

English and Japanese Compliments in Book Reviews of Academic Sociolinguistic Journals

Kayo Fujimura-Wilson

Abstract

Compliments have been previously examined along with linguistic politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) as an important speech act for creating solidarity among speakers. In written texts, writers need to negotiate a relationship with readers and thus maintain a level of concern about politeness. Book reviews in academic journals publicly display both positive and critical evaluation, and reviewers need to create solidarity with authors and readers alike. Therefore, this study examines the way in which compliments are used in English and Japanese book reviews in sociolinguistic journals in order to reveal the cultural differences in written compliments between the two languages as well as their similarities.

In this paper, previous studies of compliments in written texts, particularly in academic book reviews in English and other foreign languages, will be discussed first. Second, the methodology of this study will be introduced. After the findings of English and Japanese compliments in book reviews are revealed, similarities as well as differences between English and Japanese compliments in sociolinguistic book reviews in written texts will be discussed along with linguistic politeness.

In both languages, compliments were used to positively evaluate a book and its authors and to make authors and readers feel good. However, the way in which reviewers in English and Japanese express compliments towards a book sometimes differed between the two languages. Reviewers in English tended to compliment more directly to the authors and the book itself, including contents and analysis, than reviewers in Japanese. Instead, the benefits to readers and style of the book tended to be more emphasised

in Japanese book reviews. Moreover, compliments in the closing section of the reviews were used twice more in book reviews written in English than in Japanese. These results suggested that compliments used in academic book reviews culturally differ among languages.

Key words: compliments, book reviews, written discourse, Japanese language academic writing

1. Introduction

Compliments have been widely analysed in face-to-face speech interaction as a way in which speakers express solidarity and negotiate social harmony with interlocutors. Speakers use compliments as a means to elicit positive feelings and try to deliver positive thoughts during conversation. Holmes (1986: 485) defines a compliment as “a speech act which explicitly or implicitly attributes credit to someone other than the speaker, usually the person addressed, for some “good” (possession, characteristic, skill, etc.) which is positively valued by the speakers and the hearer”. English compliments have been analysed in America (Wolfson, 1981, 1983) and in New Zealand (Holmes, 1986). Compliments have also been studied in European languages, including German (Golato, 2002), Greek (Sifianou, 2001), and Polish (Herbert, 1991), and in Asian languages, including Jordanian Arabic (Farghal and Al-Khatib, 2001), Chinese (Chen, 1993; Chen and Yang, 2010; Wang and Tsai, 2003), and Japanese (Barnlund and Araki, 1985; Daikuhara, 1986; Kawaguchi et al. 1996; Nomoto, 1996; Tanabe, 1996).

Compliments highly relate to linguistic politeness, as speakers choose either positive or negative politeness in the negotiation of giving and receiving compliments (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In this sense, compliments can be used not only in face-to-face interaction, but also in written texts, including book reviews, since writers negotiate solidarity with an author of a book in front of readers. In fact, compliments have already been studied in written texts such as book reviews and social networks (SNS). Holmes (1986) states that compliments can be used in enthusiastic interaction to serve as a form of positive politeness; compliments can thus also deliver a positive enthusiastic

intention towards authors, book readers, and readers of SNS.

This article illustrates the particular ways in which compliments are used in academic book reviews in English and Japanese sociolinguistic journals in order to reveal both similarities and differences between the two languages. The findings suggest that there are different communicative strategies in written texts among languages. First, the previous studies of compliments in written texts will be examined in terms of academic book reviews. Second, the methodology of this study, which examines English and Japanese compliments in sociolinguistic journals, will be discussed. The analysis will reveal how reviewers used compliments in the journals differently in the two languages. The results will show that according to their language, writers pay compliments differently, which can be a cause of misunderstanding or conflict among people of different cultures.

2. Studies of compliments in academic written texts

Compliments have been mostly studied in spoken interaction in various languages since the 1980s, and the linguistic politeness theory as put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987) has often been applied to speech interaction because speakers negotiate a relationship with interlocutors while talking to them in a given situation. Nevertheless, writing is also a part of communication and authors of written texts also need to negotiate a relationship with their readers, taking into consideration how audiences feel and react when they read the texts. Hyland (2000: 41) states that “book reviews are more interactively complex and there is a direct, public, and often critical, encounter with a particular text, and therefore of its author, who must be considered as a primary audience of the review”.

Book reviews in academic journals use different styles and more formal writing when compared to the casual and informal writing common in social networks, including Facebook interaction. Book reviews have a certain format which needs to include both compliments and criticism, and writers praise authors before criticising them. They are also published in academic journals in the public sphere, therefore, writers need to show a certain amount of solidarity with the authors as well as with the readers of the book. Politeness used to avoid a face-threatening act and positive politeness

both needs to be delivered with enthusiasm. Additionally, minimising the personal threat to authors while simultaneously demonstrating an expert understanding of the topic are critical (Hyland, 2000).

Alcaraz-Ariza (2002) analysed a total of 460 speech acts in a semantic analysis of 30 English-language medical book reviews, and observed that approximately 59% of speech acts were delivered positively, while approximately 41% of speech acts were delivered negatively, suggesting that writers were concerned with negotiating solidarity in politeness and harmony towards discourse community, and authors and readers were an included part of that community. Alcaraz-Ariza (2002) states that the frequent use of praise was used to soften criticism, and indirect criticism was also used to mitigate negative comments.

