

# A Case Study of First Encounter Conversation in Cross-cultural Settings: Discourse Style Differences in Intercultural Settings of English Speakers and Japanese Speakers

Yuka Shigemitsu\*

## Abstract

This study focuses on first-time encounter conversations in intercultural settings. The data that were analyzed were three English data sets between two Japanese and two English native speakers and two Japanese data sets between two Japanese and two English native speakers. The previous studies (Tsuda et al., 2015; Shigemitsu, 2015) suggest that Japanese speakers and English native speakers have different perspectives as to the ideal conversation. This paper illustrates how their L1 (first language) affects the discourse when they speak in FL (foreign language). The Japanese tend to take the listener's role; when other participants start to talk, they easily relinquish the floor. As English native speakers expect to gain new knowledge in most conversations, this behavior by the Japanese does not satisfy English native speakers. The study also shows evidence of some minor problems in the data. Many ESL situations in Japan have claimed that the reason why Japanese English learners are often not ideal at speaking within intercultural settings is that people in Japan are shy, but this paper claims that the different discourse styles exhibited in conversations within intercultural settings may on their own cause an underdevelopment of Japanese speaking skills in English.

## 1. Introduction

The data that were analyzed are the first encounter conversations with new people in intercultural settings, specifically between English native speakers and Japanese native speakers talking in English and talking in Japanese. The goal of the first time meeting with new people is to get to know each other. At the same time, most individuals would like to be more polite than usual to the other participants since they would like to make a good first impression in order to build new relationships. Therefore, it is logically assumed that the pragmatic rules of their socio-cultural background will affect their FL usages more emphatically than the ordinary conversation with acquaintances. According to Shigemitsu (2015), English native speakers and Japanese native speakers have different perspectives on first-time-meeting conversations. English speakers try to show their intelligence and abilities, whereas Japanese try to show a different kind of ability: how well they adjust to situations and how they develop empathy for the other conversation participants. Japanese wish to make the other participants feel comfortable during the conversation.

## 2. Previous studies

This study focuses on the conversational style differences between Japanese and English. The study was motivated by observable Japanese ESL (English as a second language) situations. Many of the learners of English have good ability in reading, grammar, and vocabulary. Some hardworking learners are also good at writing and listening. However, with speaking, the situation is different. According to Terauchi et al. (2008), based on their questionnaire to thousands of Japanese businessmen, "Japanese people tend to listen to the others talk and miss a timing to say their own opinion" and "Japanese people feel difficulties in objecting during the discussion." Moreover, Terauchi et al. (2008, 2013) concludes that Japanese behavior is influenced by their reserved attitude.

On the other hand, Tsuda et al. (2015) provides refuting claims. The reason why Japanese people feel difficulty in speaking English, according to Tsuda, is due to the discourse style differences between English and Japanese. According to results of interviews of both English native speakers and Japanese speakers participating in conversation, some of the Japanese participants categorize themselves as listeners in conversation. They say that they like to listen to other people's stories and do not like to talk much. While listening, they seldom ask questions or do not object. A few participants say that asking questions is an impolite behavior. Therefore, their cultural norms may be in evidence as they speak in English.

Otani, M., Iwata, Y., & Shigemitsu, Y. (2016) analyzed first encounter conversations by male participants. They picked up common features from their British data, American data, and Australian data. They focused on listeners and

---

\* Professor, General Education and Reserch Center, Tokyo Polytechnic University  
Received sept. 27, 2016

compared English native speakers and Japanese speakers to see how English speakers and Japanese speakers behaved in conversations within their own languages. “Listener” in their research is defined as a participant who receives the information from the current information giver (i.e., the main speaker at the time).

As for the topic development, Otani claims that information receivers in English conversation tend to shift the focus of current speaker’s talk by asking some questions. Let us quote a very typical example from their data.

(1) [Excerpt of Australian conversation from Otani et. al. (2016)]

- 01 Au15: It’s kind of funky, what do you do?  
 02 Au16: Ah, medicine. I’m first year med#  
 03 Au15: Yeah, yeah.  
 04 Au16: in the middle of, you know, never-ending.  
 05 Au15: Very tough.  
 06 Au16: Yeah.  
 07 Au17: So, the exams coming up are really tough?  
 08 Au16: Yeah, it is.  
 09 Au17: Stressing out.  
 12 Au16: Twenty fifth, yeah, freaking out.

