POLITENESS: SOME PROBLEMS
FOR JAPANESE SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH

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Abstract

In this study, the politeness strategies of Australians and Japanese speakers of English are compared in two tasks involving polite requests. Four Australians and four Japanese were "video-taped" making the requests. Their language and the strategies they used are analyzed using the concepts of *face, notice* and *small-talk* (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Initial and final salutations and the language of the request are also discussed. The Japanese speakers were more direct, and did not appear to be as appropriately polite as the Australians. The weaknesses in the performance of the Japanese are traced to inadequacies in the teaching of English in Japan. Some recommendations are made for the teaching of English for communication in Japan.

Aim of the Study

Japanese people are often said to be polite, and many of them believe it themselves. While this may be true on many occasions, they may well fail to express the intended politeness when speaking English. Expressing politeness is not easy in a foreign language. The difficulty may be caused by a lack of linguistic competence. For example, not knowing the appropriate expression for a certain situation, a non-native speaker might speak too abruptly and sound arrogant or impolite. Saying *I want to go now* instead of *I have to go now* could surprise the other person. Another cause for the diffi-

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culty is the fact that politeness is expressed differently in different cultures. The rules "as to when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner" (Hymes, 1972, p. 277) in our native culture do not necessarily work in different cultures. A Japanese person who says *I don't think so* as a reaction to a social compliment such as *You look gorgeous today!* could puzzle or offend a compliment giver who does not know it is a natural and acceptable reaction in Japan. Problems could also result from misconceptions about the culture in which the target language is spoken. Those who think that English-speaking people have complete freedom to express individual opinions, as quite a few Japanese think, and thus say *yes* or *no* too clearly, could be considered rude in many situations.

In order to avoid these kinds of problems, we Japanese teachers of high school English must foster the use of English appropriate to a given context and make students practice appropriate politeness strategies in social interactions. Unfortunately English teachers in Japan have not been successful in this respect. Grammatical knowledge has been too much of a goal because entrance examinations for institutions of higher education test such knowledge. As a result, the communicative aspects of the language have been neglected. Even communicative aspects which are taught do not necessarily lead to better communication. For example, students are often taught that *I wonder if you could do. . .?* is more formal and polite than *Can you do. . .?* as a request, so many of them think it is the safest form in every situation. However, the most formal sentence is not always appropriate. On the contrary, being too formal sometimes sounds strange, funny, or even rude. If one asks a close friend at the table, *I wonder if you could pass me the sugar?*, the friend would be puzzled about the overly formal request. We should teach in what kind of situation each form is appropriate.

It is time to make accurate use of polite language one of the

important goals of English teaching in Japan. To attain this purpose, some objective study is necessary to see how the cultural patterns of English speakers and Japanese differ from each other, and how English spoken by Japanese differs from that of native speakers. If we know which differences cause problems in social interaction, we can focus on the problematic points in teaching English. The aim of this study is to make a tentative exploration of these differences and to see what we should teach so that our students will be able to communicate with native speakers appropriately.

Face Theory

Brown and Levinson (1978) introduce the notion of *face* into their theory of politeness. (The notion can be interpreted as a concept similar to *kao* [face] in Japanese expressions like *kao o tateru* [literally, *set up face*], which means to save face.) They treat the notion of face as a basic want, and divide it into two kinds:

Negative face: the desire of every "competent adult member" of a culture that his or her actions be unimpeded by others.

Positive face: the desire of every member of a culture that his or her wants be desirable to at least some others. (p. 67)

When we interact socially, we inevitably have sometimes to act in ways which intrinsically threaten the face of ourselves or other people. Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 65) call such behavior a *face-threatening act* (FTA). For example, when we make a request, we could threaten the other person's face by forcing him or her to accept an unpleasant responsibility. Or we could threaten our own face because our request might be rejected.

