

Hazel Price*

Linguistics Department, School of Music Humanities and Media, University of Huddersfield
(h.price@hud.ac.uk)

Jack Wilson

Department of English and Creative Writing, School of Arts and Media, University of
Salford (j.j.wilson@salford.ac.uk)

*corresponding author

Applying Politeness Research: An Introduction to the Soto Data

Size: 30,089 characters with spaces

1. Introduction

The aim of this special issue is to demonstrate the relative strengths of different approaches to politeness research using a single interaction as a case study. The reason for doing this is to test the extent to which these various approaches overlap in terms of what they reveal about the data. The data that is at the heart of all the articles in this special issue is a particular courtroom interaction.

On 4th February 2013, an 18 year-old woman from Florida, made headlines when a video of her as a defendant in a bail hearing went viral. The video, filmed and streamed live on US National television, showed the defendant, Penelope Soto, enter into a routine bail hearing on a drugs possession charge. The hearing ended with her being charged with criminal contempt of court and sentenced to 30 days in the county jail. The case gained attention on the internet as well as in the national and international press after some members

of the public deemed Soto's behaviour to be inappropriate or 'rude' within the courtroom setting. One of the focuses of the linguistic study of politeness is what interactants deem to be polite or not polite. It is for this reason that the Linguistic Politeness Research Group (LPRG)¹ used the Soto data as the focus for a series of research group discussions, which ultimately led to this special issue.

In the next section, we provide some contextual information on the Penelope Soto case before going on to discuss the ethical issues that arise when dealing with data of this kind. Following this, we provide a summary of the issue's constituent papers before closing with a discussion of the range of possible applications for the research in this issue. These include the potential for using the articles in teacher led classroom discussions in schools and colleges as well as raising as an issue the difficulty for non-specialists of interpreting appropriate language and behaviour in a legal context.

2. The Penelope Soto case

The data used here is an interaction between Penelope Soto, an 18 year old woman from Miami, Florida, and Jorge Rodriguez-Chomat, a Miami-Dade County judge. Soto who was arrested and brought before Rodriguez-Chomat for possessing the prescription drug, Xanax (referred to as Xanax bars in the transcript), which is used to treat anxiety disorders. The abuse of Xanax is common in the US with reports suggesting that Xanax is the most commonly used drug after opiates. Possession of the drug constituted Soto's first offence.

Defendants are entitled to be brought before a judge to have their bail (or bond)² hearing within 24 hours of arrest. The bond hearing is primarily a procedure for the judge to

¹ The Linguistic Politeness Research Group is an international research group that meets regularly to discuss the latest approaches to the study of (im)politeness. <https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/politeness/>

² Bond refers to the amount of money the defendant needs to raise in order to be released before trial. In some serious offences where the presumption of 'probable cause' is great, a bond may not be offered to the defendant.

determine whether the court has ‘probable cause’ to believe that the defendant has committed an offence. The bond hearing is also an opportunity for the judge to raise or lower the ‘standard bond’, which is typically set by the local authorities.

Hearings of this kind are typically transactional, short in duration, and often the defendant speaks only to confirm their details. During this process, defendants wear the standard overalls of prisoners. It is routine for the defendants to stand in a line to wait their turn to be called forwards and addressed by the county court judge. The judge and defendant interact via video link and are therefore not co-present. For the defendant, their immediate audience (in their immediate vicinity) is the other defendants awaiting bond hearings and court officials. In the courtroom, the judge’s immediate audience is the county court clerks and legal representatives. Vitally, while the judge can see the defendant via the video link (although the monitor to do this is located to the right-hand side of the judge), the defendant cannot see the judge.

Presiding over the case was Judge Jorge Rodriguez-Chomat. The nature of his role and experience means that he was obviously familiar with the standards of the courtroom, the purpose of the bail hearing (i.e., whether the defendant is potentially released before trial or not), the transactional nature of the bond hearing and what constitutes appropriate behaviour in the courtroom, all to an extent that Soto arguably was not.

Following her initial bail hearing and subsequent sentencing to 30 days in jail, Soto reappeared in court after serving five days. On release Soto publicly apologized to Rodriguez-Chomat, attributing her actions to being under the influence of drugs and alcohol. At her next hearing, she again apologized for her previous behaviour and was commended by a different judge for her change in attitude. At this hearing, she entered a not guilty plea for the drug possession charges.