There are several studies covering compliments in book reviews which are published in academic journals. Book reviews have been examined in the field of English for academic purposes, and studies have examined politeness strategies in the course of argumentation. In writing peer reviews, Johnson and Roen (1992: 32) defined both positive and negative politeness; positive politeness is expressed by using in-group identity markers (e.g., an Italian-speaking writer used Italian expressions with her Italian-speaking addressee), seeking agreement (e.g., 'I agree with you that ...'), claiming reflexivity (e.g., 'I'm looking forward to discussing with you there and other issues related to communicative language learning'), and giving a gift (e.g., 'I don't know if any of her work would be helpful to you, but I have some references if you're interested'). On the other hand, negative politeness is used to soften a face-threatening act, which are observed in hedging (e.g., 'You might consider arranging the opinions chronologically under your different topics'), hedging on previous statements in discourse (e.g., 'I'm not sure how that would work out'), minimising the imposition (e.g., 'The minor editing I did just makes the expression a little more clear to me as a native English-speaking reader'), and giving deference (e.g., '... not that I am an expert ...'). In an analysis of 47 peer reviews written by graduate students, Johnson and Roen (1992) revealed that in addition to using positive words such as 'enjoy' and 'interesting', writers sometimes used expressions similarly to spoken compliments such as 'like' and 'good', which were observed in the studies of

English compliments in conversation by Holmes (1986), Manes and Wolfson (1981), and Wolfson (1981).

In academic book reviews, Hyland (2000) analysed large samples of both compliments (praise) and criticisms in various academic fields including philosophy, sociology, applied linguistics, marketing, engineering, physics, and biology, and revealed that the amount of compliments and criticisms varied among the fields. Reviewers in philosophy and sociology were more critical, while reviewers in engineering and science used more compliments and were less critical. Those in philosophy and applied linguistics used the least amount of compliments and criticisms. Compliments were often used at both the beginning and the end in book reviews, and overall, 58% of reviewers opened with a positive comment, and less than 20% of reviewers closed their reviews with criticism (Hyland, 2000).

Where compliments appear might be different according to the genre of study and appraisals seem to be used at particular stages of an article. For instance, Ahmadi (2014) conducted a study that examined occurrences of attitudinal expressions of words including expressions of affect, judgement, and appreciation in an article between soft (history and literature) and hard (mathematics and computers) disciplines. She found that in book reviews of history and literature, attitudinal expressions tended to appear in the outlining and closing evaluation of the book, while in book reviews of mathematics and computers, they tended to be used when introducing, outlining, and highlighting parts of the book (Ahmadi, 2014). Also, reviewers in history and literature evaluated books more positively than negatively (Ahmadi, 2014). Frequent appearances of appraisals at the evaluation stage of an article were also observed in academic book reviews of Chinese language books written in Chinese (Wang and An, 2013). Wang and An (2013) examined appraisals which consisted of expressions of affect, judgement, and appreciation at three stages of an article, which are the introduction, overview, and evaluation, in 30 Chinese academic book reviews. This type of analysis consisting of the three types of word expressions in appraisals is known as the appraisal theory, which Hernandez et al. (2009) used to analyse attitudes of writers in reviews of articles and books.

In Japanese book reviews, Itakura and Tsui (2011) investigated both

compliments (praise) and criticisms in 20 English and 20 Japanese linguistic academic book reviews. Their analysis of compliments only concentrated on when and how directly compliments were used in relation to criticism in the book reviews rather than purpose. They found that more compliments were used in book reviews written in English than in book reviews written in Japanese in order to establish solidarity and rapport, while more apology and self-denigration were used in book reviews written in Japanese in order to lower themselves and express humility in giving criticism instead of compliments. In their analysis, compliments were often observed at the beginning and the end of book reviews, which are similar to the results of Hyland's (2000) study.

Notably, a study conducted by Alcaraz-Ariza (2009) concentrated on the analysis of compliments, and to do so she investigated 50 English medical book reviews. Her criteria of evaluation included positive assessment using interestingness, usefulness, or relevancy to a given field, or to a potential audience, its readability, the quality and number of its illustrations, its current and numerous references, the prestige, experience or expertise of its author and editor etc. She also categorised book reviews as conceptual, textual, personal, and contextual. She revealed that in English medical book reviews, 67.3% of compliments were conceptual, complimenting a book as a whole as well as book sections, chapters, and chapter sections. Regarding compliments' addressees, book authors' competence was mostly positively valued.

Moreover, she compared her results to the study conducted by Salager-Meyer et al. (2004), and revealed that more positive evaluations than negative evaluations were used in English book review, while Spanish book reviews revealed that 98% of them contained negative comments, which suggested that Spanish reviewers were more critical than English reviewers.

Compliments in book reviews have been thoroughly studied with sequences and strategies in writing book reviews, which consist of both compliments and criticism, and how and to whom the compliments were delivered have been carefully analysed. In this article, compliments in English and Japanese book reviews will be analysed to investigate the ways in which they are differently used between the two languages and to what

extent they are similar to the use of compliments in previous studies of spoken interaction in terms of linguistic politeness as put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987).

3. Methodology of this study

This study aims to reveal similarities and differences in compliments, including praise and appraisals, which appeared in book reviews of English and Japanese sociolinguistic journals. The data was collected from a total of twenty-four book reviews in two languages. The corpus consisted of twelve English book reviews in the *Journal of Sociolinguistics* from 2015 to 2016 and twelve Japanese book reviews in *the Japanese Journal of Language in Society* from 1998 to 2013. When collecting data, it was found that Japanese journals in the field of applied linguistics do not always include book reviews, and these journals are often only published once a year. The book review genre in both the English and the Japanese journals was sociolinguistics. Review writers in English belonged to a university in America or Europe including the United Kingdom and Ireland, and review writers in Japanese were native Japanese speakers who belonged to a Japanese university in Japan. Reviewers in both journals were most likely linguists who are experts of language.