Au15, Au16, and Au17 are all Australian males who have met for the first time. They introduce themselves. In line 01, Au15 asks Au16 about his occupation in a statement structure of b-event (a term of Labov and Fanshell, 1974) style question. Au16 answers that he is a medical student and continues that medical department is very tough. Here Au16 is the information giver and other two participants are information receivers. Then in line 07, Au17 picks up a sub topic of the medical students’ everyday life and says ‘So, the exams coming up are really tough.’ Then the topic shifts to the exams of medical students.

Let us compare this type of topic shift from a typical Japanese conversation. (2) is an excerpt from a first encounter meeting in Japanese. J36, J40, and J42 are Japanese males. They are graduate students and this is their first encounter conversation. The data that is shown below is the English-translated version. J40 is asking about J36’s club activities. The question established a new topic.

(2) [Excerpt from Japanese data in Otani et. al, (2015)] (translation)

- 01 J40 : Well, were you joining any club activities at school?=  
 02 J36 : =No, not really. I did not belong any club activities. But in my hometown, I played soccer for a long time.  
 03 The elementary school that I graded from, there, I teach children soccer. I mean, I am a coach at elementary  
 04 school soccer club. I started coaching them when I was a high school student.  
 05 J42 : un  
 06 J36 : I have been a coach for a long time. I cannot do anything for myself on the weekend because of the coaching.  
 07 That is the reason that I do not belong to any club activities.  
 08 J42 : [ah]  
 09 J36 : [Well] I also belonged to a soccer club. Some of the member were related to elementary school. I enjoyed  
 10 soccer in hometown, rather than at college team.  
 (2 second pause)  
 11 J40 : That sounds nice.  
 12 J42 : Yes.  
 13 J36 : [right]  
 14 J42 : [in the future, too, ]You can enjoy.  
 15 J36 : That’s right. [@@]  
 16 J40 : [@@]I understand. Human relationship at home town is strong.  
 17 J36 : Yes, this experience taught me how to get along with children. I receive high evaluation when I teach children  
 18 at cram school. There I work as a part-time teacher.  
 19 J42 : I see yeah (2 seconds pause)

In line 11, 14, 19, the information receivers gave short feedback comments. However, their comments showed their understanding and agreement but did not develop the conversation. Even J40 (who started this topic by asking a question to J36) gave comments showing empathy only and did not ask further questions. Nor did he bring forth his similar experience. This effect is called “second story” by Sacks (1992). As a result, when the information giver wants to conclude the ongoing topic, the topic will tend to end in Japanese conversation.

In English conversations, first a topic is developed interactively. Information receivers try to contribute to the topic development and the topic is shifted together with the information giver and information receivers. Second, the amount and depth of disclosure is very visible. Third, information receivers ask questions to elaborate upon the current topic from the information giver. In contrast to this, Japanese speakers (in their data) are seen to behave as follows. First, as shown in example (2) above, the length of the topic tends to depend on the information giver. If he wants to stop, the topic ends whereas if he wants to talk more, the topic will continue. Second, Japanese do not disclose themselves very much. As for the questions, they do not often ask questions except to provide an introduction to a new topic. They select what to ask very sensibly in order to avoid being impolite. They especially tend to avoid asking about opinions or ideas. Japanese speakers (in their data) primarily listen to the current speaker. Their responses are usually the go-ahead sign.

These results can be supported by comments from participants in experimental conversations (Tsuda et. at, 2015, Shigemitsu, 2015). After recording the conversation, each participant in the experiment was interviewed by the researchers individually. Results of the interviews after recording the conversation reveal that English speakers and Japanese speakers have very different perspectives on conversation. They were asked about their impressions of the immediate conversation and also their general ideas about conversations.

These are the relatively common answers from English native speakers (N=51).

- Talk distribution should be the same.
- Ask questions.
- One engages in conversation too be able to gain new knowledge from other participants.
- Conversations with intelligent people who have their own ideas and thoughts is quality conversation.

These are some of the common answers of Japanese participants (N=25).

- Try to be a good listener. Let the other person speak more.
- Do not ask questions (they do not want to be asked questions).
- Make other participants feel good.

As we can see, English native speakers’ attitudes about “gaining new knowledge from the other participants” is not compatible with the Japanese speakers’ attitudes regarding “being a good listener” and “letting the other person speak more.” Additionally, asking questions is viewed as not being part of their manners. It can be said that English native speakers interact actively whereas Japanese speakers participate rather passively in conversation.