Factors which determine the seriousness of an FTA,

according to Brown and Levinson, are three elements which are to be found in both the speaker's mind and that of the hearer:

1) The *social distance* (D) of the speaker (S) and the hearer (H).
2) The relative *power* (P) of S and H.
3) The absolute ranking (R) of impositions in the particular culture. (1978, p. 79)

Strategies to save face are chosen according to the weightiness of an FTA. For example, when we think that R is high (a difficult request), and D and P are low (social parity between S and H), we can use an expression such as *Hey, Harry, I'm awfully sorry to bother you. . .*; while in the case of high P value (H is superior) and low R (request not difficult), the extreme case could be *Excuse me, sir, I'm sorry to bother you, but I wonder if you could just possibly do me a small favour. . .* (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 87).

The strategy is toward *negative face* or *positive face*. For example, the greeting *Hey, Harry* shows the familiarity which the S feels toward the H, which is considered *positive politeness* (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 106). Apologizing before introducing an FTA, *I'm awfully sorry to bother you*, indicates S's reluctance to bother H, which is *negative politeness* (p. 134).

Method of Investigation

Politeness strategies can be used differently in different cultures, and non-native speakers must know the differences in cultural patterns to avoid misunderstandings. In order to investigate these differences in English and Japanese, and to consider possible problems for learners of English, a preliminary investigation was conducted. The number of subjects was small ($n = 8$), and conclusions drawn from the results therefore are tentative.

Situations

Making a request:

1. Asking a lecturer to lend a book.
2. Asking a friend to lend a book.

These situations are likely to occur among students who are studying in an English-speaking country, and involve a number of politeness strategies necessary for such students. Theoretically, the differences of the social distance (D) and the relative power (P) in these situations should make the weightiness of an FTA different for situations 1 and 2, and the study expected to show the change of the weightiness influences the politeness strategies.

Settings

The lecturer's office for 1.

The lounge and the common room of a college, and the kitchen of a dormitory for 2.

All the investigations were carried out in Canberra in Australia.

Subjects

Group 1: 4 Australian tertiary students at the Canberra College of Advanced Education as informants for native speakers of English.

Group 2: 4 Japanese tertiary students at the Canberra College of Advanced Education as informants for non-native speakers of English.

In order to create realistic tension or familiarity, the roles of lecturer and friend were played, as far as it was possible, by real lecturers who actually taught the subjects, and by real friends who took the same tutorial or lived in the same dormitory as the subjects.

Procedure

Each subject was given a scenario to read, which indicated the situation, and was asked to play the role according to the situation a few minutes later.

Each act was video- and audio-tape recorded.

After situation 1, situation 2 was conducted in the same way.

Scenario

Suppose you want to read a certain book, which, you think, will be very helpful for your assignment. But it is not available in the library or in the bookshop. Your friend has told you that your lecturer [another friend of yours in situation 2] has that book. So you will ask if you can borrow it. Please think what and how you would say in an actual situation. Please think of the name of the book.

Results

In order to analyze the data, the situation was divided into five parts:

A) opening the conversation
B) notice and small talk
C) request
D) thanking
E) closing the conversation

We found that the Australian and the Japanese subjects differed in some significant ways in each part. In the following paragraphs, the above five parts are examined in detail, and general comments are made.

A) *Opening the Conversation* (Table 1)

1. Asking for permission: With the lecturer, the Japanese subjects tended to ask for permission to enter the office or bother the lecturer, using expressions such as "May I come in?" or "Can I bother you. . .?"; this was not seen in the behavior of the Australian subjects.

2. Salutation formula: The Japanese subjects tended to use

Table 1: Opening the Conversation.

		to a lecturer			to a friend		
		ask for permission	salutation formula	address term	ask for permission	salutation formula	address term
A1	F	–	Hello	first name	–	Hi How are you?	first name
A2	M	–	–	first name	–	G'day How're ya?	first name
A3	M	–	–	–	–	Hello.	–
A4	F	–	Hello	first name	–	Hi	first name
J1	M	May I come in?	Hello	Mrs.	–	Hello How are you?	first name
J2	F	Can I bother you you for a while?	Good afternoon	Mrs.	–	Hello How do you do?	first name
J3	M	–	Hello	Mrs.	–	Hi*	first name
J4	F	May I come in?	–	–	–	–	first name

A: Australian J: Japanese F: female M: male

*The other person said "Hi" first.

expressions of the same level of formality with both their lecturer and their friend ("Hello"), while the Australian subjects tended to vary the degree of formality according to the other person's rank ("Hello" to the lecturer, "Hi," "G'day," "How're ya" to the friend).

