Politeness and Memory for the Wording of Remarks

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Much research on memory indicated that the surface structure of sentence was lost. However, it was argued that in actual interactions, remarks sometimes convey *interpersonal* information, and, as a result, memory for the wording can be quite good.

Under what conditions it happens? Some researchers suggested that it happens when (1) Ss are actual perticipants in an interaction and (2) the remarks are high in interactional value (e.g.,jokes). But the formulation of "interactinal value" is not clear.

Politeness is a clear interpersonal dimension of language use. This research examined
A. Whether people spontaneously remember the wording used to convey politeness.
B. How memory for politeness might vary as a function of the social context.

A. Politeness Theory

According to Brown & Levinson's(1987) theory of politeness,
- Interactants are generally converned with managing each other's *face*.
- *Politeness wording* (PW) implicates the extent to which the speaker is concented with the face of hearers.
  E.g., "Could you shut the door?" grants more autonomy to hearer, and hence it is more polite.

There are some evidences that people spontaneously remember the politeness. Murphy & Shapiro (1994) argue that
- Hearers attend to features of text that are most relevant for their current goals.
- Sometimes an understanding of the speaker's beliefs/intentions requires relatively deep processing, so that wording becomes important.
- When wording is important, there should be some memory for surface.

PW is important for interactants' interpersonal goals, since it implicates the speaker's view of the interpersonal situation. Thus, I expected that **Ss demonstrate better memory for PW.**

B. The Role of the Social Context

People have expectations regarding the appropriateness of different PW, which varies as a function of the social context.

What impact will consistency with expectation have on memory? It depends on which

information processing stage is being affected by an expectancy (Greasser,1981):
- If expectancy functions at encoding, inconsistent information is remembered well.
- If expectancy functions at retrieval, consistent information is remembered well.

Politeness violations are particulary relevant for interactants' goals, and so they should affect encoding (i.e., noticed when they occur). Thus, I expected that **PW which is inconsistent with the speaker's status should be remembered better.**

1 EXPERIMENT 1

Ss are presented experimental instructions, in which the politeness is manipulated. Later, Ss's memory is assessed with a recognition test.

Issues below are examined:
(1) Overall memory for PW would be significant.
(2) Memory would be better for PW which are inconsistent with context (i.e., better for polite forms, since the experimenter is higher in status).
(3) Memory for meaning.
(4) Whether Ss would spontaneously encode PW. ($\rightarrow$ If so, no difference by goal condition)
(5) Effects of stimulus modality.

1.1 Method

Design: Modality(Written/Auditory) $\times$ Goal(Incidental/Intentinal) $\times$ Politeness(Polite/Impolite) $\times$ Form(3).

Learning Materials: Experimantal instruction contains 30 target sentences. 6 forms were constructed for each target. 6 versions of instruction are created.

Impolite	Direct	Write out the full name for each state you recall.
	Strong Direct–Must	You must write out ...
	Obligation–Should	You should write out ...
Polite	Desire–Like	We'd like you to write out ...
	Suggestion–Help	It would help if you write out ...
	Desire–Appreciate	We'd appreciate if you write out...

Test Materials: For each of { 30 target + 8 filler } sentences, a 4-item forced-choice measure is created (Wording-correctness(2) $\times$ Meaning-correctness(2) = 4). 6 version of the test are created.

Procedure: (1)Learning; (2)5-min distructor tasks; (3)Recognition test.

1.2 Results and Discussion

Memory for politeness [Table 1].

- Overall memory for PW. (Issue (1).)
- Better memory for polite forms. (Issue (2).)
- Ss encoded a vague impression on the politeness. ($\leftarrow$ more incorrect recognition within the same politeness form group.)

Memory for meaning quite good.

2 EXPERIMENT 2

Problems of Experiment 1 :
- Formal situation. Ss' extra attentiveness.
- Limitation to a situation in which the experimenter is higher in status.

In this experiment, students in a library were (1) approached by an experimenter and unexpectedly asked to lend a piece of paper; (2) approached by another experimenter and asked to recall the wording of the request.

Issues below are examined:
(1) Memory would be better for impolite forms (since the interactants are equal in in status).
(2) Whether memory for the off-record hint (i.e., very indirect form) is better or not. ($\leftarrow$ additional inference process v.s. politeness)
(3) Impression on the politeness.