This paper attempts to clarify more specifically what happens in the intercultural communication between Japanese speakers and English native speakers. The research questions re as follows.

RQ1: When people speak in intercultural setting, do they retain their own socio-cultural background and their native language’s discourse style?

RQ2: When speakers of Japanese and English have a conversation in an intercultural setting, do English speakers tend to lead the conversation?

RQ3: When speakers of Japanese and English have a conversation in an intercultural setting, do Japanese participants do not commit to the English speakers’ talking and listening?

RQ4: When English speakers’ aim in conversation is to gain new knowledge, will they be satisfied with the conversation with Japanese speakers?

RQ5: If Japanese speakers aim in conversation is to be a good listener, will they relish the conversation since English native speakers talk more and disclose themselves?

### 3 Data

For the analysis, 11 intercultural groups were videotaped, transcribed, and analyzed. Seven of the intercultural group conducted their conversations in English and four of them in Japanese. All the participants were male except for two, who participated in conversations in Japanese. Participants were unacquainted. The age of the participants was 20 years old or older. They should have acquired their socio-cultural background from their L1. All the participants were college graduates. The length of each conversation was about 30 minutes. They were recorded and transcribed.

As for the English data, the data were recorded in Japan. The English speakers are from the United States and Canada. They are students or office workers, and some are teachers. Japanese participants for English data collection were selected from among those who had considerably high scores in English certificate tests but never lived in English-speaking countries, except for short trips. The English native speakers in Japanese data collections were recorded in Japan and Canada. The English speakers who joined the recording in Japan were exchange students. They learned the Japanese language in their own country. The English speakers in the Canada data collection learned the Japanese language in their own countries and then lived in Japan for a few years before returning to Canada.

Among these data, five groups are focused for this paper due to the control of the data were and analyzed in discourse analysis framework and qualitative analysis. The data used are coded IE76, IE77, IE78, IE79, IJ81, and IJ82. IE is the abbreviation of the Intercultural English data and IJ is the abbreviation of the Intercultural Japanese data. All the participants were male. They were given the following instructions: “You are invited to a home party at your teacher’s house. The host, the teacher, needs to go out to get more food and drinks at a nearby shop. So, suddenly, you are left alone at his/her house with people you do not know and who do not know each other.”

In this particular situation, they must spend some time with the other guests. It may be preferable to continue conversation before the host comes back. It may be desirable to make their first impression be a good one.

## 4 Analysis and discussion

### 4.1 English data

The discourse pattern, which repeatedly occurred, were selected for this analysis. Although participants did not have interactional trouble, some unexpected discourse patterns appeared from the participants who had a different language background. First, IE78 of the English data in the intercultural setting was focused on. Excerpt (3) is the English data. The participants are Ca6, U15, J42, and J43. Ca is Canadian, U is American, and J is Japanese. Ca6 and U15 are exchange students to a university in Japan to study Japanese culture. J42 is a school teacher and J43 is a medical student. Ca6 is practicing *Aikido*, a modern Japanese martial art. However, he misses the class recently because he has an ingrown toenail. Ca6 starts, “I have an ingrown toenail, so I haven’t been able to” and then U15 reacts and shows sympathy to him.

(3)[IE78]

- 01 Ca6: Yeah, I have an ingrown toenail, so I haven’t been able to#  
 02 U15: Ugg , Oh, wow! How are you? Ugg, Oh, that’s disgusting.  
 03 Ca6: What?  
 04 U15: Do you know what an ingrown toenail is?  
 05 J42: Toenail?  
 06 U15: Yeah.  
 07 Ca6: It’s like the nail grows in and keeps growing (..) it doesn’t stop, it just grows up to the sides.  
 08 J43: *Ugeee*  
 09 J42: Yeah, yeah, yeah.  
 10 U15: It’s (..) it looks terrible and it hurts.  
 11 J43: yeah yeah yeah.  
 12 U15: probably worse. Oh man. So, most people, Japanese people ask me this, so I’m going to ask you  
 13 J43: yeah.  
 14 U15: to switch it up. Do you have a girlfriend?