3. Ethical issues

Given the sensitive nature of the interaction under analysis, there are three particular ethical issues that need to be considered. The first issue is whether it is justifiable to study this data at all given that Penelope Soto was under the influence of drugs. However, during the hearing, Judge Rodriguez-Chomat asked Soto directly if she had taken any drugs in the previous 24 hours, to which she answered no. Due to this, the judge proceeded with the hearing on the assumption that Soto was telling the truth and was in a position to participate in a bail hearing. By claiming not to be on drugs, Soto was consequently bound to accept the consequences of the hearing, which she might otherwise have appealed on the grounds that she was not of sound mind at the time of the hearing. For these reasons, the data stands as a legitimate bail hearing in which the interaction went awry.

The second issue is whether it is justifiable to study the data, given the trial-by-media that ensued and the consequent negative impact on Soto's life. Our position on this is that 1) the data is in the public domain and 2) that by providing an informed analysis of the interaction we are able to challenge the vilification of Soto in the media. In fact, these two ethical issues demonstrate the potential that politeness research has to make a real-world impact.

Related to these two primary issues is the question of anonymizing data that is in the public domain. We took the view that 1) the name of the defendant was public knowledge, and 2) Soto knowingly went on camera again to apologize to the judge. Consequently we did not see that there was anything to be gained from anonymizing the data. However, we did make the decision to refer to the interactants by their interactional roles as judge and defendant and not by their identities in the transcript. Furthermore, since all of the data is

available on YouTube and we have provided transcripts that go beyond the specific analyses in this special issue, we invite readers to compare the analyses to their own opinion of the data.

4. Data

In this section, we present a transcript of the interaction that forms the basis of all the articles in this special issue. The data broadly consists of two phases. In the first phase (lines 1-254) the defendant is present in the interaction. In the second phase (255-end) the defendant is not present and the interaction is between the judge and court officials. As previously stated, the judge and defendant are interacting via video-link.

Flipping the Bird to the Judge

Transcription by Nathaniel Mitchell

Participants:

- d defendant, 18, female, wearing orange coveralls
 - j judge, Jorge Rodriguez-Chomat, male
 - m male speaker (in courtroom)
 - f female speaker (in courtroom)
 - o other speaker (in courtroom) (possibly clerk)
 - x unknown individual, either visual or audible. Superscript indicates different speakers
-

1. j [((gaze right))
2. d [((steps forward to podium))
3. j ((gaze shift to left then to paperwork))
4. j °pene°[lope so:to=
5. d [yes
6. d ((L hand under chin))
7. j =you're being charged in [possession of xa:nax=
8. j ((pushes glasses. Gaze down))
9. d [((pushes hair back))
10. j =a: B A R S ((lifts hand)) >I don't know what that
11. is<=> [what is it<
12. d ((begins smile))
13. m [°ba [rs°.
14. f [bars.
15. m ↑xanax. (.) xanax bars.
16. j °okay°
17. j ((gaze forward, begins smile))
18. d ((smile heightens))
19. m °It's how they refer to them°=
20. j =xanax bars.
21. j ((returns gaze to paperwork))

22. (.)
23. j **alright I understand you're, (.) eligible for. (pre-trial?) service?**
24. o **yes.**
25. j **[°any ob.je:ctions°,**
26. f **[your-**
27. (0.2)
28. f **ah no? objections?=
=a: she has no pri:ors? she's been charged per pill=**
30. j ((writing on paperwork))
31. f **=>which is im<pro::pper?=it should >jus be< one
count.**
33. d ((gaze forward, licks lips))
34. (0.7)
35. m **miss. soto? r'you working?**
36. (0.4)
37. d **yes**
38. d ((leans forward, gaze shift: down to forward))
39. m **how much mon?ey you make.=in a week=approximately.**
40. j ((shifts gaze from paperwork to right))
41. (0.5)
42. d **approximately about. two hundred bucks, (0.2) a wee:k.=**

43. ((gaze shifts from in front to bottom left, to forward, to left))
44. m =k.=an do you own any pro:perty o value=a hou:se a
45. ca:r a bank accou:nts >significant a<mounts of
46. **jewellery.**
47. j ((gaze from left to forward, to left to paperwork))
48. (0.4)
49. d yes=
50. m >what do you< ↑o:wn.
51. j ((gaze shift from paperwork to left))
52. (0.4)
53. d **aha I own a lot of ↑jewellery, alright?**
54. d ((tilting head from side to side))
55. d **.hhh [as we:ll a::s=**
56. m [°oki°
57. j ((gaze to left, sits back in chair))
58. (0.4)
59. m o
60. (0.6)
61. m **go ah [ead]**
62. d [a car]?
63. (0.4)