In this study, the definition of compliments follows Hyland's (2000:44) which is "defined as an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which is positively valued by the writer". Compliments are used to attribute credit to authors and books by saying something good about the paper or aspects of the paper and something about the addressee, and also to refer to accomplishments and acts as well as to characteristics of the paper or the skill of the writer (Johnson and Roen, 1992). Positive evaluations about the book and its authors were counted as compliments.

The English language (syntactically an SVO language) and the Japanese language (syntactically an SOV language) use different sentence construction. The length of a sentence and the number of words used in each book review also depended on reviewers, since the ways in which they expressed evaluations, constructed sentences, and used adjectives and

relative clauses varied. In the corpus, English book reviews consisted of 748 sentences, while Japanese book reviews consisted of 1141 sentences.

In the analysis, the frequency of compliments in English and Japanese book reviews will be compared first, and then the stages including opening and closing sections of the book reviews which used compliments will be examined. Second, the types of compliments will be defined with qualitative and quantitative data in order to observe the writing styles of reviewers in English and in Japanese. And finally, the way these compliments are similarly and differently used by reviewers in English and in Japanese will be discussed in order to examine differences in writing styles between the English and Japanese language.

4. The results

4.1. Frequency of compliments

In the data, compliments appeared more often in English sociolinguistic journals than in Japanese sociolinguistic journals. English compliments were used approximately twice as often as Japanese compliments (see Figure 1). 154 English compliments were observed in English book reviews, while 110 Japanese compliments were observed in Japanese book reviews. The breakdown shown in Figure 1 shows the percentage of occurrences compared to the number of sentences in the book reviews.

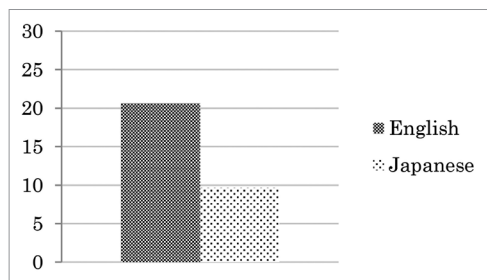


Figure 1. *Frequency of English and Japanese compliments in academic book reviews*
(% of compliments compared to number of sentences)

Compliments in book reviews have been analysed with timing of occurrences, since compliments and criticism have been used as forms of

politeness in writing. In Hyland's (2000) study, more than half of the writers (58%) opened with a positive comment and the opening compliment was addressee-oriented. Also, in a study conducted by Itakura and Tsui (2011), 80 instances of English compliments (from a total of 35,800 words in texts) were observed in both the opening and closing sections of book reviews, and the closing sections of English reviews frequently consisted of direct and emphatic compliments, which approved of the book and expressed solidarity with the authors of the book.

In this study, compliments were used in both the opening and closing sections of book reviews in English and Japanese sociolinguistic journals, however, more compliments appeared in the English book reviews than the Japanese book reviews (see Figure 2), suggesting that reviewers in English and Japanese might have different rules of writing when it comes to giving compliments in academic book reviews.

The results showed that a similar amount of compliments was used in both English and Japanese book reviews. While 10.5% of compliments appeared in the opening section of Japanese book reviews, 11.9% of compliments similarly appeared in the opening section of English book reviews. For example, in English journals, the first and second sentences of the book reviews contained praise, such as 'The blurb for this substantial volume ...', 'In this engaging book, ...', 'This is remarkable, considering that Jefferson's contribution to conversation analysis, ...', and 'Ricento's volume is a case in point, and ...'. In Japanese book reviews, the first and second sentences contained '*masani sonotoori de ari koogi no gengo-kenkyuu no sookan ga kanoo de aru*' ('It was true that with the book we will be able to see the general picture of linguistic research'), '*kakkoo no tebikisho to naru de aroo*' ('It will become a good guidebook'), '*motto yashinteki ni kono bunya no genzai to kongo o shimesoo to shite iru*' ('The book is ambitiously trying to display the present and future in this field').

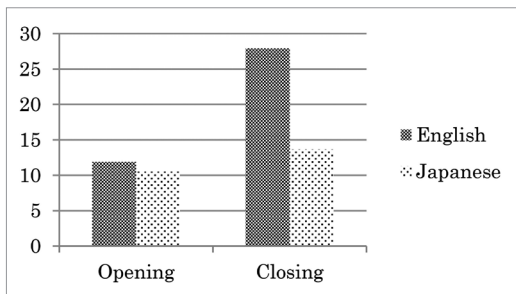


Figure 2. *Compliments in opening and closing sections of academic book reviews (%)*

However in English book reviews, 27.9% of compliments appeared in the closing section compared to 13.6% of compliments which appeared in the closing section in Japanese book reviews. In the data used in this study, most reviewers in English closed their reviews with compliments and expressed their approval of the books, which expressed solidarity with its authors; they finished book review articles with a positive and enthusiastic atmosphere. For example, 'It will become, without a doubt, one of the most important books on the language spoken by Jewish people, ...', '...', and her work goes a long way toward achieving this goal', 'And, as is evident in this book, she opened conversation analysis beyond the absolutely microscopic into the possibility of analyzing practices and large-scale sequences', 'They prove wrong the commonly held assumption that ... and provide an excellent starting point for sociolinguistic, contact linguistic and linguistic anthropological research projects that ...', 'This book is an absolute must-read for those who ...', 'To close, *Speaking Pittsburghese* is a highly readable and rich account of sociolinguistic process: the making of a dialect', 'But perhaps the most exciting part of the book are the European voices ...', 'In many ways, it offers a rebuke of what the editors see ...', 'At a more advanced level, the book provides a stimulating set of data for the critical examination of key theoretical issues ...', and 'This book manages to add theoretical depth and analytical precision to current debates about language and media'.

