings, although at the simplest level. Politeness is defined as a way of acting procially and sharing a good interaction. Children are aware of the existence of politeness formulae and of impolite ("bad") words. In addition, they have some knowledge about how politeness can be used and how it works "in action", for example, in repairs, communicative failures, etc.. Comparison between the contents of the first and second factors shows that substantial knowledge about politeness is achieved by the age of 7 - thus confirming our developmental hypothesis. Yet the contents of 7-year-olds' knowledge about politeness do not include Self-reflection and still include a few "Don't know" type of response.

**Right Area: "Politeness and cooperative discourse"**

The right area is composed of 15 items, mostly referring to the feelings of both participants in a cooperative discourse.

- 52, Subject's feelings at politeness involve consideration of the other.
- R43, To repair impoliteness, be kinder.
- R27, Politeness can be forgotten during play or quarrels.
- R20, Special words for being polite are sympathetic speech acts.
- R36, One's impoliteness can be understood from one's own feelings.
- R40, To persuade people when politeness fails, talk about the problem.
- R64, Addressee's feelings at impoliteness from subject involve the consideration of both persons.
- R60, Addressee's feelings at politeness from subject involve the consideration of both persons.
- R48, To deal with impolite people, talk about the problem.
- R63, Elaborated labelling of addressee's feelings at impoliteness from subject.
- R59, Elaborated labelling of addressee's feelings at politeness from subject.
- R56, Subject's feelings at impoliteness from the other involves consideration of both participants.
- R55, Elaborated labelling of subject's feelings at impoliteness from the other.
- R14, Different ways of being polite are being kind or good
- R3, Being polite means saying polite things.

The contents of the factor which corresponds to the 9-year-olds show further developments in children's understanding of politeness. The focus here seems to be upon people's feelings and on the fact that people's feelings are not independent. Politeness and its absence (impoliteness) are related to the emotional states of both participants. This is an important achievement for the social understanding of communication. Only 9-year-olds seem able to do this. Only among 9-year-olds can three important contents be found:
Self-reflection; confidence that "talking about the problem" is a good strategy in order to deal with difficulties in communication; and awareness of the existence of sympathetic politeness. Thus, the third factor is vastly different from the two others. The results of the correspondence analysis show that, although basic knowledge about politeness is achieved at the age of 7, understanding of politeness as a socially-oriented, sympathetic style of cooperative Discourse is achieved at the age of 9.

General Discussion

While the first set of studies of Chapter 4 aimed at describing children's overt polite behaviour, the second set aimed at describing the covert cognition which monitors such behaviour. It will be remembered that our developmental model of polite communication represented overt behaviour as solid arrows and covert cognition as dashed arrows. The latter were characterized by the fact that they "entered" the three main elements of the social situation represented in the model: the other person, social circumstances, and the Self. This graphic representation symbolized the fact that cognition about politeness, and by and large about communication, is made up of inferences about: a) the other person's state of mind (as signalled by his or her behaviour), b) the social conventions most suitable for the situation (as signalled by situational cues), and c) one own's state of mind and the effects of one own behaviour (Self-reflection). The results of Study 1 showed that, from the age of 6, children can take into account the meaning of the other person's behaviour and can modify their own verbal behaviour accordingly, if not politely. The results of Study 3 showed that, at the age of 7 years, children try to modify the other person's reactions to their first requests by means of more politeness in subsequent requests. It may be concluded that around the age of 6 or 7 children can both infer their hearers' state of mind and that their hearers will be pleased - and thus mollified - by some politeness. It remains to be demonstrated when and how children become able to make inferences about politeness in relation to either the social circumstances or the Self or both. The studies reported in Chapter 5 aimed at clarifying such points better.

Study 4 was designed to test children's ability in making inferences about politeness in various social circumstances. Children of 5-, 7- and 9 years were presented with a social situation in which a request uttered either by an adult or by a child could be addressed either to an adult or to a child. The request was either polite or impolite. The subjects' task was to identify the addressee taking into account both the social circumstances (status of both speaker and potential addressees) and the level of politeness. The results showed that the ability to make inferences about status (P) and
politeness emerges around the age of 7, but is fully developed only at the age of 9. Study 5 replicated the same experiment with British children and obtained a similar pattern of results. The developmental literature reported in Chapter 2 assumed that children's knowledge of the social circumstances which require politeness is identical to the adult notion of politeness, illustrated by Brown and Levinson's theory of universals for politeness usage. Thus, in the developmental literature children's knowledge of politeness was investigated according to status (P), familiarity (D) and cost of the face threatening act (R). Studies 4 and 5 respected this tradition - in one sense. However, nobody has ever asked children what they think about politeness. This question is important because children may have their own notions about what politeness is for and about what social circumstances require it. In addition, only interviews about children's representation of politeness can give information on how children develop and manage the Self-reflection involved in polite communication. Thus, a final study was designed to explore 5-, 7-, and 9-year-olds' understanding of politeness. The results of Study 6 are several and offer a complex picture of children's knowledge of politeness.

