ISSN 1883-7409 (print)
ISSN 1884-0184 (on-line)

Outside the Box: A Multi-Lingual Forum

Volume 7, Issue 2

Autumn, 2015

Articles

Language Learning and Teaching

Around the World

Technology

Politeness Strategies in Japanese Requests

Yuka Matsuhashi
Temple University, Japan Campus

Abstract: *Even though language learners acquire the mechanics of the second language, it is often considered challenging to use them appropriately in context. This article elaborates on a study to analyze such cross-cultural and linguistic differences in American Japanese learners (JLs) in regard to the use of politeness strategies, by comparing them with native speakers of Japanese (NJs) and native speakers of English (NEs). To understand the key differences, five NJs, JLs, and NEs were asked to make a request in three different situations in which they had relatively high face-threatening acts in role-play settings. Analysis of the data revealed significant differences between JLs and NJs in terms of politeness theory; JLs tend to transfer their socio-pragmatic features into second language communication.*

Introduction

For L2 learners, one challenging aspect of language acquisition is sociolinguistic competence. It consists of pragmatics, the use of language in context, and socio-pragmatics, the social rules of target language and behavior. Such skills need to be acquired because "this competence enables the speaker to produce utterances that are both linguistically and pragmatically appropriate" (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000. p. 170). People usually try to render relationships smoother, using such sociolinguistic skills in order to make conversation more effective. I believe that understanding proper politeness in a second language is one of the most challenging elements in cross-culture exchanges. In my experience with language learning and teaching, I've struggled to choose the appropriate words and expressions in certain situations, particularly in formal situations. Thus, I have been interested in studying such pragmatic coherences of politeness.

The purpose of this study is to examine socio-pragmatic features of American Japanese learners (JLs) in speech acts, especially in regard to the use of politeness strategies, by comparing them with native speakers of Japanese (NJs) and native speakers of English (NEs). In order to elicit example of the politeness strategy for high face-threatening acts, a request speech act was chosen and Okutsu's (2000) study was used as a model in this study.

Matsuhashi, Y. (2015). Politeness strategies in Japanese requests. *OTB Forum, 7*(2), 6-26.

Okutsu (2000) used role-play to elicit Japanese learners' request forms and analyzed her data by comparing native Japanese speakers with American learners. She then differentiated the degrees of face-threatening acts. For this study, besides NJs and JLs, five NEs were asked to make a request in three different situations in which they had relatively high face-threatening acts with different variables. For the JLs and NJs, tasks in Japanese were provided and the role-play activities were conducted in Japanese. In the same manner, tasks in English with the same content were provided for the NEs and the roleplay was done in English. All the conversations were transcribed and analyzed afterwards using Blum-Kulka and Olshtain's (1984) coding system called A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). The utterances of the JLs were compared to those of the NJs to investigate L1 pragmatic transfers and socio-pragmatic differences. Five NEs were included in order to see the cultural norm difference and how it affects the Japanese pragmatics in this study. Furthermore, by comparing the requests of the JLs with not only those from the NJs but those from the NEs, I intended to look at the cultural differences between the NJs and the NEs in more depth, and analyze the sociolinguistic competence of the JLs.

Literature Review

In this section, I review important concepts of politeness from previous studies. The present study is based on politeness theory, so these concepts are addressed in this chapter by introducing the theoreti-

cal research on politeness. Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) classify politeness as universal, and they showed the commonality in different languages by introducing face-threatening act theory (FTA). FTA plays an important role in a speaker's choice of utterance to protect the interlocutor's face. However, some researchers argue that politeness has language-specific features as non-Western perspectives for many years (Hill et all., 1986; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989; Nwoye, 1992). According to Ide's theory of "*wakimae* and volition" (1989), that politeness is oriented to social norms in wakimae, while in volition it is oriented to the face of the individual addressee.

Politeness Theory

Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) proposed the universal politeness theory. They claim that every member of a society has *face*, which is defined as one's public self-image, and people usually want to maintain face. Therefore, when a speaker decides to commit an act that potentially causes the interlocutor to lose face, the speaker will tend to use a politeness strategy in order to minimize the risk. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), the notion of such face and one's social interaction oriented to it are universal. Therefore, it is universally agreed that "politeness is the expression of the speakers' intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face-threatening acts (FTA) toward another" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 73). The Weight of FTA (W_x) consists of the following three major categories:

$W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S) + R_x$

(D) Social Distance between speaker (S) and hearer (H)

(P) Power between speaker (S) and hearer (H)

(R_x) Ranking of Imposition toward hearer

(Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 78)

The more weight of FTA (W_x) is carried, the more politeness strategies people tend to use.

However, each culture seems to have different degrees of aspect in each category above. For example, in a recent study (Duthler, 2006), students' emails to ask a professor to extend an assignment deadline were investigated from a cross-cultural point of view. It was found that native English speakers tend to change the use of subject pronoun when the ranking of imposition is very high, while Korean speakers did not change it. Similar to Korean speakers, I believe that the ranking of imposition will not affect the use of the subject pronoun in Japanese. In the present study, Social Distance (D), Power (P), and the ranking of imposition (R_x) are set-up high in the situation of Task 1 and Task 2 in both languages. I hope to discover the different degrees of (D), (P), and (R_x) in English and Japanese.

Positive face and Negative face

Brown and Levinson (1978) also classified face into two different categories, positive face and negative face. They explain that "positive politeness is designed to meet the face needs by performing an action like complimenting or showing concern for another person" (p. 62). On the other hand, "negative face is the desire to be autonomous and not to infringe on the other person. It is the notion of possessing a claim to one's own territory and rights to non-distraction, such as freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 62). It seems that negative face is adopted by a speaker in a conversation to protect the interlocutor when the interlocutor feels threatened. Researchers draw a distinction between English and Japanese in that the former belongs to a positive face grouping while the latter is classified as negative face. For example, native English speakers usually say "if you want" in conversations to show the interlocutor their intention clearly. On the other hand, Japanese tend to interpret this phrase with discomfort since the interlocutor would prefer to be rather autonomous. As another example, Dobeta (2001) explained these two categories using the example of a Japanese learner asking a senior Japanese person about having a beer. He/she tends to say,

**sensei, biiru o meshiagari-tai desu-ka?*

Teacher, beer ACC drink-HON - want- Q

'Teacher, would you want to have a beer?'

(Dobeta, 2001, p. 51)

Even though the honorific verb for both eat and drink *meshiagaru* was used correctly, the Japanese learner used *tai* 'want' to apply a politeness strategy

for positive face toward a Japanese person who expects one for negative face. To meet that expectation, a native speaker would say,

sensei, biiru o meshiagari masuka.

Teacher, beer ACC drink-HON-Q.

"Teacher, would you have a beer?"

In other words, *tai* 'want' interfered with the interlocutor's prerogative to not have his territory violated by the lower-ranking speaker. As these examples show, there are different politeness strategies to handle face-threatening acts depending upon languages, and these strategies are put into a hierarchy of effectiveness. I hypothesize that American Japanese learners will tend to transfer their politeness strategies in order to manage positive face in the Japanese context as shown in the example above. If that is the case, I would like to examine the tendency of L2 learners' pragmatic transfer.

Wakimae (discernment) and Volition

As alternatives to Brown and Levinson's universal politeness theory, two modes for the realization of the politeness aspect of language use has been studied specific to Japanese culture: One is *wakimae* (discernment). In order to be perceived as a well-mannered person in society, Japanese people predominantly use the distinguished honorific language called *keigo*. According to Bachnik (1992), for Japanese, "[I]t is a crucial social skill to be able to shift from one type of behavior to another according to the identification of a particular situation" (p. 8). There-fore, depending upon the interlocutor's social status, the Japanese speaker skillfully shifts from a casual form to an honorific form or vice versa. According to Ide (1989), "[A]ll Japanese speakers are expected to assess and acknowledge their sense of place in relation to both the situational context and the social context (*wakimae*) in society" (p. 229). There are various factors such as differences in age, status, power, and the degree of intimacy that play an important role for evaluating people's place in society and determine what types of language structures and lexis they use. This importance on various levels of social distance and hierarchy again makes Japan unique concerning linguistic etiquette. In a similar fashion, it is said that "Japanese people categorize distance by their sense of grouping people as either *uchi* (in-group) or *soto* (out-group) primarily" (Ide & Yoshida, 1999, p. 457). In *uchi* relations, where the psycho-logical distance among the participants is minimized, politeness is usually avoided, and intimate and less formal expressions are used. In *soto* relations, where the psychological and social distance is accentuated, appropriate levels of politeness must be maintained.

