
Politeness has become a key focal point for research in cross-cultural pragmatics in the past two decades. It is an area that has attracted much attention, perhaps partly because differences between politeness systems in different cultures and societies can have far-reaching implications for international relations, economically, politically and socially. Brown and Levinson's theory has proved to be a popular choice for comparisons of politeness phenomena in different cultures since its re-publication in 1987. Fukushima's book on differences between politeness in British English and Japanese thus joins a fairly long list of works that have applied Brown and Levinson's theory to cross-cultural studies of politeness. Nevertheless, it does offer important new insights, both for politeness researchers in general, and for those working in the Brown and Levinson school of research in particular. The two key contributions of Fukushima's work are firstly that it generates new data which expands our understanding of how politeness is manifested across cultures, and secondly, it attempts to modify Brown and Levinson's theory so that it provides a more comprehensive account of politeness in British English and Japanese, thereby suggesting possible new directions for the future development of cross-cultural politeness theory.

The focus of this study is on comparing requests and responses to requests in British English and Japanese. It thus generates new pragmatic data from two perspectives. Firstly, because it compares politeness in British English and Japanese, and so expands the amount of cross-cultural data we have on politeness phenomena. Fukushima's study shows that while British and Japanese cultures may be both classified as "negative politeness cultures" according to Brown and Levinson, there are important differences in the types of politeness strategies employed to make requests and to respond to off-record requests. For example, Japanese subjects tended to opt for direct requesting strategies in some situations and conventionally indirect strategies in others, while British subjects always opted for conventionally indirect strategies (p.191). Secondly, it focuses on responses to off-record requests, a speech act that has received little attention in the field. Fukushima proposes the notion of "solicitousness", which is defined as "a response to off-record requests which takes the form of offering" (p.93), as opposed to making suggestions or giving advice in response to off-record requests, or even refusing the request. According to the data, Japanese subjects demonstrated more solicitousness than British subjects, who tended to offer suggestions or advice in response to off-record requests (p.199).
Based on these results Fukushima proposes modifying Brown and Levinson's original classification of societies or cultures by expanding the "negative politeness cultures" group (or dyad II) to allow for a greater degree of variation (p.195). In essence, Fukushima shows that Brown and Levinson's classification of British and Japanese cultures as negative politeness cultures is overly-simplistic, and so puts forward a means of retaining Brown and Levinson's basic approach to classifying politeness systems in different cultures.

Fukushima herself notes the limitations of the approach she uses gathering data, which relies on written questionnaires answered by undergraduates in two universities, one in Britain and the other in Japan. Yet while no study can cover all aspects of a phenomena, and should not be expected to, there remains one serious question that the use of this data poses for her conclusions: can written data really be expected to represent what the British or Japanese subjects would actually say in those situations? As Fukushima herself notes, requests and responses to requests generally occur over a number of turns (p.222), but a written questionnaire of this kind forces subjects to make requests or responses to requests in an arguable unnatural way, since the speech acts are restricted to a single turn. In addition, there is also the issue of whether the responses of subjects represents what they think they should/would say rather than what they would actually say, an additional problem that Fukushima also acknowledges (p.140). This is not to say that the data collected is not useful, but it is perhaps a pity that there was no triangulation of the written questionnaire data with other sources of data (from naturally occurring data or role plays), as this could have alleviated some doubts as to the validity of the data. It might also have been useful if Fukushima had made some comparisons with the results she obtained and previous studies, in particular Sifianou (1992) who focused on requests in British English and Greek, as this would have also served as a further means of validating the data.

