

Table 4. Refusals from a lower status to a higher status

| Refuser Status lower to higher | Respondents | Answers |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|--|
| (situation 1) * | AE | regret + vague excuse + positive opinion (1) refusal + vague excuse (1) apology + refusal + vague excuse (1) |
| | JJJ | regret/apology + vague excuse + refusal(4) |
| | JJE, JAE, AAE | positive opinion + vague excuse (2) positive opinion + apology + vague excuse (2) apology + vague excuse (2) apology + refusal (1) apology + refusal + clear excuse + positive opinion (1) |

* some of the respondents are omitted because they did not answer in a discourse style.

**Table 5. Direct explanation and its example sentences:
from lower to higher status**

AE: explain the situation directly + personal comments

Ex. "I already tried a plan very much like that one and it just did not work out. If you have any other suggestions, I would be glad to listen to them."

JAE and AAE: explain the situation directly + personal comments

Ex. "Yes, I think this plan is worth doing, too. But I tried a bit similar plan before, and it turned out to be unsuccessful. But I still think it's worth trying to see if the plan you proposed would work."

Answers by JJEs: explain the situation directly

Ex. "I have already tried it and found to be not so good."

Answers by JJJs: Explain the situation directly

Ex. "We tried similar plan before, but it did not work. The plan needs revise."

Table 6. "Want statements" answered by each group

| | The Most Direct | In Between | The Most Indirect |
|-----|----------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| JJJ | - | - | - |
| JJE | #5 (3 answers) | #5 (2 answers) | - |
| JAE | #5 (1 answer) | #5 (4 answers) | - |
| AAE | #5 (all respondents) | - | - |
| AE | #5 (all respondents) | - | - |

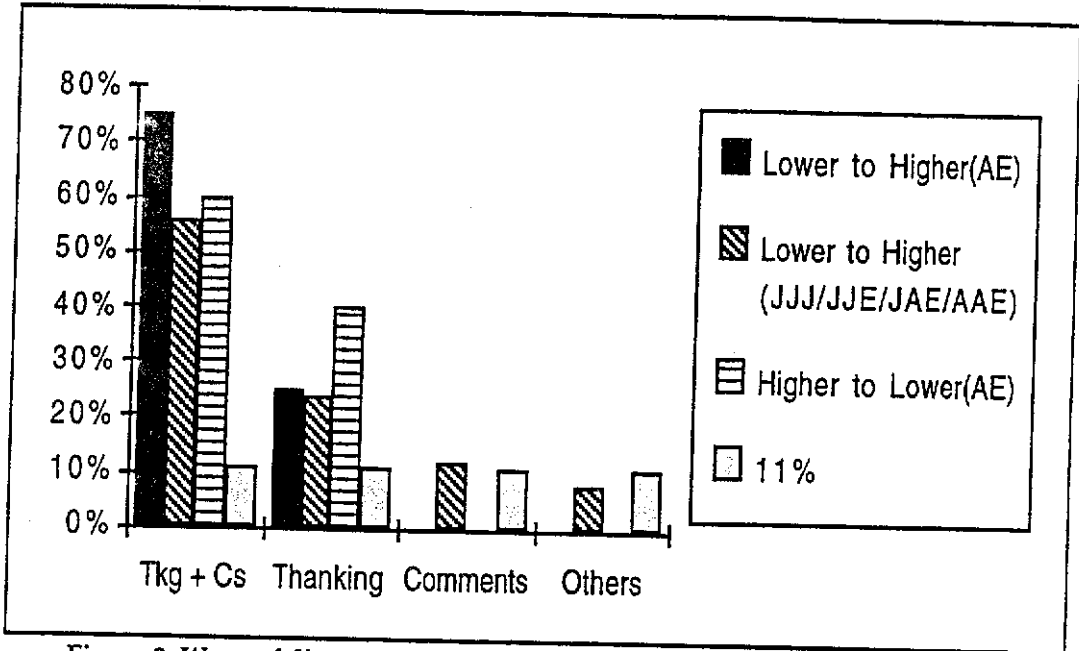


Figure 2. Ways of disagreement according to groups: from lower to higher status

* Others = keep silent or tell a lie about having not read the plan yet.

Direct/indirect expressions and status could be related in these situations. Telling about the situation directly to their boss might be considered more polite because the embarrassing situation might influence boss's status. In business settings, directness/indirectness and status may play an important role in polite expressions.

Disagreement

Lower status speaker talking to higher status colleague.

