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Book Review

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DOI 10.1515/ip-2015-0014

Leyre Ruiz de Zarobe and Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe (eds.). 2012. *Speech Acts and Politeness across languages and cultures*. Bern: Peter Lang, 402 pp. ISBN 978-3-0343-0611-9

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As the title suggests, this books deals with speech acts and politeness across languages and cultures. This volume seeks to provide further evidence for pragmatic research, more specifically on the pragmatic unit under investigation, namely that of the speech act. The illocutionary force of these acts (i.e., the speaker's intention when saying these utterances) has been extensively related to the issue of politeness (Taguchi 2012). The link between speech acts and politeness has been regarded as a universal phenomenon although the nature of this link is language and culture-specific. For that reason, extensive research (Alcón and Safont 2007; Félix-Brasdefer 2008, 2009, 2012; Hickey and Steward 2004; Trosborg 1995) has been conducted on the analysis of speech acts and politeness across different languages and cultures, especially among Western languages.

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The dichotomy underlying politeness, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, as well as the east-west debate in relation to cross-cultural pragmatics are central topics in the present volume. These topics have been addressed by analyzing different speech acts, such as requests, apologies, compliments, thanking, and offers, among others. In fact, it provides strong empirical evidence for speech acts in languages other than English. In this regard, the present book is an excellent combination of chapters and an outstanding piece of research which offers further valuable insights on those aspects previously mentioned.

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This volume opens with a general introduction, written by the co-editors Leyre Ruiz de Zarobe and Yolanda Ruiz de Zarobe, which aims to build an inclusive platform on which the topic might be discussed. The collection of chapters in this volume is divided into four main sections which comprise different research papers carried out by recognized authors who specialize in this issue. Each main section deals with a specific area which is paramount in the study of pragmatics: (i) descriptive accounts of speech acts and politeness

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in some languages and cultures, (ii) comparative studies of speech acts and politeness across languages and cultures, (iii) descriptive studies of speech acts and politeness in second/foreign language teaching and, (iv) methodological resources in the study of pragmatics.

Following the comprehensive introduction, the first section of this volume includes five descriptive studies which were conducted in five different settings, namely that of Poland, Turkey, Greece, the Basque Country and China. In Chapter 1 ('About Polish Politeness'), Ogiermann provides an overview on issues related to politeness theories. More specifically, she examines the strategies employed by Poles when apologizing and requesting. In contrast to Western languages, such as English and German, the findings showed the stronger preference for direct forms and thereby for positive politeness strategies. As Brown and Levinson (1987: 62) pointed out, those strategies are addressed towards the hearers' positive face (i.e. the hearer's desire to be liked and approved of by others). The author argues that widely known Anglo-Saxon models are not suitable for analyzing Polish and suggest that the collection of qualitative data provide a better understanding of the concept of politeness.

Similarly, in the second chapter ('Thanking in Turkish: a Corpus-based study'), Zeyrek aims to analyze and examine the linguistic thanking devices employed by Turkish subjects on the basis of a written corpus. The author found both explicit and implicit strategies and, the linguistic expressions associated with these strategies. Zeyrek highlights that "politeness is not a categorical construct with negative and positive poles, but rather a gradient one" (p. 83) and proposes that the analysis of spoken corpus is a must in identifying the thanking expressions used in spoken language.

Chapter 3 ('Greek students e-mail requests to faculty members') explores the linguistic realizations and politeness strategies used by students when making a request to their professors via email. The findings reported a high level of formality and use of negative politeness strategies. According to Brown and Levinson (1987: 62), those strategies address the hearers' negative face (i.e. the person's desire not to be impeded on by others and to have freedom of action). Bella and Sifianou emphasize the importance of learning the norms of Greek politeness when requesting via e-mail to facilitate student-teacher interactions.

Idiazabal and Larrigan, in their chapter 'Generic you in Basque: A politeness strategy in young people debates? examine the use of the 'generic-you' as a politeness strategy by secondary students when discussing a topic. The outcomes showed that the generic-you is intentionally employed by students as a politeness strategy to negotiate opinions and reach a consensus in a debate. The authors suggest that the generic-you is a negative politeness strategy due to the fact that it indicates concern on behalf of the speaker.

The last chapter in this section, written by Jiang, focuses on the speech acts of offering and inviting. ‘Politeness and facework in Chinese language and culture’ explores how facework is performed and politeness is achieved in offers and invitations in Chinese. The results showed that Chinese culture norms influence their speech act patterns. The core aspect of Chinese politeness is “denigrating self and respecting other” (Gu 1990: 238). In that regard, Jiang highlights that Anglo-Saxon models cannot be applied in Asian societies where the value system is completely different from Western societies.

Chapters 6 through 8 examine speech acts across languages and cultures. Siebold, in her paper ‘Implicit and explicit thanking in Spanish and German’ (Chapter 6), aims at contrasting the speech act of thanking in Spanish and German by means of open role-plays which elicit expressions of gratitude. Her analysis revealed significant differences across languages. While Spanish subjects implicitly employed very few thanking formulae, German subjects explicitly produced a great variety of thanking forms. The author claims that Spanish thanking behavior has a tendency towards positive politeness by expressing attention and affection while German thanking behavior has a tendency towards negative politeness in order to protect the hearer’s freedom of action. Siebold suggests that further research is needed in the area of German-Spanish contrastive pragmatics.