3. Address term: With the lecturer, the Japanese subjects used a more formal term ("Mrs. + name") than the Australian subjects (first name).

B) *Notice and Small Talk*

According to Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 108), *notice* is a positive politeness strategy which shows the speaker's interest in the hearer by taking notice of some aspect of the hearer, for example, by complimenting the hearer's clothes. *Small talk* is also a positive politeness strategy which shows the speaker's interest or friendship toward the hearer by talking about unrelated topics for some time (p. 122).

A clear contrast is seen in the results for situation 2 (asking a friend). All the Australian subjects used notice, small talk, or both with the friend. Notice or small talk used by the Australian subjects played an important role in creating a friendly atmosphere and in moving smoothly into the main topic, the request.

On the other hand, the Japanese subjects used neither notice nor small talk with the friend, and they began to make the request just after the salutation, saying something like "How are you? . . . Uh, would you do me a favor?"

C) *Request* (Table 2)

1. Reason: In comparison with the Japanese subjects, Australian subjects tended to express the reason for the request more concretely, sometimes telling the name of the places where they looked for the book ("I tried one just down in Belconnen and a couple in Civic and, uh, still no luck") or presenting a certain figure ("It's 40 dollars anyway. I couldn't

really afford it"). Lacking this kind of concrete expression, the Japanese way of giving the reason is likely to sound less persuasive to English-speaking people.

2. Information: The Australian subjects tended to use expressions which showed some uncertainty about the information that the hearer had the book ("My friend said she *thought* you had it"; "Clare told me you *might* have it"; or "Someone said that you *might* have that book"). This kind of device could save the face of the person who gave the information and it also gave an opportunity to the hearer to say that the information was wrong and to decline the request.

On the other hand, no Japanese subject used devices like these to show uncertainty. They tended to say something like "My friend said you have the book," which could sound as if they were saying, "I have proof that you have the book. Lend it to me."

3. Request sentence: The expressions used by the Australian subjects were more indirect and tentative than those used by the Japanese subjects. The Australian subjects tended to use "Do you think I could. . .?", "I thought I might. . ."? and "I was wondering if. . ." Half the Japanese subjects used "Can I. . .," which was not used by the Australians.

These results contradict the stereotypical images of English-speaking people's directness and Japanese people's indirectness. The language used by Australian subjects suggests that such stereotypes could be false. English-speaking people are not always so direct as some Japanese people think, but use indirectness and tentativeness depending on the situation.

On the other hand, the language of Japanese subjects suggests the complexity of the task of presenting a *self* while speaking a foreign language. Indirect expressions often require sophisticated linguistic ability and are difficult for non-native speakers. In this case, Japanese who usually use indirect expressions in Japanese were likely to use too direct expressions in English.

Table 2: Request Sentence (+ consideration)

		to a lecturer		to a friend	
		request sentence	consideration	request sentence	consideration
A1	F	Do you think I could borrow. . .?	–	I was wondering if I could have . . .	–
A2	M	I thought I might see if I could borrow . . .	–	I thought I might borrow. . .	–
A3	M	What I came to ask about was whether or not I could borrow . . .	– –	I was wondering if I could borrow. . .	–
A4	F	I was wondering if I would be able to borrow . . .	–	Would I please be able to borrow . . .?	–
J1	M	I am grateful if you lend . . .	–	Would you please . . .?	–
J2	F	Can I borrow . . .?	If you don't mind*	Can I borrow . . .?	if you don't mind**
J3	M	I'd like to borrow . . .	if you are not using it**	Can I borrow . . .?	If you don't use it*
J4	f	Can I borrow . . .? I will be grateful if you . . .	–	I wondered if I could borrow . . .	–

A: Australian   J: Japanese

F: female   M: male

*If . . .: before the request sentence

**if . . .: after the request sentence

4. Consideration: With the request sentence, the Japanese often said something like "if you don't mind" or "if you don't use it." This tendency can be explained as a transfer of Japanese expressions such as *moshi yoroshikereba*. No Australian subjects used this kind of expression.