The second mode of linguistic politeness is called the volitional use of expressions spoken by English speakers. Ide and Yoshida (1999) explained that "[s]peakers use strategies intentionally in order to allow their messages to be received favorably by the addressee in English" (p. 446). Therefore, depending upon the situation, English speakers may modify their use of speech so that their actions will be accepted by the interlocutor. Similar to Ide's argument, Matsumoto (1988) argued against Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Although they claim universality, she claims that "[t]he Japanese language is sensitive to social context, and honorifics are one of the 'relation-acknowledging devices' that indicate the interlocutors' status differences" (p. 411). On the other hand, Fukuda and Asato (2004) argued that Matsumoto's claim did not include the consideration of a redress for FTA. In other words, an honorific form is not necessarily used in order to reduce FTA in the conversation all the time. According to Fukuda and Asato (2004), "[I]t would be reasonable to hypothesize the following culture-specific valuation procedure for the two variables, power and distance" (p. 1996). They argued that in Japanese society, when situations involve an addressee of higher status, which is a high FTA situation, power and/or distance are assigned markedly high values and when marked, Japanese people use honorifics in order to show their wakimae to the interlocutor. However, it seems to me that ranking of imposition does not affect the use of honorific form in the notion of *wakimae*. When the ranking of imposition is high in weight of FTA, Japanese speakers seem to continue using the same style of language forms. Instead, they use more adverbial modifiers to mitigate their action instead. I propose a different formula based on Ide's manifestation of *wakimae* expected by society with the intent of distinguishing the use of the honorific form in Japanese from the use of politeness strategy.

$$\text{wakimae}W_x = D(S, H) + P(H, S)$$

For this reason, this revision of Brown and Levinson's formula states that Japanese speakers choose honorifics based on Power and Distance in wakimae settings. Ranking of imposition has no effect on the choice of honorific form. By using the formula above, I would like to examine the result of honorific use and politeness strategy by NJs and JLs, and then show the difference between wakimae and volition. I hope that this formula will help to elucidate JLs' honorific use in this study.

Japanese Honorifics

As Ide mentioned in the section on wakimae and volition, honorifics are at the core of Japanese polite expressions, and they indicate respect to the interlocutor. Therefore, wakimae always correlates with honorifics. Moriuchi (1992) mentioned that "honorifics might once have been used to express a real attitude of respect, but the use of honorifics today is controlled by social rules" (p. 23).

Japanese is a language highly sensitive to speech levels as such observation of grammatical use shows. As another element of *wakimae*, Japanese society has a high degree of "give-receive" verbs. NJs often use the humble auxiliary verbs *itadaku* 'receive' and the honorific auxiliary donative verb *kudasaru* 'give' with the main verb to show respect. Such auxiliaries cannot be found in English. For this reason, I believe that the use of such auxiliary verb structures must be challenging to JLs.

Speech Act - Request

In order to look at the pragmatic competence of politeness, Kasper (1984) pointed out "pragmatic comprehension, the comprehension of speech acts and discourse functions, can be inferred from conversational data" (p. 22). Among the variety of speech acts, making a request to an interlocutor is generally classified as an act that is likely to threaten the interlocutor's negative face; that is, the desire on the part of the interlocutor that his/her actions be unimpeded by others. In other words, it is considered that making a request impedes the interlocutor's freedom since the speaker thinks that the interlocutor will feel confined or imposed on. Requests may possibly threaten the speaker's positive face as well: the speaker likely wishes that his/her wants be desirable to at least some others because to make a request is to imply a need and to make oneself vulnerable to rejection. Therefore, in order to elicit both Japanese and English true pragmatic competence differences and analyze JLs, requests with a high degree of face-threatening acts were selected for this study.

Empirical Study of Request Speech Acts

There are a number of empirical studies regarding pragmatic differences in request strategies between native speakers and Germans (Hayashi 2000), French (Izaki 2000), Chinese (Mizuno, 1996 a, 1996b), and Americans (Cook, 2001; Kubota, 1996; Nakahama, 1998, 1999; Okutsu, 2000) investigated through role-playing. Among them, Kubota's (1996) study is particularly germane to this study. He found that Japanese people could alternatively change lexical items in order to make a request to their boss. For one request, an urgent absence from work due to a fiancée's sudden visit, he examined the use of the lexical item between Japanese and Americans. It seems that Japanese people tried to manage the FTA with negative politeness by using the pronoun *chijin* 'acquaintance' instead of using the word "fiancée," explicitly to separate the personal event from their work environment. Due to a rich selection of pronouns, Japanese people are likely to utilize language in order to protect their negative face. Apparently they do not change the lexical items when talking to someone without a high FTA weight such as family or friends. In other words, power and distance change according to the personal scale of an event.

In addition, there are several request speech act studies of the pragmalinguistical differences between English and Japanese by Japanese learners of English (Iwai & Rinnert, 2001; Kawamura & Sato, 1996; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Takahashi, 1996, 2001, 2005a, 2005b; Tsuzuki, 1999). Tsuzuki (1999), for example, collected quantitative data on judgments made by native English speakers to analyze Japanese English learners' degrees of politeness. The statistical results demonstrate that interrogative negations are judged as significantly less polite than affirmative ones in English, while negative ones are significantly more polite than affirmative ones in Japanese. Therefore, it is highly predictable that English learners of Japanese have similar issues. Furthermore, there is an interesting study in terms of request perspectives by Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003) by high vs. low proficiency EFL students in Japan. The students learned to ask the interlocutors to let them use a pen in various situations.

Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003) found that Japanese speakers prefer the verb lend to borrow, while Americans choose the verb borrow over lend when making a request. This means that Japanese speakers are likely to be hearer-oriented whereas American speakers are considered to be more speaker-oriented. Thus, such factors are likely to affect the JLs' choice of vocabulary in Japanese.

For measuring specific cross-cultural pragmatics, I referred to Byon's 2004 study. Among many studies dealing with the acquisition of politeness strategies, Byon (2004) examined native Korean speakers and American Korean learners by drawing a line at different degrees of face-threatening acts. Since she wanted to compare and analyze two different languages with different politeness categories, she created the semantic formulae, strategies used to perform a specific speech act, by instituting Blum-Kulka et al.'s (1989) Cross-Cultural Pragmatics: Request and Apologies (CCPRA) coding category of requests. Some of the categories of requests in CCPRA are the request head act strategy (RHA) and the supportive move strategy (RSM). I would like to apply those two categories to my study.

Rationale and Methodology

Based on the review of literature, there are many possible pragmatic differences between English and Japanese. Thus, non-native speakers seem to come across problems in dealing with the particular request property in Japanese politeness. In other words, the inappropriateness of making requests without knowing the cultural or social knowledge in Japanese politeness may cause misunderstandings. For this reason, it is necessary for learners to understand the situation and the interlocutor first, and then decide the use of language and the form of language by comparing with their L1. By doing so, I believe that Japanese learners can avoid making awkward impressions on Japanese native speakers. This section begins with (a) the two research questions for the study, continuing with (b) a brief description of the participants, and (c) a description of the general data collection from recorded role-play tasks, and then outlines how each task was designed. Then the procedure for this study is explained. The last section summarizes the request strategies, which are used for data analysis, including the request head act (RHA) and the request supportive move (RSM) retrieved by the Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989, p. 18).

Research Questions

Based on the role-play performances with different degrees of face-threatening acts, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. Are there any traces of L1 transfer in the socio-pragmatic features of JLs in terms of Politeness Theory?

2. What are the differences between pragmatic features of JLs and NJs, especially the use of the request head act and the request supportive move formulae?

Participants

In order to obtain background information from each participant, an online background questionnaire was conducted. NJs filled out the questionnaire in Japanese while JLs and NEs answered them in English.

Online Background Questionnaire

In order to obtain background information from each participant, an online background questionnaire was conducted. NJs filled out the questionnaire in Japanese while JLs and NEs answered them in English.

Native Japanese Speakers

The five native Japanese are 24- to 25-year-old undergraduate students at the University of Oregon, and all had been in the United States for less than two years; therefore, they were relatively familiar with American culture and society. They all had an academic major or minor in Business Administration. Since one of the tasks in this study was related to the work place, I expected that certain of their behaviors would be somewhat similar to one another. They used Tōkyō-based language (standard Japanese) in this role-play. Their background is shown in Table 1.