64. j well [ho- how much] how m- how ha how much e would=
65. d [a::n]
66. j ((moves both hands))
67. j =you say you're juw:ellery's wo:rth.
68. (0.6)
69. d ahehehe he a he[hehe
70. j [ai: it's not a joke=you know? we are
71. not in a- we are not in a club no::w=
72. j ((smile))
73. d =o?kay. but it's e [you know kind if you know but=
74. d ((begins to stroke hair, gaze toward camera))
75. j [aha you see that we are not in=
76. d = it's you know
77. j =a we are not in a club.= be se:rious about it.=
78. j ((sits forward, opens arms, hands up, gaze left)) ((brings hands together and apart))
79. d =I am se?rious about it. [but it you just made me=
80. j [>oh you're< being very
81. s:=
82. d =la:.ugh] ((stops stroking hair))
83. j =I can see | you're ↑serious. alright.

84. j ((gaze shifts from left to paperwork))
85. (0.5)
86. d >↑you jez< made me, laugh.=↑I apologiz?e=
87. d ((left hand on chest, right hand moves off to left, palm up, stroking hair))
88. j =ts alright.=e how much is you're jew:ellery worth.
89. j ((smiling, gaze from paperwork to forward, to left, hands manipulating artefact))
90. (0.4)
91. d **it's. worth? a lot. of moni:.**=
92. d ((starts stroking hair with right hand))
93. j =like what.
94. (0.2)
95. d like:. (0.5) rick? ro::ss.=
96. d ((moves head to both sides))
97. j =↑ah??
98. j ((gaze left, eyebrows raise))
99. (3.1)
100. d ((swallows, left hand to throat, choking like action, continues stroking hair, opens mouth))
101. o °hohoho°
102. x [°oh. °

103. d [↑it's wo:rth?=
104. j =mam?=
105. d =mo:ney.
106. d ((nods, begins stroking hair with both hands))
107. j **have you had any kind of drugs in the=**
108. j ((rolls hands in front of body, gaze left, shakes head))
109. j **in the last 24 hou:rs?**
110. d ((tips body backward, steps backward and to right and back to camera, eyes open wide, gaze shift from up to left to down to forward))
111. d ↑a:ctually↑ (0.3) no::.
112. d ((stroking hair))
113. j **actually no::?=
114. m =judge I'll.- I'll make it easy for the cou:rt.=
115. m =res [pectfully
116. d ((smiling, gaze forward))
117. j [hhehe [he
118. j ((smiling widely, gaze forward, manipulating something with hands))
119. d ((tips body forward, smiling, gaze forward)) ((court official walks through jailhouse behind defendant from right to front right, gaze of woman in the back follows the official))
120. m [>I'll accept< appoint.ment at this**

121. t[ime
122. j [no. no=I >ain't going to< appoint? you. because
123. you're also not on my- substantial amounts of
124. jewel.lery.
125. j ((opens arms wide, smiling, gaze forward, smiling))
126. d ((smiling, begins to stroke hair on other side of head with both hands, steps backward))
127. x ((individual walks from right to left in court room footage))
128. j **you can go and sell your jew:ellery.**
129. j ((gaze left, left hand raises toward left))
130. d ((left hand raises to in front of mouth))
131. (1.0)
132. j **je:well::ery for a (0.6) private, attorney.=**
133. j ((raises left hand, gaze to paperwork to left to paperwork))
134. x ((moves through courtroom camera from bottom to right))
135. d ((gaze left to forward, stroking hair with left hand, stroking stops, hand rests in front of mouth))
136. j **=what is the standard bond?**
137. j ((moves right hand)) ((gaze moves from left to right))
138. (0.4)
139. f **it sh?↑ould be:=**

140. d =ain't >gonna< be no P.T.S.=
141. j ((shifts chair back, gaze from right to paperwork))=
142. f =okay.=five thousand on count o:ne? (1.3) and then should be. R.O.R.
143. j ((gaze to paperwork, writes on paperwork, mouth closed, lifts pen several times))
144. d ((gaze forward, possibly biting on finger, left hand moves to front of chin, gaze shifts right to forward, steps forward))
145. (8.0)
146. ((this silence is for speaking, all movement from j and p occurs throughout this silence. this silence also includes murmuring from off camera, ringing similar to a phone ring, and woman in back of p looking off camera to right))
147. f **oh yea. this (xx) a refe:rral to division fifty**
148. **one.**=
149. j ((flips paper over, gaze from right to paperwork, writing on paperwork))
150. f =because she has no [pri:ors.
151. j ((gaze down, flipping paperwork))
152. j [count one will be five thousand?=probable cause
found?
153. d ((left hand moves down, gaze forward to up to down to forward, head movement from side to side, arms become crossed))
154. (2.0)
155. j **count two will be R,O,R?**