D) *Thanking*

1. Thank you formula: The Japanese subjects used more formal expressions than the Australian subjects, and generally did not shift register according to the relationship with the other person, while the Australian subjects shifted it within rather informal expressions. For example, most of the Japanese subjects used "Thank you very much" both with the lecturer and with the friend, while the Australian subjects tended to use "Thanks a lot" with the lecturer and "Thanks" with the friend.

2. Comment: Most of the Australian subjects made a promise or said something to reconfirm the conditions of borrowing the book, such as when to return it or how to treat it: "I'll bring it before 9:00"; "I'll take the utmost care"; "I'll get in touch with you in a few days"; and so on. On the other hand, only one Japanese subject said such things: "I'm sure I'll give it back in a week" to the lecturer, and "I'll give you back after three days" to the friend.

E) *Closing the Conversation*

1. Reason for leaving: To the friend, half the Australian subjects gave some reason for leaving, such as "I'm a bit late for a lecture, so. . .," while no Japanese subject gave a reason.

2. Last utterance when leaving: To the friend, all the Australian subjects used a salutation formula, such as "Bye" or "See ya later," while the Japanese subjects tended to use expressions of thanks such as "Thank you very much" for the last utterance.

Implications of the Results for Teaching

Although this is a preliminary study and the investigation has the previously mentioned limitations, the results show that English spoken by Japanese learners is different from that of native speakers in many respects. It is usually almost impossible for non-native speakers to speak in exactly the same ways as native speakers, and it may be unnecessary to do so. However, it is important to know the cultural patterns of the target language. Without that knowledge, non-native speakers may give the wrong image of themselves and be mis-understood. Considering the results of this research, it may be said that Japanese people could be considered too formal, or stilted, not friendly, and yet somehow abrupt and pushy. In order to avoid being misunderstood like this, teachers of English should know the difficult points for Japanese learners of English and think how to teach each point.

The results of the investigation are summed up as follows:

1. Japanese learners of English tended to use negative polite-ness strategies in some situations where native speakers were not likely to use them (e.g. "May I come in?"; "If you don't mind").

2. Japanese learners of English did not use positive polite-ness strategies in some situations where native speakers were likely to use them (e.g. first name).

3. Japanese learners of English did not use explicit or emphatic expressions in some siutations where native speakers were likely to use them (e.g. reasons for the request).

4. Japanese learners of English did not use negative polite-ness strategies in some situations where native speakers were likely to use them (e.g. indirect request sentence).

5. Japanese learners of English could not shift the level of formality or style according to the status of the other person (e.g. salutation, thank you formula).

6. Japanese learners of English tended to use more formal expressions than native speakers did (e.g. salutation, address

term, thank you formula).

These results highlight some anticipated problems for non-native speakers: results 1, 2 and 3 imply problems which are caused by the transfer of the learners' own cultural patterns which are different from those of their target language. Without conscious learning, it is difficult for non-native speakers to use cultural patterns different from their own. In other words, in teaching, we should make students aware of the cultural patterns of their target language.

Problems can occur even when students have similar cultural patterns in their own culture. Such a case is seen in result 4. In spite of the fact that Japanese people often use negative politeness strategies such as tentative or indirect ways of making a request, once they start speaking English their way of making requests tends to become inappropriately direct.

