

Japanese EFL students' levels of directness in making requests

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Researchers, Fukushima and Iwata (1985), Rose (1996), Beebe (1989), and Ellis (1991) have reported that the Japanese are more direct than Americans when using English in certain situations. Following their footsteps, the researcher examines the different of levels of directness used when making requests by advanced level JE speakers in comparison to AE speakers in producing low, medium, and high imposition requests. Responses were gauged with Takahashi's "Components of the Conventional Indirectness Level of the Taxonomy" (1993) and the nine levels of directness in the Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). The data was analyzed quantitatively and results showed that AE speakers and JE speakers used similar levels of directness, and that JE speakers were more indirect in most situations.

Fukushima and Iwata (1985), Rose (1996), Beebe (1989), and Ellis (1991)などの研究者達は、ある状況で英語を用いる場合、日本人はアメリカ人よりもより直接的であると報告している。日本人英語使用者が何かを要求する場合の直接度レベルの違いを精査するため、大学一年生のEFL学習者を対象に、discourse completion questionnairesで何かを要求する文型を書かせるパイロットスタディーが実施された。最初の研究結果は、ノンネイティブはネイティブよりもより直接的であることを示した。次に、要求度が低い場合、中程度の場合、高い場合の直接度のレベルを調査するため、英語力が高い日本人の英語話者とアメリカ人英語話者を比較する研究がなされた。Takahashi の "Components of the Conventional Indirectness Level of the Taxonomy" (1993) と Cross Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989) の9つの直接度レベルによって、測定された。その結果、ノンネイティブとネイティブが要求する場合の直接度には一般的傾向があるが、文化による二分化には至らなかった。年齢、男女差、社会的階級などの他の諸要因に加え、対話者がその状況に適した直接度のレベルをいかに決定するかの個人的違いは別として、両グループによって用いられる直接度のレベルの違いを特定することは難しいと考えられる。

Japanese people are generally perceived as being shy, quiet, nonverbal and indirect and, in contrast, the characterizations of Americans are that they are vocal, direct, and clear (Miller 1994). Fukushima (2001) points out that Japanese society tends to suppress individuals who stand out and that on the surface, teamwork and harmony are valued. It is generally acknowledged that Japanese society is largely homogeneous and that of the United States heterogeneous. Such stereotypes have their limitations; nevertheless, there is much empirical evidence to suggest the demands of America's multiethnic society – the desire to avoid misunderstandings – have made Americans more explicit than their Japanese counterparts.

Several researchers, Fukushima and Iwata (1985), Rose (1996), Beebe (1989), and Ellis (1991) have reported that the Japanese are more direct when using English than Americans in certain situations. If the Japanese are usually indirect and generally prefer to avoid impoliteness by putting the other in a "face losing" situation, why are they reportedly perceived as direct when speaking in English?

The researcher had observed in 2000, EFL students who interact in English in the classroom with peers were able to make requests that are structurally simple and grammatically correct. What was perplexing at times was that these requests sounded more “direct” than those made by native speakers of English (NS). This could be that the stereotypical image that the Japanese distrusts the verbal is a more nuanced phenomena than generally viewed, and one should, therefore, avoid oversimplification. Was the directness due to a lack of linguistic control? Were students able to say what they intended? Accordingly, this paper examines the L2 level of directness of Japanese speakers of English. What is the level of directness of advanced level JE speakers in comparison with American English (AE) speakers when making verbal requests in English according to Takahashi’s (1993, p.58) taxonomy and the CCSARP coding manual (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper, 1989, p.18)? Two scales of directness are used so as to better analyze the data.

Subjects

To examine differences in levels of directness when making requests by JE speakers and AE speakers, ten Japanese informants, two male and eight female with TOEFL scores above 600 were asked to fill out a discourse completion task (DCT) questionnaire. For the control group, five American English speakers, four male and one female also completed the same survey. All participants reside in Japan.

