A Relevance-Theoretic Perspective on (Im)politeness Issues in the CB Radio Discourse of Polish Drivers

Abstract

This paper has two major objectives. The first objective is to present the phenomenon of CB radio discourse of Polish drivers and discuss its main features. The second goal is to analyse two of these features from the angle of the (im)politeness issues, using the perspective of Relevance Theory. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general discussion of the phenomenon under scrutiny: the socio-cultural background of the CB radio discourse as well as its basic linguistic features are presented. In the second part of the paper, I discuss Escandell-Vidal’s approach to politeness within Relevance framework (Escandell-Vidal 2004) and integrate the model with the habitus-based definition of politeness (Bourdieu 1977; Watts 2003). The final part of the paper shows how the integrated approach can be used to examine two major aspects of the CB radio discourse: its conversational structure and the use of diminutives.

Keywords: Relevance Theory, CB Radio discourse, pragmatics, (im)politeness, CB radio Polish slang, CB radio discourse of Polish drivers

1. Introduction

The CB radio discourse of Polish drivers is a relatively recent area of study which has only recently gained proper academic attention (see Nowik 2007; Nowik-Dziewicka 2010; Milusz 2012; Jaros 2011a; 2011b; 2011c; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c; 2012d; 2013a; 2013b; 2014; 2015a; 2015b; 2016). This paper undertakes to present the phenomenon in question and to attempt an analysis of (im)politeness issues in the CB radio discourse of Polish drivers from the point of view of Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson [1986] 1995). The first part of the paper is devoted to the discussion of the phenomenon under scrutiny, and presents its socio-cultural background as well as its basic linguistic features. The second part of the paper offers an overview of a relevance-based approach to politeness as suggested by Escandell-Vidal (Escandell-Vidal 2004) and includes an attempt at
integrating it with the habitus-based definition of politeness (Bourdieu 1977; Watts 2003). The final part of the paper examines two major (im)politeness aspects of the CB radio discourse: the issues of (non)-preservation of exchange structure and the use of diminutives, from the relevance-theoretic perspective. The linguistic data serving as the basis for the analysis have been collected by the author of the paper. The conclusions derived on the basis of data analysis are presented in the final part of the paper.

2. Short history of CB radio

CB radio (Citizens Band radio) is a system of short-distance radio communication conducted by individual users over 40 channels of 27 MHz radio band. The users share one of the channels for communication, but only one user can speak at a time; other users have to wait for the shared channel to be available. CB radio communication is not a recent invention: the first CB radio was constructed by Al Gross in the 1940s in the United States. However, widespread use of CB radio communication occurred a few decades later – in the 1960s and 70s. In Europe, CB radio appeared in the 1960s, but in Poland it became truly popular only in the 1990s, after the fall of communism, when the borders were opened to the import of Western technology. There are two main factors that contribute to CB radio’s popularity all over the world: a relatively low cost of equipment (the radio and the antenna) and, in the majority of states, no legal obligation for a CB radio permission or licence.

There are many types of CB radios used throughout the world; however, this paper will focus on and analyse the language used by Polish drivers who communicate via a portable CB radio, whose range is usually between 10 and 15 km.

Highway CB communication

One of the most common uses of CB radio is the so-called ‘highway use’, which first emerged in the 1970s in the United States with the introduction of the ‘double nickel’ – the 55 mph speed limit for trucks. Truck drivers contacted each other in order to share the warnings concerning potential dangers, such as radar traps, construction works or bad weather conditions. The major aim of communication, however, was to maintain the time and pace of the delivery despite the 55mph speed limit. The channel reserved for highway communication is channel 19. This channel is also often monitored by the police and other services, and can also be used to call emergency services.

CB radio communication gave rise to a specific kind of language (CB radio slang) and culture, first in the United States (Ramsey 1979; Dannefer and
Poushinsky 1979) and in Canada (Aléong and Chrétien 1981). Here is a short sample of an American CB radio slang, a conversation in which two truck drivers exchange information regarding police speed checks to be found on their route (Ramsey 1979, 339):

(1)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| D1 | Breaker one-nine for that west-bound eighteen-wheeler. |
| D2 | You got it, good buddy. |
| D1 | How’s it look out your front door? |
| D2 | Oh man, we got a green light all the way in to that Clovis-town. But you better comb your hair then after the next water hole. Until then we gonna put the hammer down. |
| D1 | That’s a big ten-four, good good buddy. You shake the trees and we’ll rake the leaves. This is that Piccolo Pete out. |
| D2 | Ten-four, good buddy. This is that Chili Chopper out. |

The popularity of CB radio was reflected in popular culture: the CB phenomenon served as the source of inspiration for a number of songs and movies, such as The Convoy or Smokey and the Bandit, to name just the most popular ones.