One of the reasons for this tendency is their lack of linguistic competence. Tentative or indirect ways of making a request are often more difficult than direct ones, and non-native speakers tend to avoid the former and use easier ones. In order to make learners learn such difficult expressions, it is necessary to make them accustomed to using them through sufficient practice.

Result 4, not using an indirect request, may possibly be caused by false stereotyping. Some Japanese people believe that English-speaking people speak directly in any situation. Such a belief can cause the Japanese to use inappropriately direct expressions and, as a result, to be considered impolite. It implies the importance of knowing the cultural patterns of the target language through the observation of actual use, not through a stereotyped image of the culture.

Result 5 implies that Japanese speakers of English lack the range of expressions necessary to deal with various situations. As there is not such a clear distinction of style in English as *desu-masu* and non *desu-masu* styles in Japanese, it is difficult for many Japanese to know that there are also stylistic distinc-

tions in English. Some Japanese even believe that English is an "egalitarian" language and there is no variation at all of style according to the relationship a speaker has with the other person. In fact, English-speaking people also shift expressions to show either respect or familiarity toward the other person. These misconceptions show how important it is for learners to be aware of actual patterns of the target language.

As well as making students aware of such distinctions, it is also important for teachers to help students acquire a variety of expressions. Once students get accustomed to a certain expression, they tend to use the same expression to anyone and in any situation. In order to avoid this, a lot of practice should be given to learners so that they can make themselves familiar with various expressions and choose an appropriate one according to the situation.

Among varieties of expression, the informal or intimate style of language, appropriate in talking to a friend, is often neglected in language teaching, as is implied also in result 6. Generally speaking, non-native speakers who learn the language mainly in class tend to use more formal expressions than native speakers. In a sense, it is understandable and even reasonable for language teaching to focus on a relatively formal style of language. Given limited instruction time, teachers tend to stress the formal or safer style of language. However, as the writer has experienced herself, to be appropriately informal is one of the most valuable things for many language learners. It becomes important especially when the learner stays in a country which uses the target language.

Weaknesses in English Teaching in Japan

In the previous section, we have seen implications of our results for teaching, which can be summarized into three main points:

1. We need to make students aware of the cultural patterns of the target language.
2. We need to teach students a sufficient range of expressions which could be used according to various situations: more attention should be paid to informal expressions.
3. We need to give students enough practice time to acquire the necessary communication patterns, especially those which demand high linguistic competence.

"To make students aware of the cultural patterns of the target language" does not imply making them use the target language in exactly the same ways as native speakers. The point is that they should know the difference between their native and target cultural patterns in order to avoid being misunderstood. This goal is not fulfilled by English teaching in Japan. One reason is that Japanese teachers of English generally have only limited opportunities to communicate with native speakers and do not know the cultural patterns very well. Materials also present some problems. The authorized textbooks do not give students enough access to natural communication patterns of native speakers. As the textbooks are written or recorded especially for language learners, they sometimes present overly formal or unnatural language which is not actually used by native speakers.

The second point, "the need to teach a sufficient range of expressions," also raises some questions about English teaching in Japan. First of all, the spoken language tends to be neglected, especially at the tertiary level, where literature and reading activities are still much favored. This is also true at the secondary level, especially at prestigious schools, because entrance examinations pay little attention to spoken language.

Gradually, more attention is being paid to *English for communication*, and the present authorized textbooks try to present grammatical points in context. However, even when

language is contextualized, students cannot see clearly in what kinds of situations the presented expression can be used appropriately, because of the lack of a contrastive situation. For instance, even if students are presented with a request form like *Will you do. . ., please?* in a quite appropriate context, they will not be able to know in what other situations they can use the same form appropriately, and what other forms should be used in what other situations. Without that knowledge and the knowledge of a variety of expressions, students will use *Will you do. . ., please?* in any request situation. The result is that they could be too formal in one situation, and could be impolite in another.

The third point, "the need to give students enough practice time," is crucial for teaching English in Japan. As Japanese students have very little opportunity to use English outside class, the classroom is a very important place to practice using it, even though a classroom environment should be considered quite different from everyday ones.