Learners of Japanese

The participants are five American college students who were studying advanced-level Japanese (400-level) at the University of Oregon. Participant JL5 had never been to Japan while the four other

Table 1. *Participant Information of Native Japanese Speakers*

Code	Age	Birthplace	Major	Length of stay in the U.S.
NJ1	25	Yamanashi	Business Administration/Marketing	1yr and 8 mos
NJ2	24	Miyagi	Business Administration	1yr
NJ3	24	Fukui	Business Administration	9 mos
NJ4	24	Shizuoka	Business/Economics	7 mos
NJ5	24	Kanagawa	Comparative Literature/Business Administration	1yr and 4 mos

Note. yr = year, mos = months

participants had experience staying in Japan for four months to one year. JL5 had been taking significantly more Japanese courses at University of Oregon than the other participants, and studied Japanese on his own for five years (Table 2).

Native English Speakers.

The participants are five American students, one graduate student and four undergraduate students (Table 3). In order to avoid the Asian cultural influence, none of the students had studied East Asian Languages including Japanese in the past.

Data Collection

Data Collection from Role-play Tasks with Recording

Data were collected through the use of role-play tasks. There were a total of three requesting tasks described on separate sheets of paper and each task contained a situation, problem, and suggestion. All the tasks were designed to elicit students' face-threatening act, closely looking at the request head act (RHA), the request supportive move (RSM), and hearer-speaker perspectives. For the NEs, tasks were written in English and the role-play done in English while the tasks for the NJs and the JLs were written in Japanese, and the role-play was done in Japanese.

Task Design for the Role-play

In terms of designing the role-play tasks, Brown and Levinson's three major categories for Weight of FTA were taken into consideration. For Task 1, each student was to ask the professor to write a letter of recommendation with a due date of two days. They didn't know each other personally well, so the distance (D) is considered to be quite high. In addition, a professor and student usually have a high degree of social hierarchy in Japanese culture, especially when they do not know each other well, so the power difference (P) was also considered to be high. For Task 2, a company employer made a request to borrow a computer from the general manager. As in Task 1, the two people didn't know each other well (D). In addition to that, social power (P) could be a key point in this task. Since the interlocutor is the general manager, who is hierarchically dominant at a company, the degree of social power is considered

Table 2. *Participant Information of Japanese Learners*

Code	Years of JPN study	Studying JPN at UO	Studying JPN outside of UO	Other FL studies	Future work in Japan?
JL1	2 yrs	13 terms	High school in Hawaii (5 yrs)	No	Yes
JL2	2 yrs	2 terms	Waseda University (1 yr)	No	No
JL3	2 yrs	4 terms	Waseda University (1 yr)	Spanish French German	Yes (attorney at Japanese firm)
JL4	3.5 yrs	9 terms	High school in Fukuoka (1 yr)	Spanish Arabic	No
JL5	5 yrs	12 terms	High school in Oregon (1.5 yrs)	No	No

Note. JPN = Japanese, UO = University of Oregon, FL = foreign language, yrs = years.

Table 3. *Participant Information of Native English Speakers*

Code	Age	Foreign Languages studied	Major	Work Experience
NE1	24	Spanish (6mo)	Journalism: Electronic Media	media
NE2	25	Spanish (2yrs)	Journalism: Electronic Media	media
NE3	28	Russian (10+yrs) French (6yrs) Spanish (6yrs) Italian (3yrs) German (1yr) Polish (1yr) Old Church Slavonic (6mo)	Comparative Literature	food hospitality information and technology sales and marketing education
NE4	19	Russian (4yrs)	Geography, Russian and Eastern European Studies	science education manufacturing
NE5	19	French (5yrs)	History and Philosophy	grocery store recycling (Budweiser)

to be higher than in the other two situations. Even though Task 1 and Task 2 have a similar weight of FTA in terms of power and distance, it is interesting to see the socio-pragmatics transfer from the perspective of professor-student relationship and the one of senior manager-employer relationship. For Task 3, they are asked by a stranger to show her/him the direction of a hospital room. Since the interlocutor is a stranger, the distance is expected; however, the relationship between the requester and the interlocutor is that of strangers, so I was curious to know the role of power in this situation. Among them, it is thought that Task 2 is the most challenging for JLs. Employees at companies are usually expected to use certain honorific forms in order to show the *wakimae* "discernment" in Japanese society. For this reason, I was especially interested to see how the participants use the politeness strategies in the situation.

Table 4. Lexical / Phrasal Downgraders

Types of downgraders	Examples
1. Consultative devices	*Dorekurai kakaru to omoimasuka?* 'How long do (you) think that it will take?'
2. Understaters: The speaker minimizes the required action or object	*Chotto ojikan itadaitemo yoroshiidesuka?* 'Can you give me a bit of time?'
3. Hedges: The speaker avoids specification regarding the request	*Nanika sooiufuuni shite itadaketara taihen tasukarimasu.* 'It would really help if (you) did something about it.'; *~soodesu.* 'It seems that'
4. Downtoners: The speaker modulates the impact of the request by signaling the possibility of non-compliance.	*Moshikashite kikai o itadaketarato* Will (you) maybe (possibly, perhaps) give (me) an opportunity?; *moshi* 'if'; *dekitara* 'if possible', *yokattara* 'if it's fine'
5. Politeness device	*Dooka chotto pen o tsukawasete itadakemasuka?* 'Can I use your pen for a minute, please?'

Note. Adapted from Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, p. 203.

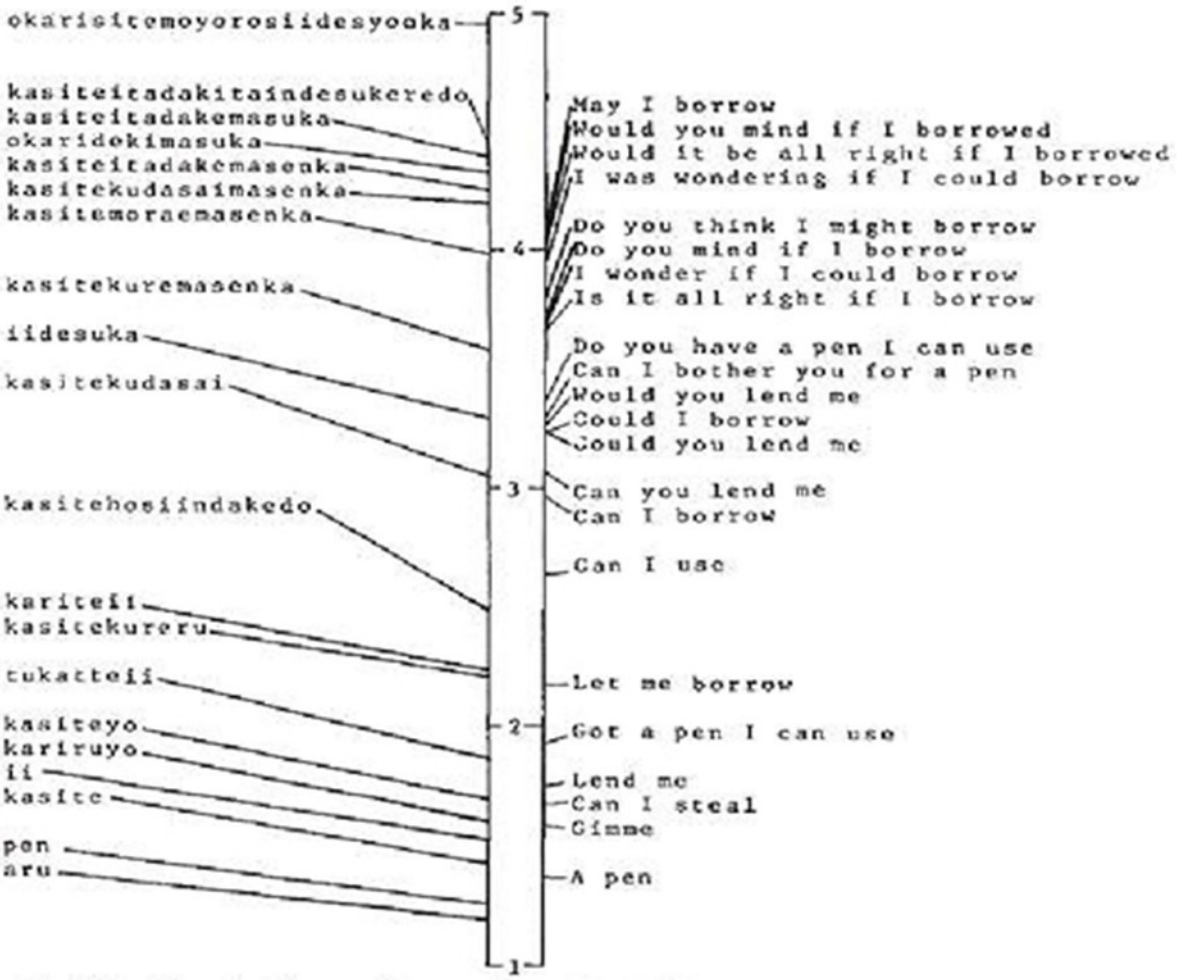

Figure 1. Degree of request head act strategies. Reprinted from B. Hill, S. Ide, S. Ikuta, A. Kawasaki, & T. Ogino, "Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English." *Journal of Pragmatics, 10*, p. 347. Copyright by the *Journal of Pragmatics*. Reprinted with permission.