However, in Japanese journals, half the amount of English compliments appeared in the closing sections, for instance, '*teni totte moraitai issatsu de*

aru ('this is a book which I would like students to read'), '*manabu tokoro ga ooi sho de aru koto wa tashika de aroo*' ('it is true that we can learn a lot from the book'), and '*tekisetsuna annaisho de aru*' ('it is a suitable guidebook'). These results suggest that the ways in which solidarity and enthusiastic approval are expressed in the closing section seem to be important in English book reviews, however, there is not a similar requirement in the closing section of Japanese academic book review writing.

Instead, some Japanese reviewers expressed expectations and used question forms in the closing sections of Japanese sociolinguistic journals; half the reviewers concluded with these types of sentences. For example, further expectations were stated, such as '*yo ni ooku okuri dasarete kuru koto o kitai shite iru*' ('I expect many books will come out'), '*watashitachi no ishiki o sasaete kureru koto o kitai shitai*' ('I expect that these books will attract us and help support our awareness about the field of this study'), '*kono mokuhyoo no tassei ni kiyo suru koto ga kitai sareru*' ('it is expected that further studies will make contributions to achieve this purpose'), '*soko kara aratana kadai ga umareru no da to iu koto o itai no de aru*' ('I speculate that an author would like to say that new assignments will come from that'), and question forms were stated, such as '*kadai toshite nokosarete iru no dewa nai daroo ka*' ('I wonder if there is an assignment in the future'), '*akanboo wa hontoo ni kangaete iru no ka*' ('Are babies really thinking?').

4.2 Types of compliments

Compliments in speech interaction generally have four common objects in their use: praising other's appearance, characteristics and personality, ability and skill, and possessions (Chick, 1996; Herbert, 1986, Holmes, 1986, Lewandowska-Tmoaszczyk, 1989; Wang and Tai, 2003; Wolfson, 1981). In book reviews, reviewers positively value several elements and give compliments in their writing, which Alcaraz-Ariza (2009) has defined with four elements: conceptual, textual, personal, and contextual. In her definition, conceptual includes positive remarks directed towards the very content of the book reviewed, such as the book as a whole, book sections, chapters, and chapter sections (Alcaraz-Ariza, 2009: 54). Textual includes positive remarks aimed at formal aspects of the text, such as stylistic issues, book layout, and visual

presentation including graphs, diagrams, tables, and pictures (Alcaraz-Ariza, 2009: 54). Personal includes positive remarks aimed at the book authors and/or book editors themselves, and contextual includes positive remarks which are not directed at the book content itself or at the book authors/editors (Alcaraz-Ariza, 2009: 54).

When evaluating a book, reviewers generally assessed whether the book consisted of good content and detailed and relevant analyses, which are conceptual; whether an author had sufficient skills and delivered high standards of research and writing, which is personal; whether the book layout and graphs were sufficient, which is textual; or they identified other characteristics of the book, such as expressing benefits to readers from the book and provided positive personal comments, which is contextual. In this study, I used these four elements to categorise the data into seven types of compliments, which consisted of two conceptual (book sections and contents, analysis of a book), one personal (authors, editors) one textual (stylistic issues), and three contextual (characteristics of a book, reviewers' personal comments including feelings, benefits to readers) in order to see how reviewers create praise.

Seven types of compliments in book reviews in this study

- 1) Book sections and contents (conceptual)
- 2) Analysis of a book (conceptual)
- 3) Book authors and editors (personal)
- 4) Stylistic issues (textual)
- 5) Characteristics of a book valued by reviewers (contextual)
- 6) Reviewers comments including feelings (contextual)
- 7) Benefits to readers as valued by reviewers (contextual)

The results revealed that there are some differences of writing styles between reviewers in English and reviewers in Japanese in sociolinguistic book reviews. Reviewers in English more directly expressed compliments on the contents and analysis of a book than did reviewers in Japanese, while reviewers in Japanese positively evaluated stylistic issues and expressed benefits to readers and provided positive comments which included their

feelings more frequently than reviewers in English (see Figure 3). Reviewers in English gave more direct compliments to authors and/or editors than reviewers in Japanese, showing that they preferred to make points directly to a book and its authors.

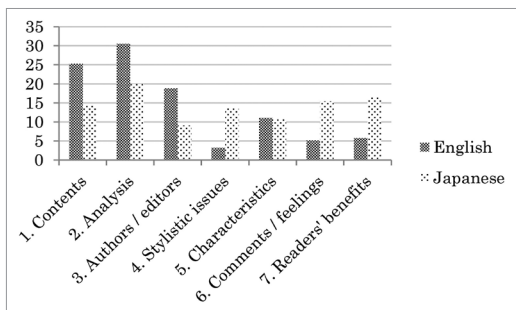


Figure 3. *Types of compliments in academic book reviews (%)*

Additionally, reviewers in Japanese used less direct forms of writing than reviewers in English. Reviewers in Japanese expressed thoughts about stylistic impressions, positive feelings about a book, and benefits to readers from the book (see Figure 3). Japanese reviewers preferred to mitigate explicit expressions towards a book and its authors, and then made compliments more personal.

In his analysis of 333 English essays by Japanese undergraduates, McCrostie (2006) revealed that a high degree of personal involvement including the first-person voice was observed in EFL students writing, and he concluded that the results showed their lack of English academic writing conventions. However, the results of this study might suggest that expressing personal comments and feelings is a Japanese style of writing and might indicate that Japanese writers may find it easier to express how they have felt rather than directly making points about the contents of books and skills of authors.