**Highway use in Poland**

In Poland, the ‘highway use’, which is also conducted on channel 19 (band C, 26.960-27.400 Mhz), started to develop in the 1990s and was strongly connected with the economic liberation following the fall of the communist system. After the borders were opened, the roads filled with trucks transporting goods between Western and Eastern Europe.

Initially popular mainly among truck drivers, a portable CB radio soon became a common equipment of a passenger car, too. Its increasing popularity in Poland was related to two major factors: firstly, to the small number of existing highways and the relatively bad technical condition of the roads, and, secondly, to the severe speed limits. Due to these factors, travelling throughout the country within reasonable time without breaking speed limits was, and often still is, a mission impossible. That is why CB radio in Poland has been used mainly to avoid radar traps, photo radars and controls carried out by police or by Inspekcja Transportu Drogowego (the Inspectorate of Road Transport) – an institution controlling trucks and truck drivers. Last but not least, the popularity enjoyed by a portable CB radio in Poland was also strengthened by Polish drivers’ mentality: it is a common belief that speed limits are set to be broken, and that ‘clever drivers’ should outsmart ‘dumb policemen’. Over the last couple of years, however, the popularity of CB radio
with non-professional drivers has been falling (Szypulski 2018). This trend has been accompanied by the increase in the use of smartphone applications, such as Yanosik, which combine the function of a GPS with a warning system, informing the drivers about potential dangers on the road. Still, CB radio has remained the major communication device for professional truck drivers.

3. Research methodology

The data for the analysis have been collected either by recording and transcribing or by noting down, and come from the years 2005-2015. The author has been listening to similar conversations since 1999 while travelling as a car passenger in Poland. It needs to be emphasized that due to the acoustic conditions, data collection is very often hindered: CB radio exchanges are frequently broken and filled with crackles, which makes them difficult, or sometimes even impossible, to record and transcribe. On the other hand, the limited time of the exchange as well as the use of ritualized formulae facilitate a relative ease of notation.

The recorded corpus consists of approximately 20 hours of recording, only a small part of which (circa 15,000 words) has been transcribed. The perspective that the paper assumes is qualitative data analysis. The examples analysed have been chosen by the author by listening to the recordings and transcribing relevant data. Additionally, the proposed claims are supported with the examples that can be found in the work of other authors who analysed that kind of discourse.

4. CB radio discourse of Polish drivers

CB radio discourse of Polish drivers is a complex phenomenon which displays a number of characteristic features, such as specialised (slang) vocabulary, frequent use of repetitions or the overuse of diminutives. The following sections will be devoted to the presentation of those most characteristic aspects of CB radio discourse.

Information exchange structure

There is more than one type of exchanges conducted by means of a portable CB radio, but the kind that is of special interest for the purposes of this paper is the information exchange.

The main objective of information exchange is to obtain information concerning the road conditions on the road one has yet to cover. The most solicited information concerns the dangers connected with police controls, radar traps and photo radars (traffic enforcement cameras); however, it often includes
advice on the construction works, weather conditions, traffic jams, etc. Information exchanges follow a typical pattern and contain certain obligatory elements. Each information exchange starts with a call for attention, or the summon (the underlined phrases), and a request for information, for instance:

(2a) **Kolego, kolego, jak tam drożka na Warszawę?** [‘**Good buddy, what is the road-DIM to Warsaw like?’**]²
(2b) **Mobilki³, gdzie stoją?** [‘**Mobilki, where are they standing?’**]
(2c) **Mobilki, jak droga na Katowice?** [‘**Mobilki, what is the road to Katowice like?’**]
(2d) **Koledzy, jak ścieżka w kierunku Piotrkowa?** [‘**Good buddies, what is the path to Piotrków like?’**]

This usually elicits an answer from one of the drivers travelling in the opposite direction:

(3a) **W stronę Warszawy na czterysta trzydziestym siódmym 437) suszareczka.** [‘Towards Warsaw, there is a hairdryer-DIM at 437 km.’]; **hairdryer stands for a hand-held radar**
(3b) **Czysto kolego.** [‘**It’s clean, buddy.’**]
(3c) **Czyściutko.** [‘**It’s clean-DIM.’**]
(3d) **Do Warszawy masz czysto, tylko tam spory koreczek jest w Serocku.** [‘It’s clean until Warsaw, but there is quite a big traffic jam-DIM in Serock.’]
(3e) **Przed Suwałkami misiaczek na hulajnodze, patrzy przez lornetkę.** [Before Suwałki, a teddy-bear-DIM on a scooter is looking through binoculars.’]; **teddy-bear is a police officer, scooter is a police motorcycle**
(3f) **Na sto osiemdziesiątym pierwszym (181) w stronę Białegostoku wypadacz. Resorak wjechał w naczepę.** [‘At 181 km towards Białystok, there is an accident-DIM, a toy-car ran into a semi-trailer.’], where **toy car stands for a passenger car**

The answer is followed by the expression of thanks and feedback on the road covered by the first driver:

(4) **Dzięki, dzięki, kolego. Ty do Białegostoku masz czyściutko.** [‘**Thanks, thanks, buddy. It’s clean-DIM to Białystok.’**]

When we cannot share any relevant information, we need to explain our reasons (Jaros 2011c):

(5) **No, dzięki kolego, ja ci nie pomogę, bo ruszam. Szerokości, powodzonka.** [‘I can’t help you, good buddy, because I have just started my trip. Have a safe journey. Good luck-DIM.’]
If the acoustic conditions are insufficient, and one of the interlocutors did not receive a clear message, they can ask for clarification:

(6a) Powtórz kolego, bo nie doleciało. ['Say it again, good buddy, because I haven’t got it.‘]

or just make sure if they were heard correctly:

(6b) Doleciało? ['Got it?‘]

The final but optional element of the exchange is the leave-taking and the wishes of good luck/happy holiday, etc.:

(7) Dzięki kolego. Szerokości. Bajo. ['Thanks, buddy. Have a safe journey. Bye.’]

Jaros (2011c and 2015b) also quotes the following examples of the closing formulae:

(8a) Miłego dzionka. ['Have a nice day-DIM.’]
(8b) Miłej nocki. ['Have a nice night-DIM.’]
(8c) Przyczepności. ['Have a good grip.’; meaning that the car wheels should have a good grip, which will make your journey safe
(8d) 7 i 3 pod kółeczka. ['7 and 3 under your wheels-DIM.’], meaning “good luck”
(8e) Słoneczka pod kółeczka. ['Sun-DIM under your wheels-DIM.’]
(8f) Lustereczko dla ciebie, kolego. ['Mirror-DIM for you.’], where mirror-DIM means “and the same for you”
(8g) Podziękował. ['Thanks’]

Here is an example of a typical information exchange:

(9a)

| Original Polish text | literal English translation |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| K1: Kolego, kolego, jak tam dróżka na Warszawę? | D1: Buddy, buddy, what is the road-DIM to Warsaw like? |
| **Call for attention (summon) and request for information** |
| K2: Na światłach będziesz miał kolego krokodylków, a potem czysto. | D2: Buddy, at the (traffic) lights you will have crocodiles-DIM, and later it’s clean. [Crocodiles is the name given to the officers of Inspekcja Transportu Drogowego – Inspectorate of Road Transport] |
Answer
K 1: Dziękuję, dzięki, kolego. Ty do samego Mrągowa masz czyściutko.
D1: Thanks, thanks, buddy. Until Mrągów it is clean-DIM.

Expression of thanks and feedback
K 2: Dzięki, powodzonka.
D 2: Thanks. Good luck-DIM.

Expression of thanks and leave-taking

Jaros (2011b) quotes the following example:

(9b)

| Original Polish text | literal English translation |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| K1: Mobile, podrzućcie jak ścieżka do Radomska? | D1: Mobilki, tell me what is the path to Radomsko like? |

Call for attention (summon) and request for information

K2: Na 460 miałeš suszarkę.
D2: At 460 km there was a hairdryer.

Answer
K 1: No, dzięki. Wlot do Częstochowy masz czysty.
D1: Thanks, the entry (road) to Częstochowa is clean.

Expression of thanks and feedback
K 2: Dziękuję serdecznie. Szerokości i miłego wypoczynku.
D 2: Many thanks. Have a safe journey and good rest.