First, it was observed that politeness is understood as being close to kindness ("gentilezza") in all age groups. Especially for 7- and 9-year-olds, politeness is related to pro-social behaviour. Compared with 7- and 9-year-olds, 5-year-olds can hardly define politeness and are less able to offer examples of other people's politeness. As for linguistic politeness, about 50% of the children of all ages cannot identify special words to convey politeness. They mention politeness formulae such as "please", "thank you", "sorry", "all right", etc. They also mention examples of positive politeness such as "how did you enjoy your holidays?", "would you like a biscuit?", "I love you", "you are a great friend", "how are you?", "Have you hurt yourself?", "may I help you?", etc. In general, 7-year-olds tend to mention more formulae, while 9-year-olds mention examples of both conventional and positive politeness. These results show that, from the age of 7, politeness is viewed as a form of pro-social behaviour. In addition, examples of both conventional and sympathetic politeness can be reported by children.

Conversely, children's knowledge about the strictness of politeness rules is not great. This result may help us to understand why, in natural situations, children are not very polite. Possibly, the "need" for politeness is not fully understood by many of them.

Significant age-related differences were found in the responses to most questions which required Self-reflection in answering. In particular, only 9-year-olds know that they can "forget" politeness, for example during quarrels, because of lack of attention, or in anger. While 9-year-olds think that they understand when they have been impolite, either from the other person's behaviour or from their own emotional state, 7-year-olds mostly rely on the other person's behaviour. Sixty per cent of 5-year-olds cannot report personal means to understand if they have been impolite. About half of the 5- and 7-year-
olds have difficulty in repairing their impoliteness, while the majority of 9-year-olds report that they can repair impoliteness by further words ("talking about it", "saying 'I'm sorry'"). In addition, most 7-year-olds cannot report strategies to deal with impolite people, while 9-year-olds state that, in dealing with impolite people, the best way is to talk about the problem. These results indicate that Self-reflection can be found in children's knowledge of politeness phenomena by the age of 9.

The majority of children in all age groups can identify the recipient's feelings of both their politeness and impoliteness at the simplest level. In contrast, significant age differences were found in the complexity of the description of the effects of politeness and impoliteness upon children's own feelings. The most important age difference is that only 9-year-olds link their reports of their own emotional state to that of the other person. This phenomenon is apparent for both politeness and impoliteness from others. Age-related differences can be found in the description of the perlocutionary effects of politeness/impoliteness upon the Self, but cannot be found in that of the perlocutionary effects of politeness/impoliteness upon the other. Most children of all ages can identify their own feelings when others are polite to them, but half the 5-year-olds cannot identify their feelings at impoliteness from other people. It may be added that the easiest task is representation of the subjects' feelings when others are polite to them and the most difficult task is representation of other persons' feelings when the subject is impolite to them. In summary, the perlocutionary effects of politeness appear to be more easily understood by children than these of impoliteness. The subject's own feelings seem to be more richly represented than these of the other person. Only 9-year-olds can take into account the feelings of both participants in the social interaction.

From the above results, it may be concluded that the common ground for all age levels is that politeness is a form of kind, pro-social behaviour and has a positive effect on people's feelings. However, many elements of children's knowledge of politeness differ from age to age. To draw such differences together, the factorial structure of children's representation of politeness was examined by correspondence analysis. Results showed that the content and structure of children's knowledge of politeness does vary in relation to age.

The content of the cluster of responses associated with 5-year-olds shows that children at this age know very little about politeness - the majority of the categories grouped together for this age group being the "Don't know" type of response. For 5-year-olds politeness belongs to the general effort "of being good" and has a positive effect on other people's feelings.

By contrast, the content of the cluster of responses corresponding to the 7-year-olds shows that at this age level children do possess information about the most important features of politeness. They can identify all the perlocutionary effects of both politeness
and impoliteness upon people's feelings, although at the simplest level. Politeness is defined as a way of acting proocially and sharing a good interaction. They are aware of the existence of politeness formulae and of impolite ("bad") words. In addition, they have some knowledge about how politeness can be used and how it works "in action", for example in repairs, communicative failures, etc..