This result can be confirmed in Alcaraz-Ariza's (2009) four categorisations of target types of compliments (see Figure 4). Japanese compliments were made in high percentages of contextual factors, while English compliments

showed high percentages of conceptual factors. Reviewers in English concentrated on evaluating elements and analyses of a book, while reviewers in Japanese preferred to express their satisfaction with reading the book with their personal opinions.

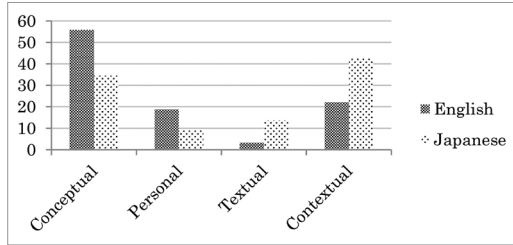


Figure 4. *Target types of compliments in academic book reviews (%)*

The results revealed that compliments in English book reviews were mainly conceptual - reviewers praised the contents and analysis used in a book (see Examples 1 and 2 below). The book being reviewed in Example 1 was written about the Yiddish language in a particular area and time, which a reviewer positively evaluated by saying that ‘an important part of the book is devoted to ...’ and ‘another interesting example of ...’, in which positive adjectives were frequently used. In Example 2, detailed analyses of a book about World Englishes were enthusiastically complimented on by the reviewer, which were expressed in comparative phrases such as ‘a most welcome contribution’, ‘great interest’, and ‘the comparative and descriptive analysis of English in ... thus closes a gap in current research, but it is much more than that’.

Example 1

‘An important part of the book (chapter 10-12) is devoted to the Yiddish language, another interesting example of JL, which emerged either in the Rhineland or in Bavaria in the Middle Ages’.

Example 2

‘The analysis of structural and sociolinguistic aspects of these second-

language varieties of English is a most welcome contribution to the growing body of World Englishes research, and at the same time it is of great interest to contact and sociolinguistics as well; the comparative and descriptive analysis of English in Fiji, Samoa and the Cook Islands thus closes a gap in current research, but it is much more than that'.

Reviewers in English also more frequently complimented authors and book editors than did reviewers in Japanese. When English-language reviewers praised authors' and editors' works and contributions to a field, they directly complimented them. For example, in Example 3 the reviewer appreciated the author's effort to fill a gap in the study of the field by saying 'her work goes a long way toward achieving this goal', emphasising that a huge amount of work was needed to be done in order to achieve that purpose. In Example 4, the reviewer stated the fact that the author's approach would expand methods of conversation analysis further by saying that 'she opened conversation analysis ... into the possibility of analysing practices and large-scale sequences'. In both examples, the authors were put forth as subjects who did important and valuable research.

Example 3

'The author rightly observes that after "200 years of language contact the empty space on the map needs to be filled-systematically" (p. 2), and her work goes a long way toward achieving this goal'.

Example 4

'And as is evident in this book, she opened conversation analysis beyond the absolutely microscopic into the possibility of analysing practices and large-scale sequences'.

On the other hand, reviewers in Japanese praised the benefit which the book offered to readers and the stylistic issues of a book more frequently than did reviewers in English. Defining usefulness for others was the primary way to compliment a work, and examples in Japanese focused on readers rather than authors. In Example 5, the reviewer stated that the

book is beneficial even for researchers in sociolinguistics, guaranteeing that readers would be able to learn from the book. In Example 6, the reviewer stated that the book is very useful for people who are beginning to study in the field, expressing how the books were beneficial and helpful for a certain group of readers such as new researchers. In this sense, the reviewers indirectly praised the books and authors.

Example 5

'sarani ookina shiya de komyunikeeshon kagaku no soosei o musoo shiteiru wareware shakaigengo-kagaku-kai no kaiin ni totte mo manabu koto ga ooi sho de aru koto wa tashika de aroo'.

(I'm sure that we, members of the Japanese association of sociolinguistic science, who are trying to analyse communication on a large scale, can learn a lot from this book')

Example 6

"komyunikeeshon" o korekara manabooto suru hito ni wa kono doonyuu-shoo wa kiwamete shinsetsuna annai yaku o hatashite kureyoo'.

(This introductory chapter will become a very helpful guide for a new researcher who is going to study communication')

Moreover, in Japanese book reviews, frameworks of chapters in a book which help readers to easily understand its contents were sometimes emphasised. Some Japanese book reviewers highly evaluated the way in which authors provided explanations and the structure of the book itself. For instance, Examples 7 and 8 below show that reviewers praised the structures and presentations of the books. In Example 7, the reviewer evaluated the way in which the author used many examples and how data were presented using explanations with simple Japanese, and in Example 8, the reviewer approved the well-organised figures in the book.

Example 7

'subete no shoo ni kyootsuushite ooku no jirei ya choosa jikken deeta o mochiite, gutaiteki ni, heiina kotoba de setsumei ga nasarete iru'.

(All chapters were well explained with a lot of concrete examples, researches, and data in simple Japanese.)

Example 8

'isasaka gooin ni mieru tokoro ga naku mo nai ga zushiki toshite wa yoku matomatte iru'.

(Some figures were a little coercive, but they are well summarised and organised.)

In addition, reviewers in Japanese expressed their positive feelings more frequently than reviewers in English did, and they showed their interest and enjoyment of reading the book. Reviewers in Japanese seemed to express their subjective feelings and comments about the books compared to reviewers in English. For instance, in Example 9, the reviewer expressed the personal opinion that readers would be interested in the field. In Example 10, the reviewer expressed how much he enjoyed reading the book from the beginning. Both reviewers expressed their feelings which did not at all relate to the contents and analysis of the book.

Example 9

'nado nado, naname yomi suru dake demo, shinrigaku e no kyoomi o kakitatete kureru'.