Japanese participants J42 and J43 did not respond immediately so U15 assumed that they may have not known the term “toenail.” U15 and Ca6 started to explain what the ingrown toenail is. J43 said “*Ugeee*” in line 08. “*Ugeee*” is an exclamation expression when someone feels something is very bad. J42 repeated “yeah” three times in line 09, which emphasized he understood the term very clearly. U15 showed sympathy again saying, “it looks terrible and it hurts.” Again, this time J43 repeated “yeah” three times in line 11. He showed his empathy by agreeing with what U15 said. However, the English native speaker did not take the “yeahs” to mean a display of sympathy and judged that the Japanese participant was not interested in the toenail topic. English native speakers might have expected some comment from J43, a medical student. However, J43 just said “*ugeee*” and “yeah, yeah, yeah” in lines 08 and 11. Then U15 changed the topic entirely in line 12. The expression “oh man” is usually used to express displeasure over something that happened. Therefore, U15

may be not satisfied with the Japanese participants' attitude.

The topic of the next excerpt is about injury, which is similar to excerpt (3). Participants are an American (U15) and a Canadian (Ca6) and two Japanese (J42 and J43). This topic is introduced by J44. He noticed that U15 was injured and then mentioned more about it. J44 speaks English fluently and his responses are very quick. His pronunciation is very good and he does not have an accent. J44 established a topic and began, "So, you injured." Then, U15 began to explain about his injury from the next turn in line 02.

(4) [IE 76]

- 01 J44: So, you injured.  
 02 U15: Oh, no. It's a (..) it's a, it's kind of a complicated story.  
 03 J44: Okay.  
 04 U15: I was (..) I was with my um home stay family.  
 05 J44: Yes.  
 06 U15: last weekend and we went to Gifu.  
 07 J44: Right.  
 08 U15: And this place called *Shoehein* Park.  
 09 J44: All right, *Shoehein* Park.  
 10 U15: And there was this big hill covered in fake grass like plastic grass.  
 11 J44: Yeah.  
 12 U15: and you can just get on a sled and just slide down it.  
 13 J44: Um-hum.  
 14 U15: Now (..) it was much bigger than I thought it was @.  
 15 J44: Yeah @  
 16 U15: So, when I think I get to the bottom  
 17 J44: Yeah  
 18 U15: I lose control  
 19 J44: Yeah  
 20 U15: and I use my arm  
 21 J44: Yeah.  
 22 U15: to slow my fall.  
 23 J44: @@  
 24 U15: And let's say  
 25 J44: Yeah.  
 26 U15: I have very little skin left @  
 27 J44: @@  
 28 U15: It is  
 29 J44: Oh, it must be @@  
 30 U15: It's, it's [at]  
 31 J44: [Yeah].  
 32 U15: That's why I wear this, it looks  
 33 J44: Yeah.  
 34 U15: disgusting.  
 35 J44: Disgusting, yeah @  
 36 U15: Oh, man.  
 37 J44: Oh yeah man, gee

Even when he started to ask a question to U15, J44 gave just short back-channelings during his talk. In line 09, J44 said, "all right, Shoehein park." This implies that he understood the name of the place. In line 15 and line 27, when U15 laughed, J44 also laughed. In line 35 and line 37, he repeated the utterance of U15. Here J44 may have shown sympathy and understanding with this echoing of words and laughing voice. He listened to U15 and let him continue in whatever way he wants to talk. However, it is uncertain that U15 comprehended J44's verbal behavior as appropriate. He might have

expected a different pattern of discourse or manner of speaking.

Thus, excerpts above show that Japanese participants tend to remain as listeners, and they are not being as involved in the current speaker's conversation as they do in their L1.

## 4.2 Japanese data

This section analyzes the Japanese conversation. In excerpt (5) from IJ81, participants are two Japanese (J46 and J47), and a Canadian (Ca5) and an American (U16). They talked about drinking custom in North America. J46 was asking about drinking customs in the United States and Canada. They answered with a general idea and gave the name of popular drinks, Cola and Pepsi. After that, U16, who has Indian background, started to talk about his tea custom. He drinks Chai.

Japanese participants were giving a go-ahead sign by using short feedbacks to the speaker. Moreover, two of the Japanese were giving these feedbacks at the same slot in similar ways. In line 15, one of the Japanese participants asked a question to elicit more information about the current story. After this excerpt, Canadian participant, Ca6, started to talk about his own drinking customs. However, Japanese participants did not talk about their tea customs.