Procedure

On the day of recording, each participant came to a room in Friendly Hall at the University of Oregon. The interlocutor was a bilingual Japanese visiting scholar. Since he played a role of professor, I chose a person older than all the participants. The interlocutor was asked to speak similarly to every participant in order to show consistency. First, one of the tasks was chosen and given by the experimenter. After participants read the instruction for the task, they were encouraged to ask questions to clarify the situations and the expressions.

After all the data were collected, they were carefully transcribed by two people. In this study, the transcribed tasks were analyzed by the following procedure. First, in order to compare the conversation differences in transcription by NJs and JL, including the language-specific politeness in Japanese, *wakimae*, Usami's coding system (2007) was used. Secondly, Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) coding categories of requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) were used in order to identify the different request strategies of Japanese and English, and the strategies were counted. Then, the data from the JLs and the NJs were compared in order to show socio-cultural differences and more details of interlanguage pragmatics. Last, the JL data set was analyzed with the RHA and RSM by a native English speaker (NE) in order to examine their L1 transfer based on politeness theory.

Data Analysis

Reliability of Coding

In order to avoid subjectivity in the coding, one American graduate student, majoring in East Asian

Languages and Literatures, was given the description of the semantic formulae and strategies used to perform a specific speech act, and asked to proofread to determine whether the use of the semantic formulae was accurate. He also double-checked the translated data in English from Japanese.

Data Analysis Methods

The present study is analyzed based on these semantic formulae of Cross-Cultural Pragmatics, Request and Apologies (CCPRA), which consists of two aspects: (a) the request head act strategy (RHA) and (b) the request supportive move strategy (RSM).

Request Head Act Strategy.

The request head act is rephrased as request mitigators. It is often in the syntax of words or phrases, and consists of downgraders to show indirectness. The list below shows types of request head acts. In parenthesis are examples used by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984).

1. Interrogative (Could you do the cleaning up?)

2. Negation (I wonder if you wouldn't mind giving me a chance...)

3. Past tense (I wanted to ask you)

4. Embedded "if" clause (I would appreciate it if you give me a chance...)

Syntactic downgraders

(Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984)

Native Japanese speakers tend to use the negation from verb-ending morphology in order to show indirectness in Japanese while English speakers are likely to use the rest of the syntactic downgraders in English as politeness strategies. According to Takahashi (2001), English requests can be mitigated to a greater extent by making them syntactically more complex by embedding the if-clause, that-clause, and/or infinitive "to VP" within another clause. Here, those syntactic downgraders show degrees of requesting forms. For example,

"I am wondering if you could VP"

"Do you mind if you VP?"

"Do you think that you could VP?"

"Would it be possible to VP?"

"Would/Could you VP?"

This is the variation for requesting in English. From top to bottom, the degree of politeness is declines. In contrast to English, native Japanese speakers rarely change the embedded clause to show mitigation. Given this difference, it is interesting to see how Japanese learners utilize such syntactic downgraders when they make a request in Japanese. The assumption is that some Japanese learners think of the embedded clause as a high degree of mitigation in Japanese and transfer such L1 politeness directly into Japanese. By doing so, their speech is considered ungrammatical in Japanese, and sometimes causes impoliteness when they make a request. In addition, there are downgraders that are used as phrases in the main request sentence.

Request Supportive Move Strategy.

The request supportive move is rephrased as external modifications. According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), the request supportive moves affect the context in which they are embedded, and thus indirectly modify the illocutionary force of the request. In Mizuno's study (1996a, pp. 94-95), she created a Japanese semantic formula for request supportive move strategies. In this study, I would like to adapt her coding. In order to analyze the cross-cultural data better, I have added *compliment* to Mizuno's semantic formula. The list below is a modified version of Mizuno's request supportive moves.

1. Grounder: Reasons, justifications (*Kochirano misu de wasurete shimattanodesuga* 'Owing to a mistake, I forgot to ask (you)')

2. Limitation: Reduce imposition (*Ojikan wa torasemasen* 'It shouldn't take long')

3. Cost-minimizer: Attempt to remove or reduce the interlocutor's burden by limiting the request (*Moshi gomeewaku de nakereba* 'If it's not too much trouble')

4. Pre-commitment: (*Onegai o kiitekuremasuka*? 'Would you do me a favor?')

5. Apology: (*Gomeiwaku o okakeshite sumimasen*. 'I'm sorry to bother you')

6. Compliment: (*Kurasu wa totemo omoshirokattadesu*! 'I have taken your classes and it was very interesting!')

7. Gratitude: (*Gorikai arigatoo gozaimasu*. 'Thanks for your understanding')

From the list above, it is important to mention that the cost-minimizer, compliment, and gratitude show positive politeness. The interlocutor usually has the desire to accept the request, and the speaker can use a cost-minimizer in order to prevent the FTA, saying 'if only you can'. Compliment and gratitude are speakers' positive politeness strategies that show a desire to be accepted by the interlocutor. On the other hand, limitation, pre-commitment, and apology show negative politeness. The speaker includes limitation, pre-commitment, and apology in the conversation so that the interlocutor won't feel imposed upon by the speaker's request and can be autonomous. All RSMs in the list above can be used by speakers in any languages. Therefore, it is interesting to see how many RSM each subject in English and Japanese will include in the role-play.

Request Perspectives

According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), requests usually include reference to the requester, the recipient of the request, and/or the action to be performed. The speaker can manipulate requests by choosing from a variety of perspectives.

Speaker-oriented: Emphasis on the speaker's role as the requester (*Okarishitemo yoroshii desuka*. 'Can I borrow..?')

Hearer-oriented: Emphasis on the role of the hearer (*Okashi shite itadakemasuka*. 'Can you lend me..?')

As found in Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003), the perspective of native English speakers is usually speaker-oriented while that of native Japanese speakers is hearer-oriented. Hill et al. (1986) also investigated relative ranking of politeness of request forms both in Japanese and English. Below is the chart they created to show the speaker perspectives in Japanese and English with the request head act.

The numbers 1 to 5 show the degree of politeness. The larger the number is, the more polite sentence becomes. Notice that most English speakers used the speaker-oriented verb *borrow* until the

Table 4. *Results for Request Head Acts (RHA) and Request Supportive Moves (RSM) for Three Tasks*

	Task 1			Task 2			Task 3		
Acts and Moves	NJ	JL	NE	NJ	JL	NE	NJ	JL	NE
Request Head Acts									
Consultative devices	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Understaters	9	2	2	11	4	0	4	0	0
Hedges	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Downtoners	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total RHA	10	2	5	11	4	1	4	0	0
Request Supportive Move									
Grounders	2	0	2	5	5	5	0	0	0
Guarantees, limitations	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0
Cost-minimizers	5	2	2	3	0	0	0	0	0
Pre-commitments	3	1	1	2	1	0	3	1	0
Apologies	3	6	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Compliments	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gratitude	5	6	5	6	4	5	5	5	5
Total RSM	19	15	14	19	10	10	9	7	5

Note. RHA = request head act; NJ = native speaker of Japanese; JL = learner of Japanese; NE = native speaker of English; RSM = request supportive move

ranking of politeness of request form went down to level 3.5. In the same manner, most of the Japanese speakers used hearer-oriented verb *kasu* 'lend' for the polite request forms. Also, in Japanese politeness, the benefactive construction with an auxiliary verb such as *kudasaru* 'give' or *itadaku*, *morau* 'receive' plays an important role (Yasumoto, 2001). A benefactive construction can cause a speaker to show the feeling of his/her self-interest in the expression of the main verb just by adding the auxiliary verb *kudasaru* 'give' or *itadaku* 'receive' into the main verb with a conjunctive modification. There are some languages that allow the benefactive verb such as Japanese and Chinese. However, there is no such phenomenon found in English. Below are the possible request forms with benefactive construction for the main sentence in Task 1 and Task 2 in the study.

Task 1

Kai te itadake masen ka

Write te-form receive Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can write me (and I receive (it))…'

Ka ite kudasai masen ka

Write te-form give Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can write me (and you give (it) to me)'

Task 2

Kashi te itadake masen ka

Lend te-form receive Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can lend me (and I receive (it))...'

Kasite kudasai masen ka

Lend te-form give Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can rend me (and you give (it) to me)...'