(And so on, we will find an interest in psychology even if we casually skim read the book.)

Example 10

'hajime kara yomu no mo tanoshii kokoromi da'.

(It is enjoyable to read the book from the beginning.)

In this study, compliments in book reviews were divided into the four categories put forth by Alcaraz-Ariza (2009), which consisted of conceptual, personal, textual, and contextual, and further into the seven types of compliments shown above. It was found that the writing styles and the ways in which reviewers expressed compliments in English and in Japanese

sociolinguistic book reviews sometimes differed. The results revealed that reviewers in English used compliments more directly and they praised the contents, analyses, and authors and/or editors of a book, while reviewers in Japanese used different strategies of compliments which focused on benefits to readers, stylistic makeup of the book, and reviewers' feelings when reading the book.

As such, linguistic politeness as put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987) is reflected in the use of compliments in English and Japanese book reviews. In general, compliments play a role of positive politeness wherein people feel good about common ground and values (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Holmes, 1986, Rees-Miller, 2011). Compliments in book reviews are positive evaluations about a book and its authors and/or editors which help to make readers and authors and/or editors feel good.

In order to show their positive politeness, reviewers in English often explicitly wrote positive comments on contents, analyses, and the authors of a book. They used positive and enthusiastic adjectives to describe studies and authors. However, reviewers in Japanese sometimes emphasised benefits to readers, which indicated solidarity with readers, and did not aim their compliments directly at the books and its authors. Reviewers forged a relationship with readers and commented on how the structure and organisation of books help readers to understand the books. As such, Japanese reviewers indirectly gave compliments to authors by mitigating face-threatening acts, and they sometimes used a negative politeness strategy which addresses the hearer's need for freedom from action and imposition as put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987).

In this sense, the strategies used in Japanese book reviews might reflect characteristics of Japanese speech communication. When giving compliments in speech interaction, Japanese people do not often give compliments on appearance and possession as do speakers of American English (Barnlund and Araki, 1985); their compliment responses are sometimes vague and speakers tend to deflect away from received compliments (Daikuhara, 1986). In sociolinguistic book reviews, Japanese reviewers also chose sentences which are not direct compliments to the contents of a book and its authors and/or editors, instead, they emphasised the organisation of a book and

expressed their personal feelings, opinions on the characteristics of a book, and the benefits to readers.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined written compliments in book reviews of English and Japanese sociolinguistic journals in order to reveal to what extent reviewers in English and in Japanese differently expressed compliments while negotiating solidarity with authors and readers. In general, compliments are defined as a form of a speech act and a positive evaluation which makes people feel good (Herbert, 1986; Holmes, 1986). In written text such as book reviews and peer reviews, compliments are relevant not only to help build solidarity with readers and authors, but also to maintain authors' face when criticisms are given (Hyland, 2000).

The results of this study revealed that overall, reviewers in English generally used more compliments than reviewers in Japanese, and in the closing sections compliments also appeared more often in English than in Japanese. In particular, more than one fourth of English compliments were observed in the closing sections. Positive evaluation and enthusiastic approval at the end of book reviews seemed relevant to negotiate solidarity with readers and authors and/or editors in English book reviews. In Japanese book reviews, reviewers seemed less obligated to write compliments in particular sections; instead they sometimes expressed their expectations or presented questions in concluding remarks at the end of the book review.

There were both similarities and differences in the use of compliments between English and Japanese book reviews. Reviewers in both English and Japanese praised the contents and analyses of the book, and they sometimes expressed their opinions and feelings towards the book, however, reviewers in English used more direct forms of compliments and referred to the contents, analyses, and authors and/or editors of a book. Reviewers in Japanese on the other hand, used less direct forms of compliments and chose to compliment the style of the book and the benefits to readers from the book, as well as to express reviewers' feelings. They did not directly express their opinion about the contents and authors in order to not impose upon them, which helps to mitigate face threatening and maintain authors'

face as a form of politeness. In the use of compliments in speech interaction, Japanese people tend not to give compliments on addressees' appearance and possessions (Barnlund and Araki, 1985) and to use vague responses indirectly (Daikuhara, 1986), which seems to be also reflected in written compliments in sociolinguistic book reviews. This study shows that Japanese book reviewers sometimes used negative politeness towards authors and/or editors of a book. These cultural notions are necessary for readers to acknowledge, since they will be able to understand the intention of the author more clearly.

In the future, research using a larger corpus of data across different genres will shed further light on this subject, and criticism needs to be investigated as well as compliments. Moreover, gender differences may come into play; in speech interaction women have been shown to use compliments to indicate their solidarity with interlocutors while men tend to use fewer compliments due to a form-function relationship including a hierarchical relationship and competition (Herbert, 1990). Therefore, reviewers' gender could be investigated in order to see how reviewers differently use compliments according to gender. As it stands, this study adds to the current academic literature, providing particular characteristics of Japanese and English language written compliments, which helps researchers to further understand Japanese and English communication in written texts.

References:

- Ahmadi, N. (2014). Recognizing attitude and polarity of words in review texts: An analysis of English soft and hard disciplines. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World*, 5(3), 342-350.
- Alcaraz-Ariza, M. Á. (2002). Evaluation in English-medium medical book reviews. *International Journal of English Studies*, 2(1), 137-153.
- Alcaraz-Ariza, M. Á. (2009). Complimenting others: The case of English-written medical book reviews. *Fachsprache*, 1(2), 48-63.
- Barnlund, D. C., & Araki, S. (1985). Intercultural encounters, the management of compliments by Japanese and Americans. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 16(1), 9-26.