However, the present situation of Japanese schools is not very favorable for this purpose. At present, English is taught three times a week in most public junior high schools, and even this is sometimes interrupted by various extra-curricular activities. For most Japanese students, who begin to learn English at junior high school, this is not nearly enough time to practice and get accustomed to important expressions. Another factor which makes it difficult to give students enough practice is class size. The average number of students in a class is forty-five. This makes it difficult for teachers to know the problems of individual students and to give practice appropriate to those problems. Teaching in a difficult situation, with limited time, teachers tend to focus upon giving basic grammatical knowledge to students, not on communicating with them in English. Therefore, the interaction between the teacher and the students tends to develop a fixed pattern: the teacher explains and asks a question, a student answers it,

and the teacher comments on the answer. Communication between students is quite limited. Moreover, such interactions are often carried on mainly in Japanese. In such a class, students have very limited opportunity to use English to express their own opinions or feelings. This situation prevents students from improving their competence for communicating in real situations.

Some Suggestions

What can Japanese high school teachers do to improve the present situation in English teaching in Japan? First, we must consider how we can make students aware of the cultural patterns of the target language. Teachers need to know the patterns themselves. Otherwise, they may mislead students with their own biased information or false stereotypes. To avoid this, teachers should have more opportunity to contact the target language culture; that is, more attention should be paid to teacher training, both in and outside Japan. Opportunities for Japanese teachers to contact native speakers are increasing, thanks to the Japan Exchange and Teacher (JET) program to employ native speakers as assistant instructors in public secondary schools [see Shiozawa and Rives, elsewhere in this issue]. However, opportunities to study abroad are all too few for Japanese teachers. Living in the target language culture and getting first-hand experience is often crucial to understanding a culture well.

Other valuable sources of the cultural patterns of the language are TV programs and films. Thanks to video tape recorders and bilingual television sets, we can record some English TV programs or films to use as teaching materials in class. Even if students cannot understand authentic materials very well, students still profit from seeing them. Such materials clearly show the situation and the behavior of the native speakers, including gestures and facial expressions, which are important elements of communication.

Next, how can students be taught a range of expressions sufficient to be varied according to the situation? In order to teach appropriate expressions, notional–functional syllabuses, such as those which Wilkins (1976) proposes, may be desirable. We should not adopt notional–functional syllabuses thoughtlessly, as their contents often presuppose specific students whose purposes in learning English are quite different from those of Japanese students. However, we should examine these syllabuses carefully and try to apply their concepts in designing syllabuses for Japanese students.

Role-play is an effective teaching technique which furnishes opportunities for students to practice expressions of politeness. Students are given a certain problematic situation (e.g. try to borrow a book from a very strict teacher; complain about the noise of the piano practice of a neighbor's child; apologize for having broken a vase at a party in a friend's house; etc.) and a role in it, and a directive to try to solve the problem. After having students play a role in one situation, we can have them role-play a similar but slightly varied situation (e.g. try to borrow a book from a close friend instead of a very strict teacher) and discuss how aspects of the communication pattern, such as style or formality, are different from that of the previous situation.

Although it may be impractical to draw from authentic materials alone in creating textbooks, some introduction to the actual use of English by native speakers will be helpful and important to show students that there are many varieties of English. It would be good to set aside some part in textbooks for introducing more informal varieties of English, which would broaden students' views of the language.

In order to make students pay more attention to the actual use of the language and the variety appropriate to a particular situation, language tests should reflect attention paid to these aspects in teaching. Testing often has a considerable effect upon teaching and learning, and it is difficult to change the

latter without changing the former. More listening comprehension and oral production tests should be introduced in entrance examinations, classroom tests, and other outside tests. Present "oral production tests," which are often carried on in the form of a question and answer about a short passage, or a speech about a certain topic, do not assess competence in choosing expressions which are appropriate according to the context. Tests for assessing such competence should be introduced. Cohen and Olshtain (1981) make some suggestions for such tests.