The respondents were also asked what to say to their boss when they found their boss's new plan was clearly wrong because the plan had been already tried before, and it did not work well (situation 6). There were two types of answers: 1) explaining the situation directly and 2) giving hints to let the boss know about the situation. Generally, Japanese and American business people seem to prefer disagreeing directly (see figure 2). In this situation, JAEs and AAEs who are living in the US seem to have acquired target-like expressions of disagreement to a greater degree than JJEs who are living in Japan (see Table 4).

All Americans (AEs) replied by explaining the situation directly, and added personal comments. The AEs tended to make personal comments in order to make polite expressions of disagreement which is also discussed by Beebe and Takahashi (1989a, b). On the other hand, JJJs (who answered in Japanese) answered in two types: (1) direct type and (2) hint type (see figure 2). JJJs hinted by replying, "I will bring the previous file which was

the same type of plan," or "I tried this plan. I will bring the file now" (Originally written in Japanese). Although these respondents knew that the plan did not work well, they did not mention it. Instead, the respondents tried to inform the boss about the fact by showing him the previous file.

While JJJs answered in two types, nine out of 11 answers written by JJEs, JAEs and AAEs were direct type, which is the same type as AEs. In other words, JJEs, JAEs and AAEs tended not to use hints in order to explain the situation to the boss. In the questionnaire, some respondents commented that they would tell the fact clearly because they did not want to waste time. In English, Japanese respondents (JAEs AAEs JJEs) tended to tell disagreement directly (see figure 2).

JAEs and AAEs (who are living in the US) tended to add personal comments after telling the fact directly, which is similar to answers by AEs(see in Table 4). By adding personal comments, responses becomes original. However, JJEs and JJJs (who are living in Japan) tended to tell only the fact. Without comments, responses sound less original. By stating disagreement with personal comments, JAEs and AAEs might express more target-like polite ways of disagreement than those by JJEs which do not have personal comments.

JJJ (Japanese who answer in Japanese) expressed disagreements in two types: disagreement with hints and directly. JJEs, on the other hand, JAEs and AAEs (Japanese who answer in English) seemed to prefer to disagree directly. Furthermore, JAEs and AAEs (who live in the US) seemed to have acquired target-like expressions of disagreement because they tended to express disagreement with personal and positive comments which is similar to expressions of AEs. Here, it is possible to say that exposure to the target culture can help ESL learners to acquire target-like pragmatics.

Higher status speaker talking to lower status colleague.

In situation 8, the respondents were asked to tell a subordinate that his proposal was not good. AEs and JJJs responded by telling problems or suggesting discussions about the plan. However, half of JJE, JAE and AAE answered in harsh ways, that is, telling the fact directly, such as the plan was not good at all.

Although AEs and JJJs suggested discussions in their responses, their responses were not the same way. One of the AEs responded, "Your plan seems very good, but there are some rough edges, maybe we could get together, and work out those rough edges together." JJJs tended to suggest discussion as hints for the problems, such as, "Please explain this point," and "Let's discuss it," (Originally written in Japanese). By asking for further "discussion" about the plan, the respondents were trying to convey the fact that the plan was not very good. AEs had already mentioned that the plan had problems before they suggested discussion. On the other hand, JJJs needed to understand that "discussion" meant that the plan had problems. This indirect expression is the typical Japanese norm, a hint strategy.

Six out of 12 JEs, JAEs and AAEs (Japanese who wrote answers in English) replied with hint type, and six of them replied with direct expressions. These answers are different from the expressions by AEs and JJs. Two of the direct expressions is, "unfortunately, I can't accept your plan because....," or "I must tell you my opinion about your plan...." Some respondents commented that, "since I do not want to waste time with the subordinate's plan, I will tell them directly."

In this situation, half of JEs, JAEs and AAEs used hint strategy which JJs also used. The other half of them criticized their subordinate's plan harshly, but JJs seldom replied to their subordinate harshly. This result could be related to language stereotypes. As Beebe and Takahashi (1990) discuss, JEs JAEs and AAEs might be instructed to speak with direct expressions in English.

The relationship between degrees of Directness and Politeness.

Americans (AEs) and Japanese who answered in Japanese (JJs) shared the same degree of directness. Also, non-native speakers of English (JEs, JAEs and AAEs) understood the target-like degrees of directness. However, in the answers of JEs (Japanese living in Japan, who answered in English) and JAEs (Japanese living in America, who answered in English), "want statements" were not understood to the same degree as the AEs, and AAEs. In other words, Japanese who had less exposure to the target culture, did not understand "want statements" correctly while those Japanese who exposed to the target culture longer did. The reason for this result may be that in Japanese, there are no conversation expressions similar to "want statements," (see Table 4).