Expression of thanks and leave-taking

As we can see, the exchange contains a number of adjacency pairs, i.e. conversation units consisting of two utterances, uttered by two different speakers, where the second utterance is an obligatory follow-up for the first utterance (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). The adjacency pairs to be found here include {information inquiry↔answer}, and {answer↔expression of thanks}. What is interesting, however, is the lack of second pair parts in greeting and in leave-taking. In ordinary circumstances, the lack of the second is always meaningful (for instance, the lack of the response to a greeting may be considered impolite), and must be motivated. Here, this lack can be due to the reasons of efficiency: the time span of the conversation is limited due to the limited range of the antennas and the fact that the cars are moving in opposite directions, so the omission of the otherwise obligatory second is justified. Such a strategy serves to make the exchange more economical and allows for accommodating a bigger portion of more relevant information.
Repetitions

Apart from this established conversational structure, the discourse of Polish portable CB radio displays a number of other characteristic features. One such feature concerns frequent use of repetitions (such as kolego, kolego [‘buddy, buddy’] or dzięki, dzięki [‘thanks, thanks’]). This phenomenon can easily be explained by the auditory conditions of CB communication. CB radio conversations are often filled with numerous crackles and other background noises. The repetition of key fragments, such as the call for attention or the expression of gratitude, enhances the speaker’s chances that his/her message will get across in difficult auditory conditions. This, in turn, ensures that the adjacency pairs are completed and that the structure of the exchange is preserved. Additionally, as noticed by Milusz (2012, 115), repetitions may serve to enhance the expressive power of the utterance, as in

(10) Masz czysto – jedziesz, jedziesz. [‘It’s clean – you are going, you are going.’]

when one of the drivers encourages the other to drive faster and to overtake. Moreover, repetitions add some rhythm to the utterance, making it more dynamic and perhaps easier to understand.

Slang vocabulary

The vocabulary used by CB radio users is typical of a slang: the majority of the words used in CB radio discourse have completely different meanings in standard Polish from the meanings they acquire in CB radio conversations. The examples already cited include: krokodylki ‘crocodiles-DIM’, suszareczka ‘hairdryer-DIM’ or misiaczek ‘teddy-bear-DIM’, but there are many others. For instance, bacik ‘whip-DIM’ denotes an antenna and the word skakanka ‘skipping rope’ refers to Scania – a specific truck make; beczka ‘barrel’ refers to a tank truck, marginesik ‘margin-DIM’ to a hard shoulder, oczko ‘eye-DIM’ to a headlight and gruszka ‘pear’ stands for a CB microphone. As a result, the language of a portable CB is difficult to understand for the people who are not members of this particular discourse community. This is a typical feature of anti-language, which is understood as a language of a minority created against the majority (Halliday 1975). Here, the majority is obviously not understood as the majority in number – the number of drivers significantly exceeds the number of police officers. In the case of a portable CB radio, we can talk about the majority understood as majority resulting from the power held by the institution (the police or the Inspectorate of Road Transport – Inspekcja Transportu Drogowego). In Brown and Levinson’s terms ([1978] 1987), on the other hand, the use of slang vocabulary could
be classified as a positive politeness strategy, aimed at increasing the feeling of solidarity and in-group membership among the members of the community. The strategy is aimed at strengthening the positive face (i.e. the need to belong, to be a part of a community) of both interlocutors. It allows the speaker to show that since they have mastered the slang, they belong to a certain group, and simultaneously lets the hearer feel that they count as the part of the same community because they can understand the slang.

**Diminutives**

Another significant characteristic of CB discourse is very frequent use of diminutives: *mobilek, krokodylek, dróżka, suszareczka, wypadeczek, koreczek, misiaczek* or *powodzonka* ‘vehicle-DIM’, ‘crocodile-DIM’, ‘road-DIM’, ‘hairdryer-DIM’, ‘accident-DIM’, ‘traffic jam-DIM’, ‘teddy bear-DIM’, ‘good luck-DIM’, are just a few representative examples. Nominal diminutives are created in Polish by adding a diminutive suffix (most often -ek or -ka) to a nominal root. This pattern is very productive, and in recent years, an increased use of diminutives in everyday language has been noticed (Kryk-Kastovsky 2000; Handke 2008). However, the number of diminutives used in CB radio discourse is especially surprising, and not easy to explain in view of the sociological profile of a typical user of a portable CB: a middle-aged male driver (Jaros 2015a). An attempt to explain this issue will be undertaken in the further part of this paper.

**5. Politeness in Relevance Theory**

Relevance Theory (henceforth: RT) has been claimed to be asocial. It has been stated that it deals with communication as a cognitive process and is, therefore, not interested in its social context (Mey and Talbot 1988). However, a number of theorists working on politeness issues from relevance-theoretic perspective, for instance, Mark Jary (1994; 1998a; 1998b) or Victoria Escandell-Vidal (1996; 1998; 2004) have proven that this claim is unjustified. Wilson and Sperber have themselves also explicitly declared that the social component of communication is of significant importance to a fully-fledged theory of communication (Sperber and Wilson 1997; Wilson and Sperber 2005).