Nine-year-olds' responses show further developments in children's understanding of politeness. Interestingly enough, most responses are concerned with people's feelings. Politeness and its absence (impoliteness) are related to the emotional states of both participants. Self-reflective responses are mixed with attention to the effects of politeness on people's feelings. In addition, awareness of linguistic politeness ("being polite means saying polite things") and of sympathetic speech acts are present in the cluster of responses for 9-year-olds.

In brief, analysis of children's representation of politeness shows that substantial knowledge about politeness is achieved only at the age of 7 years. However, consideration about the effects of politeness and impoliteness on people's feelings, self-reflection, and awareness of sympathetic linguistic politeness is achieved only at the age of 9. These results offer further, and possibly final, support to the developmental analysis of politeness discussed in the first part of the present work..
CHAPTER 6

Final remarks

This final chapter is devoted to a general discussion of the results of the six studies on the development of politeness, as presented in the previous chapters. Before addressing the issue, however, it may be useful to summarize the line of thinking which led to the formulation of the main hypotheses of this work.

Chapter 1 aimed at "setting the scene" for the further work. In it, the most important features of politeness phenomena were discussed. Special attention was devoted to the linguistic theories about politeness for two reasons. The first is that the literature on the development of politeness has been influenced by linguists' work. The second is that linguists had the merit of giving a detailed description of what polite behaviour is, thus facilitating a psychological analysis of politeness. In the opening chapter, it was shown that, in speech act theory, politeness belongs to the higher linguistic functions as it appears in dialogical, socially-oriented Discourse. It was also stressed that politeness can be used to achieve two different social aims. On one hand, politeness can be used to convey respect for the hearer's freedom of action (negative politeness). On the other hand, it can make people feel good by wishing for them what they want for themselves (positive politeness). Various verbal strategies are adopted to pursue such aims - negative politeness being more conventionally expressed than positive politeness. Chapter 1 closed with an analysis of the mental operations needed for polite discourse. This analysis showed that, in any psychological inquiry on politeness, much attention should be devoted to the speaker's cognitive efforts aimed at understanding the ongoing social interaction - including his partner's state of mind.

Chapter 2 reviewed the available empirical evidence on the development of politeness. It was observed that most studies adopted a linguistic point of view, mostly focussing on children's ability to be conventionally polite (negative politeness). The empirical evidence which has been published so far shows that by the age of 5 or 6 years children possess the basic linguistic repertoire for politeness and can use it suitably in role-playing conditions. It was also shown that learning or linguistic disabilities do not seriously impair linguistic politeness, which can be found at the simplest level even in disabled children's speech acts. A review of the literature showed that there are several unexplored areas. In particular, little attention has been devoted either to children's spontaneous use of politeness in everyday social intercourse or to the development of positive, sympathetic politeness.
Chapter 3 aimed at proposing a general framework for the study of the development of politeness. The analysis of the mental operations needed for polite discourse - proposed in Chapter 1 - stressed the need to analyze the cognitive entities involved in polite social interaction. To that aim, Flavell's model of social cognition (Flavell, 1985) was taken into account. A theoretical analysis of that model applied to polite discourse showed that politeness in spontaneous intercourse can be described by the speaker's recursive thinking involving both inferences about the other person's mental state and self-reflection. On this theoretical basis, a set of hypotheses for the development of politeness was proposed. In particular, it was suggested that the development of politeness consists of the progressive integration of the various components of Flavell's model. This development can be described by three main levels. At the first level, children do not attempt to "read" their hearers' minds and carry out speech acts straightforwardly. This mental condition manifests itself by the absence of politeness in spontaneous speech. Children may possess the linguistic repertoire for conventional politeness, but do not use it in everyday circumstances. This repertoire can be elicited by role-playing conditions, but it is not spontaneously activated by children. At the second level, children are able to make some inferences about their hearer's mental states. To do so, they must also have some knowledge about the social conventions for communication. This hypothetical mental functioning manifests itself in the spontaneous use of negative, conventional politeness. At this level, children have some understanding of politeness phenomena. At the third level, children will be able to carry out the whole set of recursive thoughts needed for understanding the social constraints of communication and for monitoring it. Only at this stage, can children use all the potentials of politeness, both negative and positive.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the empirical evidence which has been collected to test the developmental hypothesis presented in Chapter 3. The three studies reported in Chapter 4 described children's behaviour in circumstances suitable for eliciting linguistic politeness, while the three studies of Chapter 5 described children's reasoning about politeness. Thus, the empirical evidence of Chapter 4 bears more upon children's overt polite behaviour, while that of Chapter 5 bears more upon children's covert mental cognition about politeness.