All respondents shared the same notions of directness and politeness both in English and Japanese. "Hedge performatives" and "query preparatory," the second direct sentences, were regarded as the most polite expressions. "Strong hints" and "mild hints," the most indirect sentences, were the secondary polite expressions. "Mood derivable" and "want statements," the most direct expressions, were regarded as the least polite expressions. The respondents might choose the second direct sentences as the most polite expressions because they perceived them as a balanced degree of directness and politeness (Brown & Levinson 1978).

If the second language has some expressions that their native language does not have, non-native speakers may not perform them well. Native speakers of Japanese in this study might find it difficult to understand the degree of directness and politeness of "want statements" in English since Japanese does not have the similar expression. However, all JAEs, who had 4 years of working experience in English speaking countries, understood the degrees of directness of "want statements." This result may show that the longer non-native speakers are exposed to the target culture, such as in business settings, the more they acquire target like pragmatics; furthermore, it also comments on the need to have an immersion like experience in order to acquire all forms.

Conclusion

In this study, there were two questions. One was to see which experiences help Japanese business ESL speakers to develop the ability to use target-like politeness expressions instead of transferring them from Japanese pragmatics. The second question was to see how Japanese speakers of English understand the relationship between degrees of directness and politeness.

Referring to the first question, the results of the situations refusals and disagreement suggests that living experience in the target culture helps learners to acquire target-like pragmatics. The respondents living in the English speaking countries developed ability to make their replies original, which Americans tend to prefer (Beebe and Takahashi 1989a,b). Furthermore, only Japanese who had work experience in English speaking countries understood English "want statements." These results suggest that Japanese who had less exposure to the target culture found it difficult to use English pragmatics and politeness expressions appropriately. In other words, the more specific experience learners are exposed to, the more they have chances to acquire the communicative competence.

For the second question, the results show that Japanese and American business men share an understanding of the relationship between degrees of directness and politeness despite the fact that indirectness and politeness are strongly related in Japanese (Clancy 1990).). As Blum-Kulka (1987) discusses, a "query preparatory" such as "Could you clean your desk?" was regarded as the most polite expression because the respondents balance degrees of directness and politeness.

However, the business people in this study valued their native norms in their responses when they responded to higher status business people. Most of Japanese respondents expressed humbleness in their comments, and most of American respondents made positive comments in their responds. In other words, Japanese ESL business people tended to express the Japanese norm in their responses to compliments made by their higher status people.

In this study, the respondents were carefully selected to be young business men at large companies; it is no coincidence that the respondents were male. It is possible to say that the results in this study are an indication of the politeness strategies which young American and Japanese executive male business people tend to use.

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(2) Today, you made a presentation about the profit share in contrast with the previous year. Your presentation was successful, and your boss approaches to you.

Boss: Your presentation was very good. I was fascinated with your approach.

You: [spacing reduced by editors]

(Comments:)

(3) Today, what the company calls "casual day", is a day for casual attire.

This morning, you put on casual clothes, and it is the first time that you try casual clothes in the office. Your assistant notices your clothes,

Assistant: Mr. A, you look so nice on your casual clothes. I really like your shirt.

You: [spacing reduced by editors]

(Comments:)

(4) You and your boss are having lunch at a cafeteria near your office. Your boss is in a hurry, and he has to leave now. You notice that your boss is about to leave with ketchup on his cheek.

Boss: I need to go now.

You: [spacing reduced by editors]

(Comments:)

(5) Your company has a plan to improve the computer system and you are in charge of this plan. You are comparing three computer companies to decide which one is the best. One of the computer companies invites you to play golf at the fanciest club this weekend, but you can not attend.

Salesman: If you are available this weekend, we would like to invite you to play golf at X club. I think it will be a wonderful opportunity to get to know each other in such a healthy setting.

You: [spacing reduced by editors]

(Comments:)

(6) A new boss has moved into your division. He proposes a new plan to you for your project, but you have already tried the same plan before and it turned out not to be good.

Boss: Did you read my new plan? I think it worth trying once.

You: [spacing reduced by editors]

(Comments:)

(7) It is one p.m. You are waiting for executives from Y company to have an important meeting. Your assistant comes to tell you that they have just arrived and s/he will be greeting them now. Then, you realize that you assistant has some spinach in her/his teeth.