Tsukawase te itadake masen ka

Use-CAU te-form receive Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can let me use (and I receive (it))...'

Tsukawase te kudasai masen ka

Use-CAU te-form give Neg Q

'I am wondering if you can let me use (and you give (it) to me)...'

Task 1 is limited to one main verb, *kaku* 'write.' On the other hand, in Task 2, there are two types of main verbs available and four possible ways to make a main sentence. The first two are the verb 'lend' and the second two are the verb 'use.' Both of the main verbs can be speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented when they are used in affirmative sentence by themselves; however, the auxiliary verb is the key to create a hearer-oriented verb. Once the benefactive construction was created with either *kudasaru* or *itadaku*, the main verb becomes hearer-oriented. For the second two, the main verb *tsukau* 'use' needs to be changed to a causative form in order to survive in the construction.

It is posited that in terms of the speaker's perspective (a) native Japanese speakers will use the honorific auxiliary verb *kudasaru* 'give' more often, while (b) Japanese learners might use the speaker-oriented auxiliary verb *itadaku* 'receive' as a result of L1 transfer. The findings from the data analysis are discussed in the following section.

Results

This section is organized as follows: First, the results from the use of polite form by Japanese learners (JLs) in terms of *wakimae* is described. Then, the findings are listed dividing into two semantic formulae, the request head act and the request supportive move, followed by the request perspectives. Other findings from the study are discussed at the end of this section.

The Linguistics Form Based on Wakimae

As I mentioned in the discussion of Ide's *wakimae*, Japanese people clearly distinguish the use of the honorific form according to the interlocutor's social status and social distance. Through different verbal behavior, Japanese people are expected to acknowledge social and situational position. The degree of imposition is not likely to change the use of linguistic form by the Japanese speaker; thus, it is not exactly face-threatening acts that affect Japanese honorific speech. The possible elements of honorific use in the role-play are considered to be the following: In Task 1, as I mentioned in the data collection section, there was great social distance because of the lack of intimacy. Also, since the situation was the student's fault because he waited until the last minute to ask for a letter of recommendation from the interlocutor, the ranking of imposition was considered to be high. In Task 2, the general manager and the employer often have a greater social power difference than any other situations in Japanese society.

Surprisingly, the NJs' and JLs' use of honorifics was similar in both situations. The purpose of Japanese honorifics is to show respect to people who have distance and power in society while the use of RHA and RSM will change in every situation. Even though English does not have prominent distinguished honorific forms as shown in the results from the NE speech, the JLs seemed to notice that the situation was rather formal, and they successfully utilized their honorific speech consequently. Even though there were some conjugational mistakes, they perceived the pragmatics of politeness in both of the situations.

Table 4 shows the summary of numbers of each categorized coding in four RHAs and seven RSMs. The total numbers of each category are also listed. Unfortunately, Task 3 seemed to yield no prominent results one RHA; therefore, only Task 1 and Task 2 are analyzed below. Each number shows the number of instances of each type.

Request Head Act

For the request head act, I focused on the main sentence that contains the request form in the conversation.

Use of Understater Chotto.

The understater *chotto* is one of the most common adverbs in Japanese. It literally means "a little bit" in English; however, it is used in various ways in Japanese conversations. Peng (1994) even referred to *chotto* as *hyakumensō* (百面相: multitudinous phrases; p. 27). According to Peng (1994), one of the functions for *chotto* is the speaker's reluctance to say something in order to make the speech sound less demanding and minimize the imposition. In Matsumoto's investigation, she retrieved the example from a Japanese women's magazine, and Japanese person looking for the shirts at the store.

Customer: *Tyotto [Chotto] ookii*.

Big

'Tyotto it's big"

Sales Clerk: *Tyotto ookii desuka*.

Big is Q

"Is it a little big?"

Customer: *Tyotto dokoroka.*

Far from "Far from a little bit!"

Shufu danwa (p.16)

In the first speech of customer, he/she intended to tell the sales clerk indirectly that the shirts was big, using *chotto* to minimize the imposition toward the clerk. However, the sales clerk assumed that the shirt was, in fact, a little bit big. Therefore, the customer ended up feeling uncomfortable since the sales clerk did not understand what he/she wanted. Here, the actual semantic meaning of chotto was interpreted by the sales clerk instead of the pragmatic meaning of chotto. For this reason, the use of chotto is somewhat ambiguous; thus, for learners to use pragmatic meaning of chotto must be challenging.

In the role-play, the NJ used chotto much more frequently than the JLs; in particular, one NJ in Task 1 used them five out of nine times. In Japanese discourse, request and other speech acts are expressed vaguely than clearly and directly. We can anticipate that this understater chotto is preferred and used effectively in the FTA situation by some NJs.

Request Supportive Move

For request supportive move, every speech was examined based on the verbal communication listed in the data analysis section.

Cost-minimizer

NJ used cost-minimizer expressions skillfully, especially in more face-threatening tasks. Okutsu (2000) mentions in her study that Japanese speakers also use (a) conditionals such as *dekimashitara* 'If it is possible' and *moshi ozikan arimashitara …* 'If there is time (for you)' and (b) provisionals such as dekireba 'provided it is possible' and sashitukae nakereba 'provided there are no problems (with that)' to mitigate the requests that followed. Table 4 shows the number of cost-minimizer used by the NJs and JLs. Notice that the NJs use cost-minimizer expressions more frequently than the JLs in both Task 1 and Task 2. Especially in Task 1, it is used by every NJ and in Task 2, three out of five NJs used cost-minimizers while no JL used any. It is obvious in NJ requests that NJs use various kinds of cost-minimizers such as dekireba 'if possible,' *moshi yoroshikereba* 'if it's fine with you,' *moshi yoroshikerebade yoroshiinodesuga* '(I) will be fine with that if it's fine (with you)' before making an actual request to protect the interlocutor's face. On the other hand, JLs' cost-minimizer is limited to one type, *yoroshikereba* 'If it's fine with you.' Here, Okutsu (2000) points out, "[I]f the non-native learners do not have experiential memories of situated language use regarding how Japanese people use apologetic/ mitigating expressions in their request making, they will naturally fall back on their limited bank of relevant memories in Japanese and—the bottom line—how they would make requests in their own language" (p. 205). However, by analyzing the speech of the NEs, I found that the NEs use the cost-minimizers in their English requests in conversation like the NJs. The function of the cost-minimizer is quite similar in both languages. This indicates that both NJs and NEs use a variety of cost-minimizers; however, because JLs have limited language production, they might only use one type of cost-minimizer. For this reason, the advanced language classroom can introduce a variety of request supportive moves.

Apology and Sumimasen.

Ide (1998) mentions that "originally an expression of apology, *sumimasen* is a word that is commonly heard and used in everyday Japanese discourse" (p. 509). However, this single expression can function to encompass the feelings of both thanks and apology in the Japanese language. It is often considered that when Japanese people thank someone for receiving something or thank someone for some behavior, people tend to think of themselves as imposing a burden on this person. Therefore, in order to reduce their FTA in negative face, Japanese people tend to use the word *sumimasen* instead of saying simply *arigatō gozaimasu* 'thank you very much.' Other researchers comment that "this phenomenon has attracted attention both from anthropologists and from social psychologists interested in Japanese language and culture" (Benedict, 1946, pp.105-106; Doi, 1975, pp. 27-28; Lebra, 1976, p. 92). In this study, some of the JLs seemed to use apology by under-standing the situation; however, it seemed that JL3 overused them in Task 1 and gave an impression of discomfort to the interlocutor. In this case, JL3 is aware of the use of *sumimasen*; on the other hand, because the task is strongly face-threatening, he thought that he should use them occasionally in the conversation. To avoid such a misconception, students need to learn the boundary of each mitigation strategies as well.

Request perspectives

There are a few findings for analysis of request perspectives. As Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) would have predicted, all the NJs used a hearer-oriented verb for the main verb in both Task 1 and Task 2. In Task 1, they said, "Would you write me a letter of recommendation?" and in Task 2, "Would you let (me) use your computer for a while?" However, the majority of NEs used the verb *use* as to show a speaker-oriented perspective as following.

> I was wondering if I could use your computer (NE1, Task2)
>
> I am wondering if I can use your computer in 10 minutes (NE3, Task 2)

As seen above, the perspective of Japanese speakers and English speakers are very different. However, the data show that the JLs successfully used hearer-oriented verbs in both Task 1 and Task 2, yet they had some difficulty in using the causative verbs in Task 2.