Fukushima frames her work as a defence of Brown and Levinson's theory against the rather critical reception it has received by some in the field, her aim being to "put [Brown and Levinson's] politeness theory on to a more secure methodological footing" (p.19). In particular, she attempts to demonstrate that "the variables determining politeness strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson are valid", and thus that "Brown and Levinson's framework is still valid for cross-cultural comparison" (p.19). This is of particular interest since the trend thus far for researchers working on Asian languages such as Japanese or Chinese has been to reject Brown and Levinson's approach as being unable to account for politeness in those languages. It is not entirely clear, however, that Fukushima has actually mounted a successful defence of Brown and Levinson's theory,
especially in relation to Japanese.
It is claimed by Fukushima that her results show that Brown and Levinson's power, distance and degree of imposition variables do indeed influence the choice of politeness strategies. However, since few would argue that these variables are not related to politeness phenomena (although some researchers such as Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003) might disagree with the idea that they are "pre-existing" factors that "influence" choice of politeness strategies), the question is not so much whether or not these variables are important in relation to politeness, but whether it is these variables alone that can account for choices of politeness strategy (as Brown and Levinson claim).
Fukushima's conclusions seem to indicate that there are other factors involved in the generation of politeness apart from Brown and Levinson's three variables (pp.179-180), which seems to weaken rather than support Brown and Levinson's theory.
It is also proposed by Fukushima that the notions of individualism and collectivism are necessary in order to explain differences between politeness strategies in British English and Japanese. For example, she suggests the in-group and out-group distinction that is more prominent in collectivistic cultures like Japanese influences the choice of request strategies, as opposed to the more individualistic British culture which emphasises personal autonomy (p.212). This is one of the key claims made by Fukushima, since as the title of the book itself reflects, one of the main theses of her book is that differences between politeness phenomena in British English and Japanese can be related to the relative importance of individualistic values in British culture and collectivistic values in Japanese culture. The individualism/collectivism distinction has, of course, been employed by researchers in relation to the analysis of face-work across cultures (for example, in the work of Ting-Toomey (1994) and others) with interesting results, but as Cocroft and Ting-Toomey (1994) admit, the classification of Japanese as a collectivistic culture is somewhat of an over-simplification. Fukushima acknowledges the complexity of reality (p.111), but in her analysis ultimately ends up treating Japanese culture as simply collectivistic (at least in relation to requests and responses to requests). For example, she explicitly claims that differences between requesting strategies in Japanese and British English "can be accounted for by the differences between British and Japanese cultures in terms of individualist and collectivist cultures" (p.212). This illustrates the difficulty of applying notions such as individualism and collectivism to the analysis of politeness across cultures. Nevertheless, the use of these concepts in theorizing about politeness is certainly worth further attention, as Fukushima's analysis of differences between requests and responses to requests was certainly very illuminating at times.
Since Fukushima's aim is to support Brown and Levinson's theory she also attempts to deflect criticisms made by Japanese and Chinese researchers in relation to the notion of face. She claims that Matsumoto (1988) and Ide (1989) have not refuted Brown and Levinson's theory by showing that some choices of politeness forms are obligatory according to situations, because the data used by them amounts to "simply discuss[ing] some sociolinguistic characteristics of the Japanese language, which are not significant pragmatically" (p.61). It would appear from this line of argument, then, that Fukushima does not consider the use of different verbal endings in Japanese, including honorifics, to be relevant to politeness, or at least to "pragmatic" politeness. However, the implied distinction between "sociolinguistic politeness" and "pragmatic politeness" is difficult to sustain in light of research by Okamoto (1999) or Usami (2002), for example, that demonstrates the use of honorific verbals and so on in Japanese is not as obligatory or rigid as often thought by some. In other words, the actual use of honorifics in Japanese is pragmatic in nature. To reject evidence that shows honorifics cannot be explained using the notions of positive or negative face on the basis that honorifics are sociolinguistic rather than pragmatic phenomena thus seems somewhat problematic. Another problem for her claim that Brown and Levinson's notions of face are applicable to a comparison of British English and Japanese is the fact that in her analysis of requests and responses to off-record requests she does not make recourse to the notion of face even once. The fact that the notions of positive and negative face are not utilised at all in her study explicating politeness phenomena seems to indicate that these notions may not be particularly useful for interpreting politeness across cultures. From Fukushima's analysis it appears that the three sociological variables proposed by Brown and Levinson, together with the influence of individualistic and/or collectivistic values, and other culture-specific notions, such as *giri* ('social obligations') or *kikubari* ('empathetic consideration'), are more useful in understanding politeness across cultures. This book is an important contribution to the field of cross-cultural pragmatics. It compares politeness in British English and Japanese, something that has not been attempted in such detail thus far, and also shows the importance of "solicitousness", a politeness strategy not investigated by others in the field. The potential for utilising notions drawn from cultural studies, such as the individualism/collectivism distinction in analysing politeness across cultures is also demonstrated. In this sense, then, while the book is framed as a defence of Brown and Levinson's theory, it seems to be moving at times in a direction that counters some of the key claims made by Brown and Levinson. It is a book that should be of interest to both those seeking to further their understanding of differences between politeness in British English and Japanese,
particularly teachers of ESL and Japanese, and also to those involved in the further development of a more adequate cross-cultural theory of politeness.

Griffith University
Michael Haugh

References