156. j ((writing on paperwork))
157. (1.3)
158. f **this is >requesting R O R on< count two: throu:gh twenty si:x.**
159. (0.2)
160. j **and dever- defer to division fifty one**
161. j ((writing on paperwork, gaze down))
162. d ((gaze forward, arms crossed))
163. (8.0)
164. ((during this pause in talk, at 6 seconds j moves paperwork which has been written on off screen to the right, pulls into screen paperwork which was off screen))
165. j ((gaze to left, to paperwork, to left))
166. j **bye? bye,**
167. j ((right hand makes waving gesture to left, gaze left, frowning expression))
168. (1.1)
169. d **adi:?o:s.**
170. d ((leans forward, gaze forward, smiling))
171. o **°erhh.°**
172. d ((walks away from camera off left))
173. j ((begins smile, gaze left))
174. j **°hehehehe° COME BACK MAM.**

175. j **COME back,**
176. j ((right hand making summoning gesture))
177. x ((incoherent talk))
178. (1.6)
179. j **com?e ba:ck,**
180. j ((summoning gesture, gaze shift to left))
181. d ((smiling, walks back to camera, clasps hands together))
182. (0.5)
183. j **>gimme the< paper again.**
184. j ((left hand moves off screen, gaze left, smile))
185. d ((puts hands to mouth, gaze right to forward, hands cross across chest, gaze and body orientation move to back left))
186. (5.7)
187. j **count one, will be. ten, thou,sand.**
188. j ((gaze left, right hand gestures left))
189. d ((immediately opens mouth)) ((grabs hair, tips body forward))
190. (0.2)
191. d **[.hhh]**
192. x **[oooo]oooh.**
193. j ((writing on paperwork, no smile))
194. d **are you ↑ser[ious?**

195. j [i am serious. = a↑dio::s?
196. j ((gaze left, right hand gestures left, gaze to paperwork))
197. d .hhh
198. d ((gaze forward, takes step back, mouth open, gaze shift to right, orientation shifts to right and away from camera))
199. x ((chatter from courtroom))
200. j ((gaze to paperwork, moves paper off camera to right, gaze comes to front, tips glasses up, gaze to left))
201. x¹ hahahahaha
202. x² ow. (jeez)
203. x³ °adi.os?°,
204. d ((begins to walk away, gaze unknown, ‘flips the bird’ with left hand, gaze back to camera))
205. d °fuck you°
206. j ((gaze right, no smile))
207. (2.0)
208. ((note, in this recording these 2 seconds have been wiped from audio))
209. (0.5)
210. x °↑Ooh.°=
211. j =come BACK again.
212. j ((gestures to left with right hand, smiling, smile disappears))

213. x ((several voices shouting))
214. j **come back again.**
215. j ((strong summons gesture, gaze to right, puts pen down))
216. ((female defendant at the back of d stifles a smile behind her hand, orients toward d re-entering, follows her movement back into shot))
217. (3.0)
218. x **°bring her BACK again.°=**
219. ((this is not a period of silence but of constant chattering of people, note line 128))
220. j **=bring her BAck again.**
221. j ((strong summons gesture to left, furrow in brow))
222. (3.5)
223. x¹ **°ooh°.**
224. x² **(yo. freak.)**
225. (0.5)
226. d **what's, [up.**
227. d ((walks into camera from up left, pulls up trousers, crosses arms, no smile, moves head and body))
228. j **[I I e.- belie:ve i. heard you say:ing to=**
229. ((gesturing with left hand, finger raised, gaze to left, hand moves toward camera, elbow on desk, smile)) =
230. d **=↑yes I did↑ I'm not, going °to de [ny it.°**

231. d ((arms crossed, moves head and torso back and forth, this movement continues))
232. j ((both hands up, gesturing to left))
233. j **[I I believe you=**
234. j **=se-, did you? say=**
235. j ((gestures toward himself with index fingers of both hands))
236. d **=yes [I did**
237. d ((shuffles to left foot))
238. j **[fuck me=**
239. d **=act[↑]ually I [did-**
240. d ((moves both hands to clasp hair on both sides of face))
241. j **[did you? SAY that.=**
242. d **=yes? [↑]sir I did.=**
243. d ((moving hair back, flipping hair around tying it))=
244. j **=oh. [↑]you did say that?**
245. j ((gesturing on beat of 'did'))
246. d **I'm not [going to deny it.]**
247. j **[>I find you in< di:[↑]rect or]imina:l[↑]**
248. j ((gesturing on the beat of 'find'))
249. j **contempt.=[↑]thirty days,[↑] >in the< county gaol.**
250. j ((gesturing on the beat of 'thirty'))