The developmental model

To conclude the present work, it may be useful to summarize how the results of the six studies fit the developmental model presented in Chapter 3.
It will be remembered that the first step in the development of social communication was described by a figure in which only the Appeal function was present. It was then hypothesized that, at the first level of the development of politeness, children would have a linguistic repertoire for politeness but would not be able to be suitably polite in everyday circumstances. In other words, it was expected that children would not be able or would not feel the need to make inferences about the social situation. Thus, the graph reported in Figure 2B shows that the subject simply "acts" upon the other person.

![Figure 2B](image)

Figure 2B
Appeal: Linguistic repertoire

There are several sources of evidence in the previously presented results on children's behaviour supporting the notion that at the age of 5 children do not use politeness in everyday circumstances, while they possess at least the rudiments for a polite linguistic repertoire. For example, in Studies 1 and 3, five-year-olds insist and are still impolite after the adult's refusal to comply but, in role-playing conditions (Study 2), utter polite request 50% of the time - thus showing that possession of a polite repertoire is achieved earlier than its actual use. In addition, the results of the studies on children's cognition about politeness showed that at this age level children can barely foresee the perlocutionary effects of politeness (Study 6) and that they are not able to make inferences about politeness (Studies 4, 5). Thus, it is reasonable to think that, at an initial stage, children do not apply cognitive efforts to the social situation, as represented in Figure 2B.

The second level of social understanding about communication was represented by the figure describing the Interaction function. At this stage, children can both act and make inferences about people, taking into account the constraints and characteristics of social interaction (continuous line). It was hypothesized that children would be able to use politeness in social exchanges. It was also expected that children would mostly use the conventional aspects of politeness, which are less flexible and more routinized. Covert cognition about politeness should be present at this stage, involving inferences about the other person's state of mind and consideration of the social situation.
The results of Studies 1 and 3 on children's behaviour showed that at the age of 6 and 7, children modify their speech acts to suit the situation. They are sensitive to their partners' reactions and increase the level of politeness to overcome difficulties in the interaction. However, they do not explicitly acknowledge their partners' points of view. They seem more keen to modify their verbal behaviour in part and to bargain on that basis. As for covert cognition, at this stage children have a good representation of what politeness is and how it works - showing possession of social knowledge as indicated by the continuous line of Figure 2C (Study 6). In addition, the fact that they can modify their behaviour according to the other persons' overt reactions signals that they can indeed make inferences about their partners (dashed arrow). However, at this age, children are not very confident in making inferences either about politeness in social circumstances (Studies 4, 5) or about the Self as involved in polite behaviour (Self-reflection) (Study 6). In brief, the results of the studies presented here offer support to the hypothesized development from the linguistic repertoire level to the knowledge of convention level, represented respectively by Figures 2B and 2C.

The final level of the development of politeness was expected to be represented by the full potential of cooperative communication. In Chapter 3 it was shown how all the mental operations involved in Discourse can be described by Flavell's model of social cognition. It was also added that polite discourse involves a cognitively recursive situation of the kind: "I am thinking of me thinking of you thinking of me". Self-reflection is necessarily involved. The whole set of operations is described by the model presented in Figure 2D and evidence fitting it was expected to be found only in older children.
The results of the studies also offer support for the third stage of the model. Thus, the existence of the development of politeness beyond the conventional level was shown. It was observed in all studies that 9-year-olds do not behave like 7-year-olds. Nine-year-olds not only use more politeness (Studies 1, 2), but also they use it differently from younger children. In their spontaneous verbal behaviour, 9-year-olds explicitly take their partners' points of view (Study 1) and make flexible use of sympathetic politeness to keep up a good interaction (Study 3). It may be said that, although some initial attempts at monitoring the interaction can be observed in 7-year-olds, only 9-year-olds can monitor the interaction by means of politeness - especially by sympathetic politeness (Study 3). It remains to be demonstrated whether 9-year-olds' behaviour can be explained by the set of covert cognitive inferences reported in Figure 2D. It must be remembered that, as a matter of fact, Flavell's model was theoretically based but not empirically tested. Thus, it was hypothesized that Self-reflection - which is needed for all the mental operations underlying cooperative Discourse - would appear only at the age of 9. The results of the studies on cognition and politeness showed that, as expected, only 9-year-olds can both make inferences involving recursive thinking (Studies 4, 5) and reflect upon themselves in social exchange (Study 6).