(5)[IJ81]

- 01 J46: *Nani Nomu no shuryu na mono tte*  
what drink COM main thing CONJ
- 02 Ca5: *Uun ippanteki-ni kooku toka so*  
Well generally coke like so
- 03 J46: *Aa*  
Oh
- 04 U16: *kora toka ne*  
coke like FP
- 05 Ca5: *Pepusi*  
Pepsi
- 06 U16: *mo sekai ju yumei yakara sa*  
world-all well-known DM FP
- 07 J47: *Un*  
yes
- 08 J46: *Un*  
yes
- 09 Ca5: *Un so so*  
yes yes yes
- 10 U16: *so da ne jibun no ie dakara ano amari nanka kora toka amari nomazu do darona yappa chai toka ne*  
so COP FP my PROP house well much well Cola like much drink-NEG well Q well Chai like FP
- 11 J46: *[a]*  
yes
- 12 J47: *[un]*  
yes
- 13 U16: *haha ga tsukutte kureru kara @@*  
mother S makeCONJ because
- 14 J47: *un un*  
yes yes
- 15 J46: *maa nihon de iu ocha mitaina kanji no are de nomunda yone [kankaku teki ni wa]#*  
well Japan CONJ say tea likewise feeling GEN that CONJ drink GEN FP feeling likewise COM TOP
- 16 U16: *[uun] un kankaku teki ni wa so da ne chotto chigau*  
well yes feeling likewise COM TOP FP little different
- 17 J46: *un*  
yes
- 18 U16: *ano kara sa mo chigau ne*  
well spicy degree too different FP

- 19 J46: *aa*  
yes
- 20 J47: *un*  
yes
- 21 U16: *so so so shoga toka mo ato kosho mo ireru*  
right right right jinger like too CONJ pepper too put
- 22 J46: *ho*  
oh
- 23 Ca5: *betsuni tokuni mizu dake nomimasu @*  
nothing especially water only drink COP
- 24 U16: *maa soredemo kenko teki yana*  
DM that only helthy likewise FP
- 25 J47: *@@@*  
<translation>  
'J46: What do you drink? What is the popular drink?  
Ca5: Well, generally, we drink coke.  
J46: yes  
U16: For example, Cola  
Ca5: Pepesi  
U16: They are well know in the world  
J47: yes  
J46: yes  
Ca5: yes I agree  
U16: That's right. At home, I seldom drink cola. What do I drink? I drink chai.  
J46: [Aa]  
J47: [Um]  
U16: My mother makes it for me. @@@  
J47: Um um  
J46: Do you drink chai often as we drink green tea? [ tea drinking custom]  
U16: [Well, ]um, tea drinking custom is similar but it is different.  
J46: um  
U16: that spicy taste is different  
J46: Aa  
J47: um  
U16: yeah yeah ginger, pepper, we put them in  
J46: Oh  
Ca5: Nothing particular, only water @@@  
U16: That's very healthy  
J47: @@@'

In excerpt (5), J46 asks “What do you usually drink in your country?” in line 01 and introduces a new topic. First Ca5 answers and then U16 repeats Ca5’s answer and elaborates on it. Although J46 established a new topic, J46 and J47 gave only short back-channelings in line 03, 07, 08. The topic is not developed by Japanese participants. Ca5’s response in line 09 is heard as a strong agreement to U16’s utterance in line 06. However, Japanese back-channelings in line 03, 07, and 08 are go-ahead signs. They show that they are listening and will not interrupt Ca5 and U16; they also want the Canadians and Americans to develop the current topic. Then U16, who has Indian background, elaborates on his answer and talks about his particular situation. He drinks Chai (a spicy Indian tea) at home in the United States and his mother usually makes it for him. At this moment, J46 says that Indian people always drink chai just as Japanese people drink green tea. The final particle ‘-yone’ indicates that he claims that he has some knowledge about Chai and he knows how often Indian people drink Chai. By this ‘yone’, J46 asserts his shared knowledge and shows rapport. However, U16 denies part of J46’s comment. Indian Chai is spicy but Japanese green tea is not. This denial does not reject rapport but to the English

native speaker, bringing the topic into the argument is more effective within the conversation since argument is an intellectual act and each of them enjoy showing their competence. Line 22 "oh" shows that J46 just wanted to describe tea drinking customs of India and Japan is similar; he may not have expected the differences the tea comment would bring about. J46 does not comment on the different taste of the green tea versus Chai. After that, J46 and J47 start to give only short back-channelings, which are go-ahead signs.