The Benefactive Construction

Earlier I posited that NJs would use the hearer-oriented auxiliary honorifics *kudasaru* 'give' (the honorific-polite equivalent of the verb *kureru* 'give'). However, I found that most NJs and JLs used the speaker-oriented humble auxiliary *itadaku* 'receive' (the humble-polite equivalent of the verb *morau* 'receive'), in contradiction of my hypothesis. Figure 1 shows that *itadaku* 'receive' (4.5) ranked higher than *kudasaru* 'give' (4.3). It is not obvious, however, that the NJs used the speaker-oriented humble auxiliary *itadaku* for higher mitigation. However, as pointed out earlier, benefactive construction can play a role to show the feeling of his/her self-interest into the expression of the main verb by adding the auxiliary verb *kudasaru* 'give' or *itadaku* 'receive'; thus, benefactive construction itself might indeed have a notion of politeness internally in spite of the request perspective.

For Task 2, interestingly, the NJs all used the causative verb *tsukawaseru* 'let use' which is hearer-oriented. They constructed the sentence with a causative verb and te-form. Then they added the humble-polite auxiliary verb and the question marker *ka* to make the sentence interrogative, shown as *tsukawasete itadakemasenka*? 'I am wondering if you can let (me) use (it)'. However, two JLs (JL4 and JL5) used the form *yoroshii desuka*? (the polite form equivalent of *iidesuka* 'Is it fine?') instead of *itadaku*. As I showed in the data collection section, the main verb in Task 1, *kaite itadaku* ('write' + humble auxiliary) and in Task 2, *tsukawasete itadaku* ('let (me) use' + humble auxiliary) were
hearer-oriented. In order to make the sentence 'let (me) use the computer' with the humble-polite *itadaku* in Japanese, speakers found it necessary to use the causative verb with the *te*-form in Task 2. It is predicted that the causative verb construction is challenging for JLs to acquire and learners tend to avoid using it in conversation. As a matter of fact, Task 2 result shows that JL 4 and JL 5 know that the auxiliary verb *itadaku* is a high request head act strategy and they are willing to use it; however, because the main verb *tsukau* 'use' needs to be conjugated into the causative and te-form in order to connect with *itadaku*, the JLs avoided using the causative form, and used the second verb predicate into *yoroshii desuka* 'Is it fine?' Specifically speaking, JL4 tried to use *itadaku* from his speech on the first place, but after he uttered the first part of the verb *tsuka-* (the root of the verb *use*), he noticed that he couldn't say *itadaku* directly. Then he did not make the causative verb *tsuka(u)* 'use': rather, he chose to add *yoroshii desyooka* 'Is it fine?' to *tsuka(u)* which is a less-FTA strategy. Because a causative verb with the conjunction of the *te*-form and the humble-polite *itadaku* has a role of saving the speaker's negative face for not interrupting the interlocutor and is a high scale of Japanese FTA, It is suggested that JLs be aware of the speaker-hearer differences and learn the causative structure in the classroom instruction.

From my observation of the auxiliary verb, the JLs seemed to understand the use of wakimae; however, it is uncertain whether the JLs understood the degree of benefactive construction use based on the appropriate situation, rather, it can be considered that the JLs learned benefactive construction as set phrases in the classroom. Also, I approached to examine the learners' L1 transfer in request perspective; however, even though *itadaku* is a humble auxiliary and the JLs had the positive transfer on speaker-oriented perspective correctly, it is not necessarily appropriate to suggest that they understand the concept of request perspectives. Rather, based on the observation of the NJs use of *itadaku*, it seems that all benefactive construction involves the expression of appreciation internally related to the socio-cultural notion with orientation itself. Therefore, I couldn't find the precise result of request perspective as a politeness strategy with the limited data from this study.

Other Findings

In addition to RHAs, RSMs, and Request perspectives, there additional interesting findings resulted in from the study; sentence endings, the different order of request in Japanese and English, and the use of aiduchi 'back-channeling'.

Sentence Endings

Usually, a Japanese regular question sentence ends with the question particle ka; however, the data shows that a number of NJs did not finish in this way. The total number of times that NJs in Task 1 did not finish the sentence in this way was nineteen times out of 32 instances. In Task 1, NJ1 mentions

kaite itadaki tai ndesu keredomo

write receive want but

'(I) want to receive (your) writing, but…'

Even though he completed the sentence with the verb *taindesu* 'want' once, the sentence continued with *keredomo* 'but..' and the speaker made the sentence rather vague. I believe the main clause *yo-roshii deshooka* 'Would you be okay with that?' is hidden at the end of the sentence, and NJ1 tried to be as indirect as possible. Interestingly, NJ 5 tried to be much more indirect in the same situation. He mentions

Suisenjyoo o hitotsu kaite itadake nai kana to

recommendation ACC one write/te-form receive Neg QP Comp

'(I am wondering if you) cannot write a letter of recommendation'

In this sentence, it is hypothesized that NJ5 is waiting for the interlocutor's reply as he slowed down the sentence and did not finish it. This phenomenon tends to happen in many situations in the data. Surprisingly, among the 33 instances of NJ utterances in Task 1, thirteen were unfinished. On the other hand, of the total of 29 instances of JL utterances, only two sentences were unfinished. In Task 2, even though all of the NJs finished the main sentence for requesting, there was one situation in which the sentence was incomplete: when the senior manager inquired how long the employee needed to spend time on his computer, the employee did not finish the sentence.

It may be that a Japanese speaker unconsciously waits for the interlocutor's reaction and decision to decrease the degree of FTA in terms of negative face. In other words, the speakers give the interlocutor a choice to show his/her opinion and decision, and by not finishing the sentence, the interlocutor can be autonomous in the conversation. On the other hand, JLs are prone to finish the sentence and show their volition to the interlocutor. For this reason, I chose to categorize such unfinished sentences as Japanese specific request head acts.

A similar finding was reported by Tamura and Lau (1992), who compared the different conversation styles between Japanese speakers and English speakers. They explain that in Japanese conversation, "the receiver would let the conversation flow a bit more fully, using intuitive capacities to try to understand the message because it is his or her responsibility to sense the message" (Tamura & Lau, 1992, p. 327). On the other hand, Tamura and Lau (1992) continued that, in English, "It would be the sender's responsibility to speak more clearly, for instance, to use another expression so that the receiver would understand" (pp. 327-328).

Furthermore, the structure of the Japanese language helps in this NJs' tendency since the main clause is usually placed after the subordinate clause in complex Japanese sentences. Speech usually includes the main contents before the sentence ends, and so, failing to complete the sentence will allow interlocutors to think about a favorable answer to the request. However, in spite of the flexibility of sentence structure, it is important to note that JLs are likely to finish the sentence in order to be clear about their request. According to a Japanese instructor at the University of Oregon, the habit of finishing the sentence may be a result of in-class instruction. Students are usually instructed to finish sentences in the program. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that two processes are at work: JLs are likely to transfer L1 communication strategies in their speech endings to show the positive face; in addition, the classroom instruction seems to require that students finish sentences.

The deadline in Task 1.

In Task 1, subjects were to request letters of recommendation within a limited deadline. At this point, an interesting difference emerged between the NJs and the NEs. While all of the NEs mentioned the deadline in their own speech, only three out of five NJs asked the interlocutor to write a letter of recommendation, and all five NJs waited to see if the interlocutor would ask for the deadline. As for the JLs, three subjects mentioned the deadline in their own speech. It is not easy to tell if this result shows an L1 transfer from NE. However, at a minimum, the deadline can be mentioned in the very indirect way in this context. In particular, JL5 asked in a very direct way: "Well, I am sorry, but would you write a letter of recommendation by the day after tomorrow?" It is vital to choose words carefully and think of the interlocutor's perspective in each situa-

tion in order to minimize a face-threatening act. The results indicate that both NJs and NEs know the way to mitigate; however, when it comes to second language learning, it appears that learners need to learn the variations and their degree of frequency.

The results indicate that both NJs and NEs know the way to mitigate; however, when it comes to second language learning, it appears that learners need to learn the variations and their degree of frequency.

The use of aiduchi *'back-channeling'*

The other interesting findings were observed in the use of different back-channeling in English and Japanese in Task 1. When a professor (the interlocutor) was asking a student (the speaker) to write his strength or selling points, all the NJs responded with the short utterances "uh huh" at least six times while some of the JLs used it only twice in the same amount of communication. Then, by observing the NEs' back-channeling, there were no significant responses found. What is more, it seems that the NEs actually avoided such short utterances in the middle of conversation

NJ1

それで、あとで、帰ってからでいいですけれども（(はい)） こういうことであれば是非推薦状に書いてほしいと（(はい)） 思うような、なんかあの（(はい)）長所だとか（(はい)）、セールスポイント（はい)） 簡単でいいですから（はい)） 箇条書きで（はい)）メールしてくれませんか？

Sorede, atode, kaettekitekarade iidesukeredomo ((hai)) kouiutokorodeareba zehi, I, suisenzyooni kaitehoshiito ((hai)) omouyoona, nannkaano ((hai)) choosyodatoka((hai)), seerusupointo ((hai)) kantandeiidesukara ((hai)) kazyoogakide ((hai)) meerushitekuremasenka?