251. d o?kay, [that's fine.
252. x¹ [°yea? judge°
253. x² °(you're no pound)°=
254. x³ =[((constant chatter))
255. j =[thirty days >in the< county gaol.=
256. f I believe that she's represented by the public
257. de [fender with no (criminal) xxxxx)
258. x [(definitely no praise)][(°xx°)
259. j [there's no (big
260. defence)- representative of the public defender.
261. f ↑o,kay?°
262. (1.8)
263. x [(((constant chatter))
264. m [you're ho:nor, a point of [(intent) in the=
265. x [°your ho:nor is that=
266. m =[contempt matter.]
267. x =[wi:th or with]out present ti:me, served.°
268. j ((gaze forward, manipulating document, shift gaze away))
269. (0.8)
270. j without ti:me.=when you tell? the court- in open
271. court [fuck you. (.) I mean that's ↑criminal,=

272. m [°(xx)°

273. =contempt.

274. m **sir I:- I just I'm asking if your honor would**

275. **consider appointing=that's why. °I'm askin°.**

276. j **I appoint tchu.**

277. m **I'm sorry?**

278. j **I do appoint you.**

279. x °(xx bond in two thousand)°

280. m **respectfully? >your< honor, (0.5) an I hea:rd**

281. **exACTly >what your< honor heard, an.**

282. (1.2)

283. m **[I- I don't think your honor's dese:rving of. (0.4)**

284. x **[SHH**

285. m **↑any. co:mments. - any negative. co:mments. >an**

286. **your< honor kno:ws that#. (0.2) I- >I do< believe**

287. **in good fai:th that there's obviously some issues**

288. **here.=that are going on, #an an-# I- I jus? (0.4)**

289. **fee:l respectfully that the: pro:per procedure**

290. **(0.4) had.# (0.2) not taken place as far as the.**

291. **holding miss Soto in contempt.#**

292. (2.1)

293. j ah-# >no. you're,< right.
294. (1.5)
295. m >does your, ho:nor going to appoint me on the
296. felony ca:se as well? or we're not# °(doing
297. that)°.
298. (1.0)
299. j >I'm a<ppointing you for the:. contempt.=
300. m =°(okay sir)°
301. m ((nods head))
302. (1.0)
303. end 03:49.6

Transcription conventions:

- (0.0) pause of 0.0 seconds (note: with numbers)
- = latching showing no pause between utterances
- [marker of beginning of overlap, corresponds to same symbol on another line. note: lines 114, 115, 116, 117 are all overlapped
- (xx) unclear transcription of 2 syllables. One x per syllable (note: without numbers)
- (good morning) unclear transcription where it is believed that the utterer said 'good morning'
- ((abc)) notes in double parenthesis indicate some movement, gaze, non-linguistic element thought to be analysable. At times small notes to other happenings in the audio are made using this coding
- R O R capital letters separated by spaces indicate spelling of letters. This example would sound like "are oh are"
- COME capital letters spelling a word indicate loudness
- xanax underlined syllables indicate stress
- (note: xanax is spelt such to allow ease of referent)

ha/ho/ho	a single beat of laughter
?	upward intonational contour
.	downward intonational contour
,	flat intonational contour
.hhh	audible in breath
h	audible outbreath
word	meta comment about activity
word	bolded text indicates actual talk
xxx	bottom boarder indicates end of first recording

5. The structure of the special issue

The value of analyzing one piece of data from a variety of perspectives is that this approach offers a means of showcasing the respective values of each analytical method employed. Nonetheless, despite focusing on one piece of data, what becomes apparent across the course of the issue is that in each approach what constitutes ‘data’ is variable and subject to the level of abstraction necessary, e.g., the situation (O’Driscoll, this volume; Wilson & Price, this volume); the transcript (Grainger, this volume); third-party and press responses to the interaction (Christie, this volume; Davies, this volume). The analyses carried out in this volume also display the eclectic nature of research into interaction, which while primarily focusing on interaction as its object of study and employing theories in politeness research to explain it, makes use of theories from sociolinguistics, sociology and philosophy, amongst others.