Let us see another example. Excerpt (6) represents the same data as excerpt (5). In the introduction session in IJ81 conversation, J46 introduced himself as a web designer. Before this excerpt (6), the main topic was about J46's job. He works at an elementary school. They talk about teaching children and how to cope with children. U16 shifts topic to J46's job, the other Japanese participant. U16 asks J43 about working style of web designer in Japan. From line 06 to line 09, J46 explains that people in Japan usually work at an office. It should be noticed that some of the participants gave back-channelings during his explanation. This may not be usual in Japanese conversation. Even the other Japanese participants gave vocalized feedback. In line 14, J43 returned the question to Ca6 and U16. After that, Ca6 answered that question. However, after that, Japanese participants relinquished the floor and took their usual listener roles. They then gave only go-ahead signs with short back-channelings and laughter. It should also be noticed that U16's back-channelings are not *un*'s or *hee*'s. He says, "*naruhodo*" (I see) and "*yappa*" (as I expected), which consists of words and transmits the nuance that U16 expressed.

(6) [IJ81]

- 01 U16: *sokka un de webu dezainaa no o shigoto mo atta shi#*  
understanding yes then web designer GEN HON job too COP-PAST CONJ
- 02 J46: [soya]  
Yes SFP
- 03 U16: *donna no tte ano ie de hataraku tte iu no ga tsujo tte wake desu ka*  
how GEN CONJ DM home CONJ work CONJ GEN TOP normal Qt COM COP Q
- 04 J46: *ie(/)*  
home
- 05 U16: *un ie de*  
yes home LOC
- 06 J46: *etto nihon dato madamada sono zaitaku tteiu yori wa o yappari ohuisu ni dete tte koto*  
DM JAPAN TOP yet yet that in-home CONJ than TOP o DM office LOC go out CONJ COM
- 07 *ga ooi n de yappari shokuba niwa dete kite maa zaitaku de yaro to omoeba*  
TOP many GEN CONJ DM office LOC go out com DM in-home INST do COND think-COND
- 08 *mochiron dekiru n desu kedo nakanaka souiu shuukan ga yappari nihon niwa mada kou ima dandan*  
of course possible GEN COP COND quite that custom TOP DM JAPAN LOC yet like now gradually
- 09 *souiu zaitaku waaku tteiu mono mo dete kita n desu kedo ma nakanaka*  
that in-home work CONJ thing too exist PROG=PAST COM COP CONJ DM quite
- 10 U16: *naruhodo*  
I see
- 11 J46: *un muzukashi n de maa shussha wa chanto shite tteiu koto ga kihon ni natteku no*  
yes difficult COM CONJ attendance TOP properly do QT COM TOP basic GEN become-PROG COM
- 12 *de yappari kaisha niwa ikanaito <teto>*  
CONJ DM office LOC go-must
- 13 U16: *yappa*  
as-was-expected
- 14 J46: *un tabun amerika dato yappari mo zaitaku toka jibun de ugoku tte koto ga ooi*  
yes perhaps America COND DM DM in-home and others oneself INST move Q COM TOP many
- 15 *n janai desu ka*  
COM NEG COP Q
- 16 Ca5: *un un ooi desu*  
yes yes many COP



17 U16: *souiu hucho ga ano kanari ooi desu kedo ne maa soreyori nanka jibun no bijinesu*  
likewise trend TOP to-a-large-degree many COP CONJ SFP DM before-that DM oneself GEN business  
18 *toka hajimaru no houga tabun motto ooi to omou*  
and-others start COM better-off perhaps more many COM think

19 J46: [*un*]  
yes

20 J47: [*hee*]  
oh

21 U16: *nanka jibun no bosu ni naritai toka ne*  
DM oneself GEN boss DO and-others SFP

22 J46: [*un @@*]  
yes

23 J47: [*@@*]

<Translation>

'U16: Right. So, you work too as a web designer.

J46: [yeah]

U16: How do you work? I mean, working at home is a normal style of work?

J46: At home?

U16: Right. At home.

J46: Well, in Japan, working at home is not accepted. We go to office. Of course this type of job, you can work at home. We don't do that. People do not accept such style of working. It is difficult.

U16: I see

J46: Right. This is the unscripted rule. We work at office. So we go to the office.