- Brown, P. & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Chen, R. (1993). Responding to compliments, A contrastive study of politeness strategies between American English and Chinese speakers. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 20, 49-75.
- Chen, R. & Yang, D. (2010). Responding to compliments in Chinese: Has it changed? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 42, 1951-1963.
- Chick, K. J. (1996). Intercultural communication. In Hornberger, N. H. & McKay, S. (Eds.). *Sociolinguistics and Language Teaching* (pp. 329-348). Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Daikuhara, M. (1986). A study of compliments from a cross-cultural perspective: Japanese vs. American English. *Penn Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 2, 103-133.
- Farghal, M., & Al-Khatib, M. A. (2001). Jordanian college students' responses to compliments: A pilot study. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 33, 1485-1502.
- Golato, A. (2002). German compliment responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 34, 547-571.
- Herbert, R. K. (1986). Say "Thank you" – or something. *American Speech*, 61, 76-88.
- Herbert, R. K. (1990). Sex-based differences in compliment behaviour. *Language in Society*, 19, 201-224.
- Herbert, R. K. (1991). The sociology of compliment work: An ethnocontrastive study of Polish and English compliments. *Multilingua: Journal of Cross-Cultural and Interlanguage Communication*, 10(4), 381-402.
- Hernández, L., López-Lopez, A., & Medina, J. E. (2009). Recognizing polarity and attitude of words in text. *Advanced Technologies Application Center*, 525-536.
- Holmes, J. (1986). Compliments and compliment responses. *Anthropological Linguistics*, 28, 485-508.
- Hyland, K. (2000). Praise and criticism: Interactions in book reviews. In Hyland, K. (Ed.). *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing* (pp. 41-62). Harlow, U.K.: Longman.
- Itakura, H. & Tsui, A. B. M. (2011). Evaluation in academic discourse: Managing criticism in Japanese and English book reviews. *Journal of*

- Pragmatics*, 43, 1366-1379.
- Johnson, D. M., & Roen, D. H. (1992). Complimenting and involvement in peer reviews: Gender variation. *Language in Society*, 21, 27-57.
- Kawaguchi, Y., Kabaya, H. & Sakamoto, M. (1996). *Taiguuhyoogen to shite no home* [Compliments as attitudinal expressions]. *Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics]*, 15(5), 13-22.
- Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, B. (1989). Praising and Complimenting. In Olesky, W. (Ed.). *Contrastive Pragmatics* (pp. 73-100). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Manes, J., & Wolfson, N. (1981). The compliment formula. In Coulmas, F. (Ed.). *Conversational Routine: Explorations in Standardized Communication Situations and Prepatterned Speech* (pp. 115-132). The Hague, Netherland: Mouton Publishers.
- McCrosite, J. (2006). Writer visibility in EFL learner academic writing: A corpus-based study. *ICAME Journal*, 32, 97-114.
- Nomoto, K. (1996). *Homeru to iu gengokoodoo* [Speech Act of Compliments]. *Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics]*, 16(6), 4-12.
- Rees-Miller, J. (2011). Compliments revisited: Contemporary compliments and gender. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 2673-2688.
- Salager-Meyer, F., and Alcaraz Ariza, M. A. (2004). Negative appraisals in academic book reviews: A Cross-linguistic approach. In Candlin, N and Gotti, M. (Eds.). *International Aspects of Specialized Communication* (pp.149-172). Bern: Peter Lang.
- Sifianou, M. (2001). "Oh! How appropriate": Compliments and politeness. In Bayraktaroğlu, A. and Sifianou, M. (Eds.). *Linguistic Politeness across Boundaries: The Case of Greek and Turkish* (pp. 391-430). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Tanabe, Y. (1996). *Homekotoba no Nichi-Ei hikaku* [Comparison of Japanese and English Compliments]. *Nihongogaku [Japanese Linguistics]*, 16(6), 33-42.
- Wang, D., & An, X. (2013). A study of appraisal in Chinese academic book reviews. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 4(6), 1247-1252.
- Wang, Y-F., & Tsai, P-H. (2003). An empirical study on compliments and compliment responses in Taiwan Mandarin conversation. *Concentric:*

Studies in English Literature and Linguistics, 29(2), 118-156.

Wolfson, N. (1981). Compliments in cross-cultural perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 15(2), 117-124.

Wolfson, N. (1983). An empirically based analysis of complimenting in American English. In Wolfson, N. and Jodd, E. (Eds.). *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition* (pp. 82-95). New York, U.S.A: Newbury House.

Appendix: Book reviews in corpus

Baumgarten, J. (2016). [Review of the book *The Languages of the Jews: A Sociolinguistic History*, by B. Spolsky, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(1), 109-112.

Hashimoto, Y. (1999). *Nichijoo seikatsu no naka no 'Komyunikeeshon'* [Communication in everyday life]. [Review of the book *Intaapaasonaru · Komyunikeeshon – Taijin Komyunikeeshon no Shinrigaku [Interpersonal Communication: The Psychology of Interpersonal Communication]*, by H. Fukada, Kyoto: Kitaohji Shobou]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 1(2), 38-40.

Hashimoto, Y. (2001). *Komyunikeeshon kagaku e no 'Saisho no ippo'* [First step towards a science of communication]. [Review of the book *Komyunikeeshon Shinrigaku – Shinrigakuteki Komyunikeeshon-ron e no Shootai [Psychology of Communication: Invitation to Psychological Communication Theory]*, by H. Fukada (Ed.), Kyoto: Kitaohji shobou]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 3(2), 84-86.

Hata, K. & Okamoto, T. (2013). [Review of the book *Analyzing Narrative: Discourse and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*, by A. De Fina & A. Georgakopoulpu, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 15(2), 66-70.