In brief, the development of politeness proposed by the theoretical analysis was empirically demonstrated for both its overt/behavioural and covert/cognitive aspects. Perhaps the most interesting piece of evidence of this work is that, from the age of 9, human beings know that politeness is more related to one's inner feelings than to social conventions. We must hope that this precious notion will not be contradicted by future social experience. It is adults' responsibility to preserve it by allowing children and adolescents to experience a social world in which the majority feel the need to "make people feel good".
New directions for further research

The presentation of the work carried out so far leaves at least three major issues open: Is the development of politeness fully accomplished by the age of 9? What new areas in the development of politeness must now be studied? What new predictions may be made following the developmental model presented here?

First of all, let us spend a few more words on the soundness of the above developmental model. It was shown here that, by the age of 9, children have mastered all the components of politeness. They have a polite linguistic repertoire, they have knowledge of the social conventions which require politeness, and they may also be sympathetically polite. In brief, it has been proposed that, at 9 years of age, children have the whole set of mental operations needed for polite behaviour (Figure 2D). If the analysis of Flavell's model is reasonable, the same set of mental operations should also apply to different contents. However, the criticism that the developmental sequence proposed here holds only for politeness and cannot be applied to different circumstances may be raised.

One way of testing the model further is to show that the development which has been observed for positive, sympathetic politeness can also be observed in other domains. For example, to stay within our area of interest, it may be hypothesized that only 9-year-olds are able to understand the impolite use of politeness. Politeness can in fact be used as a weapon to manipulate, attack, or hurt the other person's feelings. It is possible to say very aggressive things by disarmingly polite statements.

It is very difficult to react appropriately to "wicked" ways of being polite, as in the following examples, "My colleague presented his theory beautifully, and I feel embarrassed at even asking this stupid question....(followed by a shrewd question criticizing the theory)"; or "You are getting wonderful marks in maths. You are really good at it. Did you say that your family are good friends with our teacher?"; or "I wouldn't like you so much now if you were good at ...(some type of positive achievement, such as writing a book, making money, being popular, etc.)"; or like the dedication of The complete book of insults: (McPhee, 1982): "To my family, without whose solicitous concern and helpful suggestions this book would have been finished in half the time".

If the main structure of mental abilities to be polite is present at the age of 9, our developmental model would predict that only around this age would children be able to understand the effects of politeness used to hurt other people's feelings ("making people feel bad"). If they are lucky, 9-year-olds do not even have direct experience of this way of using politeness which is rather an adult-like, sophisticated social game. As one would not really expect that 9-year-old children actually to use politeness in twisted ways, if
they can indeed understand the nature of the game, our developmental model would be confirmed for a different content.

The above is only one example of how our model-testing can progress further. From the work presented so far, we may gather the impression that here the development of politeness is considered as finished by the age of 9. It is true that it has repeatedly been suggested that the basic abilities for polite behaviour are not fully achieved before this age. However, we would rightly criticize the notion that everything stops at the age of 9. Even if future studies confirm the developmental model for the ages considered here, we do not really expect the development of politeness to be fully accomplished by 9. What, then, is acquired beyond this age?

First of all, children's semantic and syntactic development enriches their polite language. Adolescents' and adults' linguistic expressions of politeness are more sophisticated than younger children's ones. For example, during pre-adolescence and adolescence, children may spontaneously learn to use politeness in humoristic, ironic, or even "twisted" ways. They may also be able to be more indirect than younger children. In addition to the above evolution in locution, the development of politeness beyond the age of 9 may also be linked to the three preconditions of social communication: Existence, Inference, and Need.