U16: That is what I expected.

J46: Um. Do you accept working-at-home-style in North America?

Ca5: yes, yes, many people work at home.

U16: That's what we usually do. But starting his or her own company is now general atmosphere.

J46: [yes]

J47: [oh]

U16: Many people want to be a boss.

J46: [Right, @@]

J47: [@@]

Thus, the above excerpts show that Japanese participants tend to remain as listeners, therefore they are not involved in the participants' story within their own language, either.

### 4.3. Possible cause of problems

Section 1 and 2 show that both in English and Japanese, the discourse style of the participants' first language affected the foreign language. This section illustrates the cases wherein each of the native speakers experience conversation that he would not expect from his own language behavior and discourse styles, although there are no major problems that develop. Excerpt (7) is an English conversation in an intercultural setting. In this excerpt, Ca5 asks J44 about his part time job. J44 is a graduate student in a Japanese university. In Japan, students are encouraged to do the extra curriculum activity such as club activity and part time job. Ca5 asks J44 whether he has a part-time job.

(7) [IE76]

01 Ca5: So, do – do you have like part-time jobs now?

02 J44: Part-time job, yes.

03 Ca5: What do you do?

04 J44: Ah teach – teaching.

05 Ca5: Oh.

06 U16: Teaching.

- 07 J44: Yeah.  
 08 Ca5: Like cram school or?  
 09 J44: Cram school, yeah.  
 10 Ca5: What subject?  
 11 J44: All.

After Ca5 found J44 had a part-time job, Ca5 continued to ask him what type of job he had. “Oh” is considered to be showing surprise. U16 repeated J44’s utterance in line 04, which indicates U16 is also surprised. As English native speakers expect, the next slot in line 07 should be J44’s elaboration upon his topic. However, he did not elaborate on this topic. English native speakers might have been satisfied with J44’s short answers. Then, in line 08 and 09, Ca6 successively asked about the type of school and subject. J44’s answers were very direct to the question, but English speakers may have anticipated longer responses. .

The next example shows that when native speakers really needed some valuable information, native speakers excluded Japanese participants from the interaction. They exchanged information. This type of sequence was not found in Japanese data. Before the chunk of excerpt (8), Ca6 was planning to travel to Tokyo and Yokohama area without booking hotels in advance. The other three were surprised to hear his plan. Among them, U15 really needed the information. Ca6 said he did not mind whether he slept in a park in Tokyo. Then the topic shifted to the homeless people and the difference of homeless people’s lifestyles in Japan and North America. Then in line 01 in excerpt (8), U15 brought the topic back to the Ca6’s travel plan to Tokyo and Yokohama saying, “I wonder why you would want to do that.” Then it was found that Ca6 did not know that there were laundromats in Japan. Therefore, U15 gave him precise information regarding an area near their school.

(8) [IE77]

- 01 U15: I wonder, because in America many homeless people, they still have jobs, but they just don’t make two  
 02 enough to have a home. So, I wonder one, I wonder why you would want to do that.  
 03 Ca6: No, because dude, there is there is cheap pools in Tokyo. I can just go there and take a shower and there  
 04 is oh, but there is no laundromats here.  
 05 U15: Yes, they are.  
 06 Ca6: Are there?  
 07 U15: There is a laundromat up the street from <prazti >actually. It’s right next to umm (..) umm (..  
 08 you know the street where umm (..) what is that stupid Starbucks that we know. There’s Starbucks and  
 09 the other café and if you walk up a little bit farther, there is a laundromat.  
 10 Ca6: Like the laundromat we have back home?  
 11 U15: Yeah, like the big washers and everything.  
 12 Ca6: Well that, and I am spending a couple days in Yokohama.  
 13 U15: All right.  
 14 Ca6: Like you know  
 15 U15: Have you guys been to Tokyo before?

Finally, in line 15, U15 noticed that Japanese participants did not join this topic and so then asked the Japanese participants whether they had been to Tokyo. (This conversation was recorded in Nagoya, 355 km away from Tokyo.)

## 5 Conclusion and Future Research

This paper focuses on how the L1 discourse style affects FL when they speak with discourse analysis framework. Four conversational data sets were picked up for this research. Two of them are English conversations between two English native speakers and Japanese speakers. The other data were Japanese conversations between two English native speakers and Japanese speakers.