In the chapter ‘Learning-offers on the Internet in Spanish and French’ written by Ruiz de Zarobe, the speech act of offering is analyzed by means of online course advertisements. The similarities and differences between Spanish and French offers are discussed. The findings showed that directive strategies are the most commonly employed, mainly in French offers. These are considered positive politeness strategies. As argued by the author, the Internet, as a new universal communication context, should be further exploited in the field of cross-cultural pragmatics.

The last chapter in this section, ‘Cross-cultural analysis of the use of humor by Russian and American English speakers’ by Shardakova, describes the major patterns found in humor in elicited speech acts (apology, compliment, invitation and request) in relation to politeness by comparing American and Russian subjects. The analysis of humor revealed cross-cultural differences regarding the politeness strategies employed by the participants under investigation. The results showed that American respondents used more provocative and aggressive humor showing a great variety of politeness strategies whereas, Russian participants, unexpectedly, were less offensive and employed more hedges in order to mitigate the threatening nature of speech acts. The author attributes this finding to the fact that the majority of Russian participants were female.

The next section continues with comprehensive research on speech acts and politeness in second/foreign language teaching and learning. This section starts

with a paper ('Complimenting and responding to a compliment in the Spanish 1
FL classroom: from empirical evidence to pedagogical intervention') carried out
by Félix-Brasdefer and Hasler-Barker. The findings reported that L2 Spanish
learners did not produce compliments and respond to compliments in the
same way than L1 Spanish speakers. The authors suggest that teaching prag- 5
matics in the foreign language classroom is a necessary condition for the
appropriate use of the target language.

Beckwith and Dewaele, in their chapter 'The effect of two years abroad on
the development of apologies in the Japanese L2 of adult English native speak- 10
ers', investigated the development of apologies of a group L1 English speakers
who had studied the L2 Japanese only in the UK and a group of L1 English
speakers who have been living for two years in Japan. The results provide
evidence of the effect a stay-abroad period on fostering pragmatic development,
although the non-linear development of pragmatics was also noticed, in accord- 15
ance with previous research.

Martí, in her chapter 'Are women more polite than men? The effect of gender
on the use of request modifiers by Spanish EFL university students' analyzes the
role of gender in undergraduates' requestive behavior. The findings from a
Discourse Completion Test revealed that women showed more pragmatic skills
than men in using the appropriate request modifiers in their L2 (English). The 20
author suggests that "the relevance of gender as [an] individual variable should
be more deeply assessed" (p. 331) and proposes the inclusion of qualitative
approaches in pragmatic research.

Chapter 12, 'Teaching Slovenian and Italian communication style', is written 25
by Mikolic. The author aims to analyze the Slovenian-Italian language contact
and the effect of this contact in some areas in the L2 classroom. Strong differ-
ences between Slovenian and Italian communication styles were found. Mikolic
suggests that areas, such as lexis, speech acts and conversational strategies are
highly determined by the illocutionary force and culture of a language. This
author emphasizes the paramount role of intercultural competence in the use of 30
appropriate linguistic forms and the need to teach intercultural competence in
the L2 classroom.

Last but not least, the fourth section deals with methodological resources in
pragmatics. Ogiermann and Sabenroth, in their chapter 'Statistics, in contrastive
pragmatics', discuss statistical tests employed in cross-cultural pragmatics and 35
comment on instruments for collecting data. The authors report that the majority
of studies in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics use the Chi-square
test, the t-test and ANOVA. They also highlight the need for qualitative
approaches based on naturally occurring data in order to provide new insights
into the field of pragmatics. 40

All in all, the book is a noteworthy contribution to the field of pragmatics 1 because it presents us with several studies of speech acts that include several languages and communicative frameworks different from the traditional ones that we are used to. Interestingly enough, English and the language classroom are not the focus of attention. A suggestion that is repeatedly claimed is the need 5 to develop new politeness models which are not based on Anglo-Saxon societies. The current multilingual framework calls for further research into the analysis of politeness phenomena across languages and cultures.

Furthermore, this edited volume is well-written and organized for the reader in main sections to follow the pattern-line as they read. There is a logical 10 progression of topics and development of ideas throughout the book making it accessible for a variety of readers. In fact, the chapters complement and enrich each other as a complete volume and can also be treated as individual chapters. My only minor criticism is the fact that some of them, at times, do not provide an exhaustive description of the speech act analyzed and a comprehensive 15 discussion on previous studies related to the topic. If an in-depth interpretation of findings is required, the reader will need to supplement the volume with additional bibliographical resources.

Despite these minor limitations, *Speech Acts and Politeness across languages and cultures* is an extremely useful and valuable resource for researchers, 20 teachers and students interested in the field of pragmatics and more specifically for those interested in speech acts and politeness theories. Generally speaking, this short review does not do justice to what this volume contains, so I heartily recommend that all those concerned read it for themselves.

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Bionote

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