The account of politeness phenomena in RT that seems most appealing is the perspective proposed by Victoria Escandell-Vidal (2004) – her integrated theory of pragmatics. In her model, Escandell-Vidal combines the social and the cognitive perspective on language use, and treats them not as mutually exclusive but as complementary. The author’s claim is that the social and the cognitive approaches are not two conflicting views but rather two different components of
a larger system. None of them, it is claimed, can be reduced to the other; both are indispensible elements of a comprehensive theory of communication.

**An integrated theory of pragmatics**

The first problem that needs to be considered is whether RT is able to accommodate the notion of norms, which are fairly crucial in the account of politeness. The solution that Escandell-Vidal proposes is the existence of (at least) two modules in human mind: the inference module and the social module. The integrated operation of these two modules would enable communicators to arrive at (im)politeness evaluations of verbal input produced by the speakers.

**The inference module**

Relevance Theory assumes that the mind is modular (Sperber and Wilson [1986] 1995; Wilson and Sperber 2002), and that inferential processes take place within an inference module. This inference module is a processing device, a universal computational mechanism which works on representations. The representations which enter the module are the result of linguistic decoding, enriched by the linguistic and extralinguistic context. Inference processes, which work on these representations, allow to combine information coming from decoding with the accessible contextual assumptions in order to yield contextual effects. The operation of the module, as well as its input and output conditions, are constrained by the relevance-theoretic comprehension procedure:

a) Follow the path of least effort in computing cognitive effects. In particular, test interpretive hypotheses (disambiguations, reference resolutions, implicature, etc.) in order of accessibility.

b) Stop when your expectations of relevance are satisfied. (Sperber and Wilson 2002, 18)

Clause a) sets the input condition whereas clause b) constitutes the output condition. The input condition for this module is accessibility: apart from the assumptions coming from decoding, only the assumptions that are salient, activated by the context are allowed into the module. The output condition is relevance: representations actually produced by the module are the ones that satisfy the expectations of relevance. Summing up, an utterance triggers the process of linguistic decoding, which results in a representation based on decoded meaning and context. This representation, together with the salient contextual assumptions activated by the utterance and retrieved from memory, enters the inference module. There, the
assumptions undergo inference processes, and when the expected level of relevance is achieved, an interpretation (explicature and/or implicature) is produced.

The social module

According to Escandell-Vidal (2004, 10–12), apart from the inferential module, the mind is also equipped with the social module. The social module is more crucial than the inference module in the process of formation of (im)politeness judgements. In Escandell-Vidal’s view, the social module involves both computation and representations. Computation is connected with our ability to extract generalisations on the basis of the observed samples of behaviour. This ability is the basis of our social categorization mechanism. The generalizations we extract have the form of norms. They are stored in the long-term memory and are brought to the working memory when they are activated by the context of the interaction. The mechanism itself is universal and common to all people, but the norms are culture-dependent and derived from the experience of a particular individual. The social categorisation system, it is postulated, is sensitive to features such as power, distance, age, sex, degree of imposition, etc.

The social module fulfils two main tasks. The short term task is an on-line analysis of the current situation, including the incoming pieces of behaviour, which, in turn, causes an appropriate readjustment of the communicative activity. The long-term task is building and updating the stock of representations (norms) concerning the socially adequate behaviour.

An integrated model

For the correct and full interpretation of a given utterance, the inferential and the social module have to be integrated. The integration works two-ways; firstly, representations produced by the social module influence the interpretations produced by the inference module. When the communicative situation has been analysed by the social module, certain expectations are raised. The incoming utterances either confirm or contravene these expectations. The interpretations delivered by the inference module are evaluated as (in)appropriate thanks to the workings of the social module. Secondly, the representations obtained due to the workings of the inference module can be analysed as new samples of behaviour and undergo social categorisation, perhaps serving to establish new norms or simply to confirm and strengthen the existing ones.
Watts’s social model of (im)politeness

