How to Express Politeness in Swedish?

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ABSTRACT

There are several disciplines studying linguistic politeness but there is no consensus among scientists which definition best describes the phenomenon. Notions of politeness such as politic behavior (Watts, 1992.2003), report management (Spencer-Oatey2002,2008) appropriate behavior (Meier, 1995), or relational (Arundale) are some examples which define politeness by linguistic expressions.

Politeness norms are not static in all socio-groups in a society, and my ambition has been to shed light on the socio-cultural structure that defines the phenomenon and identify the categories which define politeness. Results show that the informants conceptualisation of politeness involve not only verbal but also non-verbal behavior. In some situations acts, such as giving up one's seat or helping with the stroller are considered even more important and are valued more highly than the verbal politeness expressions. (ACTION). To "ask nicely" (fråga snällt); to adjust one's language, and / or explain a request can be a sign of polite behavior acootding to informants. (ORDERLY LANGUAGE).Good behavior is related to "etiquette" i.e socially acceptable behavior which can be described as a set of socio-cultural norms. According to informants, a person is considered well-mannered when he or she knows how to behave in certain social contexts.(BEHAVIOR)

Polite linguistic expressions have to be complemented with proper body language and corresponding prosody in order to express politeness. The prosody is considered very important in successful polite expressions. (PROSODY and BODY LANGUAGE).

How to express politeness in Swedish relates directly to the categories that constitute the phenomenon. Results show that young people in urban settings value "artighet" (politeness) depending on the basis of an "it depends" parameter. Social variables such as R (relationship / feelings), K(context / situation) and A (appearance / age) motivate and justify politeness between speakers. Preliminary results show that categories that constitute politeness in Swedish are: respect (respekt), consideration (hänsyn) and tact (takt).