Next, students need enough practice to acquire necessary communication patterns. For this purpose, communication patterns between teacher and students in class should be reconsidered. As mentioned earlier, interaction in class tends to follow a fixed pattern. For example, a teacher usually asks students a question whose answer the teacher already knows. This kind of interaction seldom occurs in everyday life, and it is not interesting enough to stimulate students and create enjoyable conversation. Instead of asking "practice for practice's sake" questions, teachers should ask questions to obtain unknown information from students. For example, in teaching the form "would like," teachers can ask questions about each student's plan for the evening, such as "What would you like to do this evening, Mariko?" Not only teachers but also students should ask questions. As students are often curious to know about their teacher's private life, they will be willing to ask about it, if given a chance. Student–student interaction, as in pair work, should also be introduced more widely. Clark (1983) says that the desire for communication is the strongest motivation for children to acquire a language. This may well be the case also for foreign language learners, which implies that teachers should use actual communication as the format for language lessons.

Because of the common pattern of fixed teacher–student interactions in class, a teacher tends to play the role of cor-

rector, commentator, or evaluator. The teacher in such a role often makes students nervous or even frightened, which discourages them from opening their mouths in class. In order to encourage students to communicate, teachers should change the role of "frightener" into those of careful diagnostician, interested listener, and reliable adviser. The teacher's role will approach this ideal if he or she is really interested in what each student says in English, as well as how they say it, and if students' mistakes or inappropriate use of the language is regarded as a process of acquiring appropriate use and as good data for diagnosing the process, rather than as failure.

Teachers should have this open attitude not only toward students but also toward themselves to a certain extent. Language teachers who are not native speakers of the language tend to think that it is shameful to make a mistake. Many teachers find it especially nerve-racking to demonstrate their English to their students in front of a native speaker. Of course, it is good to speak grammatically, but it is unfortunate if teachers are too afraid of making a mistake to use English themselves. Japanese teachers cannot use English like native speakers, but we should admit this fact and show students we can communicate well enough, even if our English is not perfect. Taking this risk in itself will encourage students to communicate in English without being afraid of making mistakes. Once this mood has been established, Japanese teachers of English should continue to express their opinions in English and talk with students in English as much as possible.

The importance of physical conditions should not be overlooked in our search to give students enough opportunities to practice what they are learning. Present conditions — especially the time we can spend on English and the number of students in a class — should be changed. More time should be allotted to English in the school curriculum. The number of students in a class should be at most twenty, so students will have enough practice to improve their English competence.

Conclusion

Japanese people are not furtive economic animals who talk timidly and formally with frozen smiles upon their faces. They are basically polite, considerate, and friendly people. It will be highly regrettable if they cannot present their real selves to people in different cultures only because they do not know the appropriate use of the target language. Their lack of knowledge and ability to use the language appropriately may cause not only regret, but even sharp conflict.

This paper has attempted to analyze some differences between English spoken by Japanese learners and that by native speakers and to identify possible problems for Japanese learners of English. However, the study was limited in its depth and scope. Many important aspects of communication which bear on politeness — such as intonation, pausing, posture, and so on — have not been considered. It is unwise to generalize the present results into strict rules, and the author intends to undertake further research in the field. Still, the results are suggestive of certain tendencies.

Based on the analysis, recommendations have been made for improving English teaching in Japan:

1. More attention should be paid to teacher training both in Japan and in English-speaking countries so that teachers can know the actual use of English.

2. Authentic materials and video recordings should be used more so that a sufficient range of expressions for natural communication is presented to students.

3. The interaction between teachers and students, and the teacher's role in the class, should be reconsidered so that students receive enough practice time to acquire necessary communication patterns.

4. Both the time spent on English and the class size should be changed so that more chances can be given to students to express themselves in English.

It is necessary to take these measures in order to teach English for communication. We should both learn and teach English as a way to express ourselves as we intend; we should sound polite when we want to be polite.

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