Watts (2003) builds his model of (im)politeness upon Bourdieu’s theory of social practice (Bourdieu 1990). The key notion adapted from Bourdieu is the idea of the habitus. The habitus is understood as a set of dispositions to act in specific ways, which is shaped by the social structures internalised by an individual during the process of socialisation. Our habitus, which includes institutionalised forms of behaviour, rights and obligations of the individuals and the power structures, determines our cognitive practices. Social practice depends on the habitus combined with our social, cultural and material capital, and the social field where the practice takes place. Watts transfers this theory into the linguistic field, and proposes a subtype of habitus: the linguistic habitus, which comprises the ways of speaking that we believe to be appropriate in a given sociocultural context. As a result, our linguistic practice depends on our linguistic habitus (the knowledge which linguistic structures are appropriate in a specific type of interaction), our linguistic capital (i.e. our command of language) and the linguistic field (the type of interaction we are involved in). Politeness\(^\text{10}\) is understood as behaviour that is consistent with our habitus in a given situational context. Behaviour which contradicts the dispositions of the habitus is open to the interpretation of impoliteness. Utterances are not polite or impolite by themselves but open to the evaluation of (im)politeness.

The two models combined

I would like to suggest that we should incorporate Watts’s understanding of politeness into Escandell-Vidal’s model. In such a case, habitus would fulfil the role of the ‘storing space’ for the collection of norms extracted by the social module\(^\text{11}\). The concept of the habitus as a product of past experiences and at the same time the generator of our social practices seems to fit perfectly into the mental architecture as described in Escandel-Vidal’s model. Because

\[\text{...the habitus, a product of history, produces individual practices and collective practices – more history – in accordance with the schemes engendered by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes, thought and action, tend to guarantee the ‘correctness’ of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms. (Bourdieu 1990, 55)}\]

Thus habitus fulfils the role of the database for the social faculty: it preserves and stores the social norms for later reference in the course of human interaction. In the proposed version of the model, any interpretation produced by the inference
module would be evaluated against these norms. If the interpretation contravened
the norms of the habitus, it would be open to interpretation as impolite.

In brief, the short-term task of the whole system would be to match and
compare verbal input or, to be more precise, the representations obtained from
verbal input due to the workings of the inference module, to the information stored
in the habitus, and to decide whether the linguistic input (behaviour) is appropriate
(i.e. polite) or inappropriate (i.e. impolite), according to the information in the
database. The long-term task would be to extract generalisations and store them
in the habitus to be retrieved when necessary in a specific conversational context.
The integrated model is fit to explain the ‘rules and norms’ constraining the
speakers-drivers when they communicate via a portable CB-radio. The following
discussion will focus on the norms concerning the structure of the information
exchanges and the use of diminutives.

6. Data analysis

(Non-)preservation of structure

Within the model presented above, it is easy to understand why drivers strive to
preserve the form of the information exchange, and why the lack of such a form
leads to the perceptions of impoliteness. On the basis of the repeated communi-
cative behaviour that a CB radio user is exposed to, the typical structure of the
exchange is extracted by the social module and stored as a norm in the habitus
of a person participating in the community of practice of drivers-CB radio users.
The norm is stored in the habitus, and it is brought to the working memory if
a person finds themselves in the context of a car CB radio conversation, thus
influencing and raising certain expectations concerning the proper structure of
the ensuing conversation. A deviation from the norm, especially the one which
does not seem justified by special reasons, such as urgency, will be considered as
a transgression of the limits set by the habitus, and thus it will be open to evaluation
as impolite behaviour. Thanks to the norm supplied by the social module,
the inferential module will generate the interpretation of the utterance as impolite.
This (im)politeness judgement will take the form of a higher-level explication\textsuperscript{12},
which embeds the base-level explication (i.e. the layer of meaning which results
from the development of the logical form of an utterance). Depending on a given
speech situation, such a transgression may be evaluated by the hearer as accidental
(unintentional) or deliberate (intentional).

The claim that the structure of the exchange constitutes a norm can be
supported by the examples of codification of this norm, in popular press articles or
in internet forums. Here is an example taken from an internet discussion forum\textsuperscript{13}:
if we want to ask about the road, we call the drivers coming from the opposite direction: ‘buddy, what is the road-DIM to Gdansk like?’… when the information is given, we have to say how the road from the direction we are going looks like, we have to thank and introduce ourselves: ‘Thanks for the info, it’s clear your way. Have a safe trip. Rafal. Gdynia.’ or : ‘Thanks, for the info, you have bears-DIM with a hairdryer at 389.’

Here, the user called SrebrnaStrzala (English: SilverArrow) tells another user what the expected structure of the conversation is, what one has to do (‘we have to thank…’), ‘we have to say…’). On the other hand, in the forums, we can find inquiries from novices in CB radio discourse, which also proves the claim that a certain norm exists, and CB users feel compelled to conform to it.

