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English Politeness and Class

Politeness plays a vital role in maintaining class differences. In this highly original account, Sara Mills analyses the interrelationship between class and linguistic interaction, uncovering the linguistic ideologies behind politeness in British English. She sheds light on the way politeness and rudeness interrelate with the marking of class boundaries, and reveals how middle-class positions in society are marked by people's use of self-deprecation, indirectness and reserve. Systematically challenging received wisdom about cross-cultural and intercultural differences, she goes beyond the mere context of the interaction to investigate the social dimension of politeness. This approach enables readers to analyse other languages in the same way, and a range of case studies illustrate how ideologies of politeness are employed and judged.

SARA MILLS is Research Professor in the School of Cultural Studies, Sheffield Hallam University. She is the author of *Gender and Politeness* (Cambridge, 2003), *Language and Sexism* (Cambridge, 2008) and *Language, Gender and Feminism* co-authored with Louise Mullany (2011).

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In many societies the tendency to speak respectfully to others is stereotypically revalorised as an index of respectability of the self

(Agha, 2007: 302).

It is impossible for an Englishman to open his mouth without making some other Englishman despise him

(Shaw, cited in Hitchings, 2013: 5).

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