In the first article of this special issue, Karen Grainger adopts a neo-Brown and Levinsonian approach to the Soto data to argue that this framework provides a vocabulary with which to describe courtroom interaction. Grainger discusses how, in newer theories in politeness research, Brown and Levinson’s model has been discredited in favour of models that focus on evaluations of interactional behaviour rather than why certain linguistic choices

were made in a given situation. Grainger demonstrates that despite the shortcomings of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness, the model "can still provide analysts with a robust armoury of technical terms and concepts" to analyze interactions in institutional settings (Grainger, this volume).

In the second article, Jim O'Driscoll analyses the data using a Goffmanian approach to interaction, employing and expanding Goffman's notions of frames, footing and face to elucidate why the encounter went awry. O'Driscoll argues that it is ultimately Soto's status within the participation framework (Goffman, 1981) and the 'dances of footings' that are responsible for the "interactional asymmetry" (O'Driscoll, this volume) that results in the trajectory of the interaction. O'Driscoll argues that the application of Goffmanian concepts to the Soto data offers "plausible explanations for this behaviour with relatively little recourse to speculations about mental and emotional states" (O'Driscoll, this volume). O'Driscoll also explores the effect that communication via video link may have had on the participants' actions in the encounter.

Jack Wilson and Hazel Price follow this by making a case for the addition of neo-Peircean semiotics as a way of analyzing in/appropriate behaviour in addition to traditional methods of analyzing politeness data. Wilson and Price explore the framework using the Soto data to demonstrate how neo-Peircean semiotics can enrich the study of interaction. They argue that this approach can facilitate links between discursive and post-discursive approaches to politeness research. Furthermore, they make the case that a semiotic framework "facilitates the analysis of a broad range of interactionally salient phenomena from individual linguistic tokens to culturally bounded phenomena such as courtroom norms." (Wilson and Price, this volume). Through their analysis, Wilson and Price demonstrate that it is the disparity between *signs* and *interpretants* that ultimately led the interaction to conclude in the way that it did.

Moving away from the transcript as the primary source of data, Christine Christie analyses the responses to the Soto case in the YouTube comments section of the recording of the bail hearing. Christie presents these comments as an object of study for analyzing evaluations of (im)politeness. Christie examines the responses using an approach that is informed by relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), from pragmatics and indexicality theory (Ochs, 1996), and from sociolinguistics to offer an insight into one specific part of the interaction, namely the five-second exchange in which Soto utters the word “*adios*” to the judge. Using this short, but pivotal utterance as her focus, Christie offers an account for why, in their responses to the recording of the Soto bail hearing, people have arrived at different interpretations of “*adios*”. Christie argues that these interpretations can be explained through patterns in the discourses or ideologies that inform these interpretations such as discourses of femininity and the perceived role of legal institutions to uphold cultural values.

In the final paper of the special issue, Bethan Davies analyses three newspaper articles that reported on the three instances in which Soto interacted with the US court system (initial bail hearing, apology and arraignment), as well as the user generated comments that responded to the articles. Through the data, which were collected from the online platform of the UK tabloid newspaper, *The Daily Mail*, Davies investigates how metapragmatic behaviour can offer the analyst insight into how participants’ view the moral order (Haugh, 2013). Davies argues that understanding evaluations of politeness is vital to “evidence the analytical process in contexts of both vicarious participation and talk-in-interaction” (Davies, this volume).

6. Applications

The findings from the research presented in this special issue have relevance beyond the study of interaction. There are a number of areas to which the findings might be applied. During the process of conducting the research presented in this special issue, and of presenting initial findings at conferences, we have received numerous comments to the effect that this volume would be useful in the classroom as a resource for teachers to find out about current ways to analyze interaction. In addition, it provides a resource for classroom discussion about a controversial case.

What the research also reveals is the difficulty for defendants of taking part in a courtroom interaction if they have no previous experience or knowledge of courtroom and legal procedures. All of the articles in this issue highlight the impact of this lack of situational knowledge on the defendant. Moreover, the discussions in this volume raise important questions about whose responsibility it is to make sure that defendants with no prior convictions know what is a) expected of them in a legal setting, i.e., the transfer of information pertaining to whether the defendant can afford their own legal representation; and b) fully understand the repercussions of the various stages of the hearing, i.e., the reason for determining whether the defendant owns anything of value.

While we do not wish to overstate the potential impact of this particular volume, we believe that drawing attention to the range of potential applications may be valuable for future research that has outside impact as its focus.

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