



DIJ Forum

In its series of public lectures, the German Institute for Japanese Studies will present on

Thursday, 16 November 2006, 18.30 h

Mayumi Usami
Professor, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies

Politeness in Intercultural Communication

There is a Japanese saying comparable to the English proverb 'A hedge between keeps friendships green'. On the other hand, there are also those who think that 'For those who have close relationships, there is no need for propriety or reserve'. Recent theories of politeness deal with these kinds of feelings and attitudes in interpersonal communication rather than with etiquette and manner, as commonly associated by the word 'politeness'. In this respect, politeness theory provides many insights that may help mitigate conflicts and frustration frequently observed in intercultural communication.

In this talk I will first introduce the key concepts of Discourse Politeness (DP) theory. By discussing first-hand examples from various conversations I will then discuss how this theory can contribute to finding ways to solve problems created by the transfer of politeness strategies from one's first to one's second language in cross-cultural interaction.

Mayumi USAMI is Professor of Social Psychology of Language and Teaching of Japanese as a Second Language at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. She received her MA from Keio University, and an Ed.M and Ed.D from Harvard University. Her research interests include Discourse Politeness Theory, the social psychological approach to conversation analysis, language and gender, pragmatics, and intercultural communication. She has published many articles and books including *Discourse Politeness in Japanese Conversation: Some Implications for a Universal Theory of Politeness* (Hituzi Syobo, 2002), and *Kotoba wa shakai o kaerareru* [Language can change society] (Akashi Shoten, 1997).

The lecture will be given in English. It will take place on Thursday, 16 November 2006 at 6.30 p.m. at the DIJ. Admission is free, space is limited, so please register with Ms. Dinkel at the DIJ.

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