Then, later on, it's okay to do (so) after (you) go home ((yes)) (you) want (me) to include in the letter of recommendation ((yes)), (you think) well, ((yes)) (your) strength ((yes)) and selling points ((yes)) the simple is fine

((yes)), Can't (you) ((yes)) email (me)?

JL1

あぁ、そうですか。それじゃ、なんとか書きましょう。ただし、こういうことを推薦状に書いてほしいという、 なんかあなたの、その長所だとか、セールスポイントがあったら、あとでメールでも いいですから、メモして、教えてください。（(はい)）それを使って、あなたの推薦状を、書いてあげましょう。（(はい、わかりました)）

Aa, soodesuka. Sorezya, nantoka kakimashoo. Tadashi, kooiukoto o suisenjyooni kaitehoshii toiu nanka anatano, sono choosho datoka seerusu point ga attara atode meeru demo iidesukara, memoshite, oshiete kudasai. ((hai)) sore o tsukatte, anatano suisenjyoo o kaite agemasyoo. ((hai, wakarimashita))

'Oh, I see. Then, (I) will somehow manage to write (the letter of recommendation). However, if there are your strength and selling point, which (you) want (me) to mention in the letter of recommendation, please let (me) know by email or writing memo. ((yes)). Then, I will write one by using it. ((yes, I got it)).'

NA2:

Okay, uh, okay.. What's so I guess five o'clock? In Oregon Hall? That's when would be due, right? ((yea)) Okay. Uh, yea, yea, I will get that for you. I need to look up your old records in terms of what degree you got in and everything uh, and why don't you go ahead and <pause> can you give me a copy of uh, personal statements? Uh, from your program that you were in.

Schegloff (1982) characterized such short utterance as "back-channels, whose functions are to convey backward messages from the hearer to the speaker indicating that the hearer is attending to, listening to, understanding, and expecting to continue the production of the speaker's main message" (p. 87). Therefore, back-channeling, which is referred to as aiduchi in Japanese, is the interlocutor's method to show the speaker their expression of

interest, which can be understood as positive face. Maynard (1986) compared Japanese and American dialogues, and observed that Japanese dialogues have almost twice as much aiduchi as American dialogue. From the empirical study, I found that the aiduchi technique is considered by Japanese people to show a positive attitude as an interlocutor. Since the rank of imposition is particularly high in the situation of Task 1, it seems that the NJs in the role of a student tried to show their intention to listen to the professor. For this reason, I believe that the high degree of ranking of imposition and the number of aiduchi are likely to correlate with each other.

Conclusion

The present study has attempted to analyze cross -cultural and linguistic differences between native Japanese speakers (NJ), Japanese learners (JL), and native English speakers (NE) in the speech act of request. In order to elicit participants' natural occurring pragmatic politeness, request situations in a role-play task were examined. The first research question was the following:

Are there any traces of L1 transfer in the socio-pragmatic features of JLs in terms of Politeness Theory?

It is important to note that they often used transference of the English politeness strategies into Japanese context. For example, JLs tend to finish the request sentence to make a clear and precise request while NJs tend to wait for the reaction of interlocutors when making a request. In Japanese turn -taking, I found that it is the interlocutor's responsibility to sense the message of the speaker. In the same fashion, *aiduchi* 'back-channeling' played an important role for Japanese communication strategy more than English, too. Also, the understater *chotto* was a unique feature in Japanese requests in order to minimize the imposition for negative face. JLs did not use it as much and it seems that they don't know *chotto* is used as a politeness strategy in realization to the hearer. Furthermore, the use of causative form for request speech was somewhat challenging for JLs. In terms of the use of Japanese hearer-oriented auxiliary honorific verb, there seemed more psychological feeling of cultural notion involved besides request perspective. Therefore the L1 transfer was hard to predict; for this reason, the further research is needed to investigate request perspectives.

The second research question asked the following:

What are the differences between pragmatic features JLs and NJs, especially the use of the request head act and the request supportive move formulae?

This research showed that JLs tend to use fewer request supportive moves (RSMs) in Japanese than NJs. Since NEs, too, use various RSMs for their politeness strategy, I assume that the language class introduces JLs to a limited number of RSMs. Since English has the similar concept of RSM as mitigation strategies, it is important to find the frequency with which RSM is used in Japanese. The misuse of pragmatics about Japanese requesting by a JL results in discomfort on the part of the interlocutor. I believe that the apology sumimasen was covered in the subjects' previous Japanese classes; however, one JL overused the expression in speech. 3) There were few findings for the alternation of the use of RHAs and RSMs between JLs and NJs since all tasks were set up with a similar degree of social constraints. The use of honorifics with the concept of wakimae in each situation was recognized by JLs as well as NJs. However, for future research, various tasks are required to examine this research question. These findings shed light on the difficulty of acquiring pragmatics in L2 acquisition. Also, this research has indicated that there are different communication strategies even among NJs in terms of politeness use. Fukushima (2000) mentioned that "I take politeness to refer to the use of communication strategies intended to maintain mutual face and to achieve smooth communication, taking into account human relationships. The promoting and maintaining of politeness call for displays of appropriate behavior" (p. 1120). What is considered to be appropriate varies from situation to situation and culture to culture, while personal values and tastes can also influence judgments of appropriateness. Not only Japanese learners but also native speakers of Japanese should take into account the individual's values and tastes.

Directions for Future Research

For future research, some alternatives to the present study might be considered. First of all, the performance tasks were carefully chosen in the present study; however, one of the NEs claimed that Task 1

was not realistic, and so the task was modified. In addition, the instructions for the task itself were so long that some of the JLs had a hard time recalling all the information required for the situation. Since non-native speakers tend to focus on the forms rather than meanings, such a long description may have confused them. In order to avoid such difficulty and practicality for classroom teaching, situations which are used in actual Japanese textbooks will be used for future study. Also, the use of non-verbal request acts such as pause, tone, and silence were not included in the data analysis. It is very important that these elements be taken into consideration in order to investigate psychological aspects behavior of students toward the interlocutor.

In sum, the present study focused on the request using a similar pattern in three tasks. When the recording data were analyzed, I often wondered if power and distance of speakers are different from the situations in this study. It would be interesting to compare a variety of situations with different weight in power and distance in future study. Further-more, as people's style of conversation evolves, the way of request strategies changes over time. The emphasis of the Japanese value system might change over time, and the change of such cultural values can change the social structure itself, and then, the way of requesting strategy might shift (as it has shifted) as time goes by. The request study in the historical point of view, preferably decades ago, and the future data collection will be a great resource.

Also, in terms of pedagogical implication, this research indicates that the Japanese learners lack explicit knowledge of socio-pragmatics to some degree, and so, they need to learn pragmatics competence along with culture aspects explicitly in the classroom. One way to improve this aspect of language learning is through the learner's textbook use. The textbook in the classroom should include more variety of politeness strategies and frequency of expression explicitly. Also, the instructors can remind students the importance of pragmatic strategies. In the future, it is my hope to create a curriculum for advanced Japanese learners based on Japanese speech acts, introducing the concept of different politeness strategies between Japanese and English and conduct follow-up research on the effectiveness of pragmatic-based classes.

References Cited

Bachnik, J. (1992). The two "faces" of self and society in Japan. *Ethos, 20*(1), 3-32. Retrieved October 12, 2007, from http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0091-2131%28199203%2920%3A1%3C3%3ATT%22OSA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q

Bell, J., & Gower, R. (1998). Writing course materials for the world: A great compromise. In B. Tomlinson (Ed.), *Materials development in language teaching* (pp. 135-150). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Benedict, R. (1946). *The chrysanthemum and the sword: Patterns of Japanese culture.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (Eds). (1989). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics: An introductory overview. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House, & G. Kasper (Eds), *Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies* (pp. 1-34). Norwood: Ablex.

Blum-Kulka, S., & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and apologies: A cross-cultural study of speech act realization patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics, 5*(3), 196-213.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena, In E. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction* (pp.56-289). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Byon, A. (2004). Sociopragmatic analysis of Korean requests: Pedagogical settings. *Journal of Pragmatics, 36*, 1673-1704.