From a previous study (Tsuda et. al, 2015, Shigemitsu, 2015), it is suggested that English native speakers’ aim in conversation may be “to gain new knowledge from the other participants,” whereas Japanese speakers’ goals may be “to be a good listener” and “to let the other person speak more.” These goals are incompatible with each other.

It was illustrated that when people speak in intercultural settings, they retain their own socio-cultural background

and their native language's discourse style. Their socio-cultural norms are practiced during the conversation in a foreign language. The data shows that both English native speakers and Japanese speakers retain their own discourse styles, which are attributed to their language with its socio-cultural background. Since their goals of conversation may be different according to the previous studies, English speakers tend to lead the conversation because they have a desire to show their competence and to have intellectual conversation. On the other hand, the aims in the conversation of Japanese speakers are "to be a good listener" and "to let the other person speak more," therefore they follow the direction of natural course in conversations guided by English native speakers. From the data, it was seen that Japanese participants did not commit to the English speakers' talk and they tended to provide back-channelings and go-ahead signs until the current speaker stopped the current narrative story. Finally, it may be suggested that if English speakers' typical aim in conversation is to gain new knowledge, they will not be satisfied with the conversation with Japanese speakers, although evidence on this matter was less complete. However, with Japanese participants, there was no negative effect whatsoever. Since Japanese speakers' aims in conversation may simply be to be a good listener, they will inherently appreciate nearly any conversation because they can listen happily to a variety of stories. English native speakers talk more and disclose themselves more fully.

For future research, more data should be obtained. Moreover, there are some points that should be considered and included in the future work. First, a point of view from foreigners talk in various discourse levels should be considered. Intercultural settings certainly have an aspect of foreigner talk. Secondly, we should observe a border with preferable conversational behaviors mixing with non-preferable conversation behaviors in a more blended zone. Interacting participants' territories of knowledge or domain should also be taken into account: what they can talk about and how much and in how much depth. In this way, information givers and receivers can better elicit information from the other participants and promote more positive conversations for all participants.

## References

- DuBois., Schuetze-Coburn, S., Paolino, D. and Cumming, S. (1993). Outline of discourse transcription. In J. Edwards and M. Lampert (Eds.), *Transcription and Coding Methods for Language Research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Labov, W. and Fanshel, D. (1977). *Therapeutic Discourse*. New York: Academic Press.
- Shigemitsu, Y., (2015). What is required in the first encounter conversation—through the interviews to Japanese native speakers and English native speakers. *Language, culture and communication*. Vol. 7. Rikkyo University.
- Tanaka, L. (2015) Japanese question: Discourse, context and language. London: Bloomsbury.
- Terauchi (2008) *Kigyo ga motomeru eigoryoku (English proficiency required from companies)*. Kaken Report of Ikuo Koike.
- Terauchi (2013) *Kigyo ga motomeru eigoryoku towa nani ka (What is English proficiency required from companies)*. In the *JACET-KANTO Journal(9)*. Tokyo: JACET-KANTO.
- Tsuda, S., Murata, Y., Iwata, Y., Shigemitsu, Y., Otani, M., and Otsuka, Y. (2015) *Nichieigo danwa style no kenkyu (Comparative study of Discourse of Japanese and English)*. Tokyo: Hitsuji Shobo.

## Appendix

[1] This paper is based on the presentation "First encounter conversation in intercultural setting: how to overcome the conversation style differences in intercultural setting of English speakers and Japanese speakers" presented at Sociolinguistic Symposium 21 at Murcia University held on June 16, 2016.

[2] List of Abbreviations and Conventions

COM	sentential complementiser	COND	conditional affix
CONJ	conjunctive affix	COP	copula
DESID	desiderative affix	DM	discourse marker
DO	direct object	GEN	genitive case
HON	honorific	INST	instrumental
LOC	locative	NEG	negative form
NP	noun phrase	PAST	past tense
PROG	progressive	Q	question particle
QT	quotation marker	S	subject marker
SFP	sentence final particle	TOP	topic marker

### [3] List of Data Transcription Conventions

The following conventions suggested by Du Bois, Schuetze-Coburn, Paolino and Cumming (1990) and Lydia (2015) were used for the transcription of the data.

(..) Brief pause, 0.2 seconds or less

@ laughter

[ ] simultaneous speech

<text> possible utterance

(#) grammatically unfinished utterance (Lydia, 2015)