Understanding of the "existence" of a certain class of social (or socio-linguistic) phenomena is primarily related to people's experience of them. Thus, one would expect that children's experience about politeness phenomena would increase according to age. For example, during their school years children may learn a second language, including its politeness markers. It would be of interest to study children's acquisition of polite forms in second languages. As for pre-adolescents and adolescents, one may ask whether the acquisition of polite forms in second languages follows the same sequence as that observed for the acquisition of politeness in first languages. If so, in the process of second-language acquisition, even grown-ups may have a polite repertoire first, then they may be able to adapt it to social circumstances and only later they produce some sympathetic politeness. More interesting is the question of second-language acquisition during childhood. On one hand, it may be possible that the experience of a second language makes children more sensitive to the social underpinnings of politeness. On the other, the ability to be polite in second languages may be related to the underlying developmental level of social understanding. Examples of questions derived from our model which may tap the issue are: if we compare 5-year-olds who are learning a second language with 5-year-olds who are not, will the former group show more knowledge of conventions of politeness than the latter? And if we compare 7-year-olds who are learning a second language with 7-year-olds who are not, will the former group be more Self-reflective about politeness than the latter?
A second, not purely linguistic aspect is that children's experience of social conventions increases after the age of 9. For example, according to Shantz (1982), the growth of children's social experience can be described by four hierarchically embedded areas. Social development can be viewed as progressing from the narrowest to the largest domain. Children first experience partners. For example, they become aware of their partners' sentiments, emotions, wishes, intentions, preferences, thoughts, etc. Later, they become familiar with dyadic relations involving various degrees of familiarity and authority. With increasing age, the social relation experience enables children to understand the social roles which derive from larger social systems, for example, teacher-pupil, doctor-patient, etc. Finally, some social systems experience is achieved, involving awareness that social rules are relative to different social groups. Thus, it may reasonably be expected that children's knowledge of the existence of various sets of rules for politeness increases beyond the age of 9. In particular, children have to understand social relations which are not usually directly experienced at the age of 9 and cannot be directly inferred from the knowledge of the dyadic relations (P, D) which normally involve children themselves. For example, 9-year-old children may not know much about the use of politeness in adults' settings, such as offices, universities, hospitals, parliament, factories, etc. It would be of interest to see whether they apply their dyadic relation knowledge to the use of politeness in the adults' world. Also, the understanding that the rules of politeness are not absolute but relative to social groups may be a later acquisition in which factors such as social class, education and, also, travelling habits of the family may be more important than purely developmental factors.

Increasing age may also affect the ability to make "inferences" about the self and the social world. For example, the inferences which were required of the subjects in Studies 4 and 5 were quite simple. Adults and even children older than 9 may find them trivial. For the purposes of the present work, it was sufficient to show that ability to make inferences about politeness, even at a simple level, only appears after the child shows knowledge of conventions for politeness. Our model would predict that, beyond the age of 9, children are able to make inferences increasingly more complex than these examined here.

An interesting new area for further study is related to the "need" to attempt polite behaviour. This area is almost entirely unexplored. Although from the age of 5 children are sensitive to politeness in the other person's behaviour (Studies 3, 6), only at the age of 9 (Study 6), do they have a clear notion that politeness is related to the feelings of all the participants of the interaction. It may be possible that the strength by which the need to be polite is perceived is related to the ability to represent the perlocutionary effects of politeness and impoliteness. From this point of view, older, more experienced children may be more polite in naturalistic circumstances than 9-year-olds. To test this hypothesis,
for example, Studies 3 and 6 may be replicated with older children and even adults - with 
*ad hoc* modifications.

Conversely, the sensed "need" to be polite may be related to motivational as well as 
cognitive factors. The motivation to be polite - let alone its development - seems to be a 
totally unexplored area. Thus it is difficult, if not inappropriate, to make developmental 
expectations on the issue. However, there are a few points on which some speculative 
hypotheses may be indicated. First, there is the question of children's "sociability", or 
special sensitivity to the social world. The major problem in this line of research is to 
define and measure "sociability". In any case, the main question for our purpose is: do 
more "sociable" children learn to use politeness more quickly than less "sociable" ones? 
If so, our model would predict that sociable children would also be able to carry out the 
recursive thinking needed for polite communication earlier than non sociable ones. 
Second, the literature on psychopathological development in Chapter 2 showed that 
neither learning nor language disabilities severely impair the simple use of politeness. If 
we control subjects for cognitive abilities, do we still find that some people are more 
polite than others? In other words, are we able to show that there is a specific 
motivational, non-cognitive factor in the use of politeness? It is possible that we are able 
to find individual differences in the use of politeness between subjects at the same socio-
cognitive level. Third, if this were the case, we would still have the problem of 
explaining such differences. This speculation must not be pursued too far in the absence 
of specific, testable hypotheses. But further research may reveal the need to look more 
closely at the role of personality and affective factors in the development of politeness. 
We may find that there are people who develop an interest in making people feel bad, 
people who are indifferent to others' inner states, and yet others who prefer to make 
people feel good.
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