**Diminutives**

The framework described above can also help to explain the (im)politeness of the diminutives used in CB radio communication. One of the functions of diminutives in Polish is their relational value\textsuperscript{14} – they may be employed to convey the speaker’s positive attitude towards the hearer, to reduce the distance and to build solidarity between the interlocutors\textsuperscript{15}. This seems to explain well why diminutives are used in this type of discourse – they are employed in order to build the rapport and the sense of community among CB radio users. In terms of the framework discussed above, we can argue that on the basis of the repeated linguistic behaviour, CB radio users extract a norm concerning a more frequent use of diminutives in this specific conversational context. Thus, the increased use of diminutives is extracted as a generalisation by the social faculty and is stored in the habitus as a norm. When speakers find themselves in the context of a CB radio exchange, the norm is activated, and the verbal behaviour is influenced accordingly – diminutives are expected and are frequently used; such usage is evaluated as consistent with the dispositions of the habitus and thus as polite. Thanks to the integrated operation of the inference module and the social module, the resulting (im)politeness interpretation is represented in the form of a higher-level explication.
Still, even though this type of linguistic behaviour is overwhelmingly common in CB-radio discourse, it sometimes raises certain controversy. In other words, despite being a part of the habitus, this linguistic activity is sometimes seen as somehow inappropriate or unexpected even by the experienced users. This claim can be supported with the following examples of discussions among CB-users on the internet forums:

(12)

**Darksmile**, Wysłany: 2005-11-03, 21:38  
Jedno co mi nie pasuje to zdrobnienia. Dróżka, ścieżka.  
The one thing I don’t quite understand is the diminutives. road-DIM, path-DIM.

**Defender**, Wysłany: 2005-11-04, 10:27  
mnie denerwuje RADYJKO... przecież to nie walkman... , całkiem to spore i z anteną jest kawałem sprzętu..  
A radio-DIM is something that irritates me... it’s not a walkman after all... it’s quite big and, together with the antenna, it’s quite a piece of equipment..

**Zoltodziob**, wysłany: 2011-08-08, 08:54  
Szlag mnie trafia na te wszystkie zdrobnienia jak dzieci z przedszkola ... dróżka, wstążka, radyjko, mikrofonik, światełka się nie świecą, kółeczka się kręcą itd... Jak tak dalej pójdzie, to będą samochodziki na ścieżynce z kluczyczkami w stacyjeczkach i chłopczyczkami za kierownicułką...  
It drives me crazy – all these diminutives, like for children in a kindergarten ... path-DIM, ribbon-DIM, radio-DIM, lights-DIM are not working, wheels-DIM are rolling, etc. If it we continue this way, we will have cars-DIM on paths-DIM, with keys-DIM in ignition-DIM and boys-DIM behind steering wheels-DIM.

As we can see, the frequent use of diminutives raises objections and triggers the feeling of uneasiness in the case of some drivers. There are a number of hypotheses that can be proposed to explain this controversy. Firstly, the increased use of diminutives is particularly striking to the beginners – this seems to be the case with the third quotation given above, the entry submitted by Żółtodziób. The nickname of the user can be translated into English as rookie, which suggests that the user is a CB-radio beginner. And here the model can satisfactorily explain the situation: the CB radio user’s social module has not yet extracted an appropriate norm, and that is why the use of diminutives, which contradicts the dispositions of his/her habitus, is perceived as inappropriate.

Secondly, diminutives, though increasingly common in everyday Polish, are also typically associated with the so-called ‘baby talk’, or with the stereotype of ‘feminine language’ (Jurafsky 1993). The drivers-CB radio users, who in Poland are far more commonly male than female (Jaros 2011c), happen to feel irritated with this seemingly ‘feminine’ or ‘infantile’ way of speaking, and sometimes air
their irritation. Here, we could argue that the habitus-based definition of politeness predicts that the norm concerning the use of diminutives in baby talk or by women clashes with the norm concerning the use of diminutives in CB discourse. Due to the conversational context, however, the ‘CB radio norm’, as more relevant in the given context, should prevail. The model presented above correctly predicts that regular linguistic behaviour gives rise to further repeated linguistic practice. As a result, it correctly predicts that CB radio users will continue to employ diminutive forms instead of the corresponding regular nouns.