Celce-Murcia, M,. & Olshtain, E. (2000). *Discourse and context in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cook, H. (2001). Why can't learners of JFL distinguish polite form impolite speech-styles? In K. Rose. & G. Kasper. (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 80-102). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dobeta, H. (2001). The emergence of politeness in Japanese language. Based primary of the quantity

information held by participants in a conversation. *Keiai University International Studies, 8*, 53-79.

Doi, M,. Kabasawa, Y,. Mayuyama, K,. Nonaka, J,. Onuma, M,. Yamamoto, K., & Yasui, T. (1991). *Talking business in Japanese.* Tōkyō: The Japan Times.

Doi, T. (1975). *Amae no kōzō* (The anatomy of dependence). Tōkyō: Kōbundō.

Duthler, K. W. (2006). The politeness of requests made via email and voicemail: Support for the hyperpersonal model. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 11*, 500-521.

Fujii, N., & Sugawara, H. (2003). *Aozora: Intermediate-advanced Japanese communication*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Fukuda, A., & Asato, N. (2004). Universal politeness theory: Application to the use of Japanese honorifics. *Journal of Pragmatics, 36*, 1991-2002.

Fukushima, S. (2000). *Requests and culture: Politeness in British English and Japanese.* Bern: Peter Language.

Hayashi, A. (2000). Kaiwa hattenno kouzouto syuufukuno sutorateji: Nichi dokugo taisho noshitenkara mita “irai” to “kotowari” ni okeru intarakusyon [Conversational structures and strategies for remedial work: Interaction of “requests” and “refusals” from contrastive analysis of Japanese and German]. *Bulletin of Tōkyō Gakugei University Section II Humanities, 51*, 81-94.

Hill, B., Ide, S., Ikuta, S., Kawasaki, A., & Ogino, T. (1986). Universals of linguistic politeness: Quantitative evidence from Japanese and American English. *Journal of Pragmatics, 10,* 347-371.

Ide, R. (1998). ‘Sorry for your kindness’: Japanese interactional ritual in public discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics, 29*, 509-529.

Ide, S. (1989). Formal forms and discernment: Two neglected aspects of linguistic politeness. *Multilingua, 8*, 223-248.

Ide, S., & Yoshida, M. (1999). Socio-linguistics: Honorifics and gender differences. In N. Tsujimura (Ed.), *The handbook of Japanese linguistics* (pp. 444-480). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Iwai, C., & Rinnert, C. (2001). Cross-cultural comparison of strategic realization of pragmatic competence: Implications for learning world Englishes. *Hiroshima Journal of International Studies 7*, 157-181.

Izaki, Y. (2000). Cultural differences of preference and deviations from expectations in requesting: A study of Japanese and French learners of Japanese in contact situations. *Journal of Japanese Language Teaching, 104*, 79-88.

Kasper, G. (1984). Pragmatic comprehension in learner-native speaker discourse. *Language Learning, 4*(34), 1-20.

Kawamura, Y. & Sato, K. (1996). The acquisition of request realization in EFL learners. *JACET Bulletin, 27*, 69-86.

Kobayashi, H. & Rinnert, C. (2003). Coping with high imposition requests: High vs. low proficiency EFL students in Japan. In A. Martínez Flor, E. Usó Juan, & A. Fernández Guerra (Eds.), *Pragmatic competence and foreign language teaching* (pp. 161-184). Castelló de la Plana, Spain: Publicacions de la Universitat Jaume I.

Kubota, M. (1996). Acquaintance or fiancee: Pragmatic differences in requests between Japanese and Americans. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics, 12*(1), 23-38.

Lebra, T. (1976). *Japanese patterns of behavior.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Matsumoto, Y. (1988). Reexamination of the universality of face: Politeness phenomena in Japanese. *Journal of Pragmatics, 12*, 403-426.

Matsumoto, Y. (1989). Politeness and conversational universals: Observations from Japanese. *Multilingua, 8*, 207-221.

Matsumoto, Y. (2001). Tyotto: Speech act qualification in Japanese revisited. *Japanese Language and Literature, 35*(1), 1-16.

Maynard, S. (1986). On back-channel behavior in Japanese and English casual conversation. *Linguistics, 24*, 1079-1108.

Maynard, S. K. (1993). *Kaiwabunseki* [Conversation analysis]. Tōkyō: Kuroshio.

McCarthy, M., & Carter, R. (1994). *Language as discourse: Perspectives for language teachers*. New York: Longman.

Miura, A., & Hanaoka, M. (1994). *An integrated approach to intermediate Japanese.* Tōkyō: The Japan Times.

Mizuno, K. (1996a). "Irai" no gengo kōdōni okeru chūkan gengo goyōron: Chūgogujin nihongo gakusūshano baai. [Interlanguage pragmatics of requests: The case of Chinese learners of Japanese]. *Gengo Bunka Ronshu, 17*(2), 91-106.

Mizuno, K. (1996b). "Irai" no gengo kōdōni okeru chūkan gengo goyōron (2): Directness to perspective no kantenkara [Interlanguage pragmatics of requests: Directness and perspectives]. *Gengo Bunka Ronshu* (Papers on Language and Culture), *18*(1), 57-71.

Murata, Y. (2000). Changes in usage of verb forms: A comparison study of 1981/82 and 1996 TV talk shows. In M. Hori, S. Tsuda, Y. Murata, K. Murata, & K. Sekiyama, (Eds.), *The positive politeness trend in recent Japanese* (pp.79–84). Tōkyō: The Japan Association of College English Teachers.

Moriuchi, M. (1992). A study of cross-cultural communication: American students' use of Japanese honorific formalisms. Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin.

Nakahama, Y. (1998). Differing perceptions of politeness between Japanese and American learners of Japanese. *Southeast Review of Asian Studies, 20*, 61-80.

Nakahama, Y. (1999). Requests in L1/L2 Japanese and American English: A crosscultural investigation of politeness. In L. Bouton (Ed.), *Pragmatics and language learning, 9* (pp. 1-29). Urbana, IL: University of Illinois.

Nwoye, O. G. (1992). Linguistic politeness and socio-cultural variations of the notion of face. *Journal of Pragmatics, 18*, 309-328.

Okutsu, Y. (2000). *Requests made by learners of Japanese, with native comparisons: From a pedagogical perspective* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH.

Peng, F. (1994). *"Chotto" wa chotto: Peng Fei hakase no nihongo no fushigi* ["Chotto" means chotto: A mystery of the Japanese language by Dr. Peng Fei]. Tōkyō: Kodansha.

Rinnert, C., & Kobayashi, H. (1998). Requestive hints in Japanese and English. *Journal of Pragmatics, 31*, 1173-1201.

Schegloff, E. (1982). Discourse as interactional achievement: some uses of "uh huh" and other things that come between sentences. In D. Tannen (Ed), *Analyzing discourse, text, and talk* (pp. 71-93). Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

Takahashi, S. (1996). Pragmatic transferability. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 18*, 189-223.

Takahashi, S. (2001). Role of input enhancement in developing pragmatic competence. In K. Rose & G. Kasper (Eds.), *Pragmatics in language teaching* (pp. 171-199). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Takahashi, S. (2005a). Pragmalinguistic awareness: Is it related to motivation and proficiency? *Applied Linguistics, 26*, 90-120.

Takahashi, S. (2005b). Noticing in task performance and learning outcomes: A qualitative analysis of instructional effects in interlanguage pragmatics. *Science Direct System, 33*, 437-461.

Tamura, T., & Lau, A. (1992). Connectedness versus separateness: Applicability of family therapy to Japanese families. *Family Process, 31*(4), 319-340.

Tsukuba Language Group. (1992). *Situational functional Japanese, 3*. Tōkyō: Bonjinsha.

Tsuzuki, M. (1999). Language transfer in L2 acquisition with reference to the politeness degree of request expressions: A case of Japanese learners of English. *Sophia Linguistica, 44,* 109-121.

Usami, M. (2007). *Basic transcription system for Japanese: BTSJ*. Retrieved July 20, 2007, from http://www.tufs.ac.jp/ts/ personal/usamiken/ btsj070331.pdf.

Varner, I. & Beamer, L. (2005). *Intercultural communication in the global workplace.* Burr Ridge, IL: Irwin.

Yasumoto, Y (2001). “Ageru” “kureru” hyōgen to “‘amaenokōzō.’” (“‘give’ ‘receive’ expression and ‘Anatomy of Dependence.’” *Gengo, 30*(5), 74-79. Tōkyō: Taishūkan shoten.

About the author: Yuka Matsuhashi is an instructor of Japanese at Temple University, Japan Campus. She has also taught at the University of Nevada, Reno, and Willamette University in Oregon. Her research interests include educational technology, teaching Japanese for specific purposes, crosscultural communication, and interlanguage pragmatics.