

## **Folk concepts of politeness, respect and successful communication in Namibian English**

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The analysis of politeness phenomena in communicative interaction has frequently been undertaken from the perspective of an overarching theory of politeness such as face theory (Brown and Levinson 1987) or the theory of relational work proposed by Locher and Watts (2005). This approach runs the risk of superimposing theoretical constructs onto phenomena that might not be fully compatible with the mode of analysis employed, which is especially problematic in the context of research work in cultural contexts not shared by the researchers themselves.

For this reason, we instead take a bottom-up, data-driven approach in our current project on the pragmatics of Namibian English (PraProNE) regarding politeness and related concepts, following principles laid down in Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz 2006, cf. Charmaz and Thornberg 2020). In 15 interviews with staff and students at the University of Namibia in 2022, we have prompted our participants to talk about different aspects of communication in the context of Namibia's multilingual, multicultural ecology. This includes concepts of polite and impolite conversation, pragmatic norms and expectations, respect and appropriate behaviour as well as the recognition and management of intercultural differences. In a distinct series of 30 interviews conducted in 2023, we have asked participants to comment on and elaborate their own pragmatic performance in a DCT questionnaire they had previously filled out. Their reflections on their own pragmatic choices are illuminating regarding, among other things, the perceived need for politeness, indirectness, deference etc. in specific communicative scenarios, giving us a way to validate our use of Brown and Levinson's micro-social parameters in the design of the questionnaire.

Via examples from these two data sets, we will discuss the conceptualizations of linguistic politeness we find in this group of speakers of Namibian English and situate it within well-known theoretical frameworks in politeness research. We will furthermore describe and evaluate our methodological approach to this issue and demonstrate how it informs our ongoing research on speech act performance in Namibian English.

Brown, P. & S.C. Levinson. 1987. *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: CUP.

Charmaz, K. 2006. *Constructing Grounded Theory. A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis*. London: SAGE.

Charmaz, K. & R. Thornberg. 2020. The Pursuit of Quality in Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 18(3), 305-327.

Locher, M. & R.J. Watts. 2005. Politeness Theory and Relational Work. *Journal of Politeness Research* 1(1), 9-33.