7. Conclusion

The CB radio discourse of Polish drivers is a social and linguistic phenomenon in its own right, the type of linguistic activity that can be successfully analysed from a number of various perspectives, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, lexical pragmatics or politeness studies, to name just a few. This paper presented the basic features of this kind of discourse and discussed the selected aspects of the phenomenon in question from the (im)politeness relevance-theoretic perspective. It has been demonstrated that the notions of the social and inferential modules as well as the notion of habitus are useful in the explanation of (im)politeness judgements in CB radio discourse. Still, the range of aspects that may be of interest to a potential researcher is far broader and includes areas such as the slang character of lexis, the special conversational structure understood as the genre, the issues connected with the exchange of social capital or the negotiation of power. Due to its unique character and a variety of aspects, CB radio discourse of Polish drivers seems a promising research venue.

Notes

1 When travelling abroad, Polish drivers switch to channel 28.
2 The original Polish text is followed by a relatively literal English translation.
3 Mobilki is a plural of mobilek (which, in turn, is a diminutive form of mobil), a word which does not exist in standard Polish. In CB radio slang, mobil or mobilek is any vehicle that is travelling on the road at the time of the exchange.
4 The example comes from Jaros 2011b, but the labelling of the turns is mine.
5 Jaros’ research also confirms that CB radio exchanges are highly ritualized and typically follow this pattern (Jaros 2011c, 116).
6 By the discourse community I understand after Swales (Swales 1990) a group of people who share common goals, possess specific mechanisms of intercommunication (which they use to distribute information), use specific genres and particular vocabulary, and exhibit a suitable level of expertise.
Halliday lists a number of other criteria that a language must fulfill in order to qualify as an anti-language; however, a detailed discussion of CB slang as an anti-language falls outside the scope of this article.

Escandell-Vidal strongly argues in favour of the claim that the faculty of social cognition should be a separate module because of its specific character: it invokes elements and establishes relationships with no direct perceptual motivation (Escandell-Vidal 1998, 47).

Norm, as it is used here, is an umbrella term for any type of organized specific knowledge. In literature, various other names are used: scripts, scenarios, schemas or frames. In her earlier writings, Escandell-Vidal uses the term “frame”, which she defines as “a structured set of organised knowledge” (Escandell-Vidal 1996, 634). Norms constitute a part of specific knowledge which enables us to interpret and participate in the events we have been through many times: it is acquired and based on the previous experience. It is worth noting that, even though it has not been precisely defined, the notion of a norm is not foreign to the Relevance Theory: it has been employed under the label of scenarios or cognitive scripts to describe bigger chunks of organized information, stored in the encyclopaedic entries of the concepts encoded or activated by an utterance (Sperber and Wilson [1986] 1995, 87-8; Wilson 1994; Carston 2002, 226-227).

To be more precise, in Watts’s terminology, this is politic and not politeness behaviour. Watts is the father of the distinction between politeness and politic behaviour (1992): what other theories name politeness, Watts calls politic behaviour. Another problematic issue is the correspondence between appropriate/inappropriate, on the one hand, and polite/impolite, on the other hand. Due to the space limits, these issues will not be pursued here.

Escandell-Vidal, in fact, cites Bourdieu’s notion of habitus in support of her claim that internalised knowledge of practices is acquired from practices themselves as a result of generalization on observed behaviour (Escandell-Vidal 2004, 11), but she does not find it useful as the integral part of her framework.

In Relevance Theory, higher-level explicature (higher-order explicature) is a notion that was developed by Robyn Carston (2002). Higher-level explicature embeds and describes the base level explicature. The meanings accommodated by a higher level explicature include information concerning the mood of the utterance, its illocutionary force, the emotional attitude of the speaker as well as the (im)politeness judgments.

All the Internet forum examples presented in this article have been taken from a Polish CB radio forum, which was first available at http://cb-radio.pl and has later changed its location to www.cb-forum.pl. The original spelling and punctuation have been preserved.

The relational character of diminutives has been thoroughly discussed also in the case of many other languages, such as Greek, Spanish, Russian or Dutch.
In the field of politeness studies, there are numerous works discussing the relation between diminutives and politeness (see for instance Wierzbicka 1984; Sifianou 1992; Mendoza 2005; Wiercińska 2016). One of the fundamental distinctions proposed by Relevance Theory that could come handy in the analysis of diminutives and their various meanings is the distinction between conceptual and procedural meaning (Blakemore 1987; Blakemore 2011). It could be argued that the diminutive suffixes conceptually encode the basic semantic meaning of smallness while the derivative expressive meanings (contempt, solidarity) are encoded procedurally. This hypothesis, however, deserves a much broader and detailed analysis than, due to space limits, could be offered in this paper.

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