Hibiya, J. (2001). *Jikken shakai shinrigaku e no sasoi* [Invitation to experimental social psychology]. [Review of the book *Kotoba no Shakai Shinrigaku Dai Ni-han [Social Psychology of Language, 2nd edition]*, by S. Okamoto, Tokyo: Nakanishiya Shuppan]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 3(2), 87-89.

Hoffmann, S. (2015). [Review of the book *The Evolution of Englishes:*

- The Dynamic Model and Beyond (Varieties of English Around the World G49)*, by S. Buschfeld, T. Hoffmann, M. Huber, & A. Kautzsch (Eds.), Amsterdam, The Netherlands/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins Publishing Company]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 574-582.
- Hofstetter, E. (2016). [Review of the book *Jefferson, Gail. Talking About Troubles in Conversation (Foundations of Human Interaction)*, by P. Drew, J. Heritage, G. Lerner, & A. Pomerantz (Eds.), New York: Oxford University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(1), 117-120.
- Iso, Y. (2011). [Review of the book *Kotoba no Komyunikeeshon – Taijinkankei no Retorikku [Verbal Communication: Rhetorics of Interpersonal Relationship]*, by S. Okamoto (Ed.), Tokyo: Nakanishiya Shuppan]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 14(1), 223-226.
- Jaff, A. (2015). [Review of the book *Speaking Pittsburghese: The Story of Dialect (Oxford Studies in Sociolinguistics)*, by B. Johnstone, New York: Oxford University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 559-563.
- Lillis, T. (2015). [Review of the book *Double-Voicing at Work: Power, Gender and Linguistic Expertise*, by J. Baxter, Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 563-567.
- Lo, A. (2015). [Review of the book *Cambridge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, by N. J. Enfield, P. Kockelman, & J. Sidnell (Eds.), Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 570-574.
- Migge, B. (2016). [Review of the book *Further Studies in the Lesser-Known Varieties of English (Studies in English Language)*, by J. P. Williams, E. W. Schneider, P. Trudgill, & D. Schreier (Eds.), Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(1), 120-124.
- Miyake, K. (2000). *Bairingararu kyooiku-sha no doryoku to seika no kiroku* [Accounts of efforts and achievements in Japanese Bilingual education]. [Review of the book *Bairingararu no Sekai [The World of the Bilingual]*, by M. Yamamoto (Ed.), Tokyo: Taishukanshoten]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 2(2), 78-82.
- Miyake, K. (2002). *Media jidai o shutaiteki ni ikiru tame ni* [Autonomously in the Media]. [Review of the book *Media Ritarashii – Sekai no Genba*

- kara – [Media Literacy: Practical Examples from Other Countries], by A. Sugaya, Tokyo: Iwanami Shuppan]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 4(2), 108-113.
- Moyer, M. (2016). [Review of the book *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*, by O. García, & L. Wei, Basingstoke, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(1), 125-130.
- Muto, T. (1998). *Nihongo to shite no danwa kenkyuu no kakuritsu* [Establishing Japanese Research on Discourse]. [Review of the book *Bunshoo · Danwa no Shikumi [The Organization of Sentential and Conversational Discourse]*, by M. Sakuma, S. Sugito & K. Hanzawa (Eds.), Tokyo: Ohfu]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 1(1), 51-56.
- Muto, T. (2002). *Kotoba no kenkyuu o ookiku hirogeru mono – ‘Kotoba no ninchi kagaku jiten’ shohyoo* [Extending language studies broadly]. [Review of the book *Kotoba no Ninchi Kagaku Jiten [A Companion to the Cognitive Science of Language]*, by Y. Tsuji (Ed.), Tokyo: Taishukanshoten]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 4(2), 114-119.
- Ramanathan, V. (2015). [Review of the book *Language Policy and Political Economy: English in a Global Context*, by T. Ricento (Ed.), New York: Oxford University Press]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 709-714.
- Sanada, S. (1999). *‘Hooko’ no tobira o akete miyoo* [Opening the door to a treasure house]. [Review of the book *Shakai-gengogaku-nyuumon – Ikita Kotoba no Omoshiroa ni Semaru [Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Approaching the Fascination of Living Language]*, by S. Azuma, Tokyo: Kenkyuusha Shuppan]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 1(2), 32-34.
- Schreier, D. (2016). [Review of the book *South Pacific Englishes: A sociolinguistic and Morphosyntactic Profile of Fiji English, Samoan English and Cook Islands English (Varieties of English around the World G52)*, by C. Biewer, Amsterdam, The Netherlands/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins Publishing]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 20(1), 113-116.
- Shibuya, K. (2001). *Shakai-gengogaku to kokugo isooron no renkee o*

- mezashite* [Toward an integrated theory of Japanese register variation]. [Review of the book *Nihongo no Isoo to Isoo-sa* [*Japanese Registers and Register Variation*], by A. Tanaka, Tokyo: Meiji Shoin]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 3(2), 77-83.
- Tanaka, Y. (1998). *Shootaijoo o yomu* [On reading an "Invitation"]. [Review of the book *Komyunikeeshon-gaku e no Shootai* [*Invitation to the Study of Communication*], by Y. Hashimoto (Ed.), Tokyo: Taishukanshoten]. *The Japanese Journal of Language in Society*, 1(1), 57-59.
- Van Hout, T. (2014). [Review of the book *Mediatization and Sociolinguistic Change (Linguae & Litterae 36)*, by J. Androutsopoulos (Ed.), Berlin, Germany/Boston, Massachusetts: Walter de Gruyter]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 714-718.
- Walker, A. (2015). [Review of the book *Advances in Sociophonetics (Studies in Language Variation 15)*, by C. Celata & S. Calamai (Eds.), Amsterdam. The Netherlands/Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: John Benjamins Publishing Company]. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 19(4), 567-570.