Data collection, method and materials

The method used to collect data was an oral role-play. The subjects responded verbally to ten questions that were read to them. The DCT questionnaire was modeled after Fukushima and Iwata’s test (1987, p.46) on how to make requests. The DCT was modified by having participants respond orally instead of requiring them to write their requests. This was done to retain the spontaneity of oral interaction, and to avoid eliciting the edited utterances that sometimes characterize written responses (see Appendix A).

The ten questions in the DCT included situations where informants had to make requests to people of three levels of social status: higher, equal, and lower. Subjects were to make a high-imposition request such as borrowing money and a low-imposition request such as borrowing a book (not of sentimental value). The ten situations were randomized, mixing the status level of the speakers and listeners and high-, medium-, and low-imposition requests to avoid giving the participants a pattern with respect to the responses. Before the DCT was given, subjects were told that they were to make their requests to English NS. Subjects’ responses for the ten hypothetical role-play situations were tape-recorded.

Analysis

Quantitative analysis was applied to examine the level of directness of advanced level JE speakers in comparison with AE speakers with respect to verbal requests. To chart levels of “directness,” Takahashi’s Indirectness Level of Taxonomy (1993) and the CCSARP (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper, 1989) coding scheme were used. Both categorizations consist of nine levels of directness.

Takahashi's nine linguistic levels range from the "want" statement as most direct to the "mitigated expectation" statement as least direct:

1. Want statement: *I would like you to open the window.*
2. Expectation statement: *Would you open the window?*
3. Willingness question: *Would you open the window? Would you be willing to open the window?*
4. Ability question: *Can you/could you open the window?*
5. Reason question: *Why don't you open the window?*
6. Permission question: *Can I ask you to open the window?*
7. Mitigated ability question: *Do you think that you can open the window?*
8. Mitigated ability statement: *I wonder if you could open the window.*
9. Mitigated expectation statement: *I would appreciate it if you could open the window.*

The CCSARP taxonomy (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper, p.18) has nine levels of directness. However, it includes direct imperatives as most direct and mild hints as least direct. In this scale, in levels 1, 2, and 3, the illocutionary force is derivable through linguistic indicators, and in levels 4 ~ 5 understanding relies on the semantic content of the utterance. In levels 6 and 7, the meaning is derived from conventional usage, and in levels 8 and 9 the meaning relies mainly on context. Levels

1 to 5 are direct strategies; levels 6 and 7 are conventionally indirect strategies; and levels 8 and 9 are nonconventionally indirect strategies. The nine levels in the coding scale are:

1. Mood derivable: Leave me alone.
2. Explicit performative: I am asking you to clean up the mess.
3. Hedged performative: I would like to ask you to clean the room.
4. Locution derivable, obligation statement: You'll have to clean the room.
5. Want statement: I'd like to borrow your notes.
6. Suggestory formula: How about lending me the book?
7. Query preparatory: Could you lend me a pen? Would you mind changing seats?
8. Strong hint: You are making too much noise.
9. Mild hint (Intent: wanting to end the meeting): It is already 8:00.

For analysis of the data in this research project, it is necessary to define what a "native speaker" of English is. Though universal agreement with respect to what constitutes a native speaker is lacking, the researcher will use the criterion of mother tongue to categorize NS as such.

All fifteen participants' responses when making requests were gauged for the level of directness with both scales, and all responses were totaled and then divided to find the average level of directness by JE and AE speakers for each situation.

The social distance between speaker and listener in each situation is illustrated in Table 1 as follows:

S>L indicates that the speaker is in a higher position than the listener.

S=L indicates that the social distance is equal

S<L indicates that the listener has power over the speaker.

S/L indicates that the speaker and listener are strangers.

Findings gauged with Takahashi's taxonomy

In this section subjects' responses for levels of directness are calculated using Takahashi's taxonomy.

Table 1. Level of Directness in Requests by Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS)

Low Imposition Request: Book

Situation 1: S<H: Student to Professor

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	4	4	8	8						27	5.4
NNS Level:	2	2	4	6	6	7	7	8	8	8	58	5.8

Situation 6: S=H: Friends

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	4	6	6	6						25	5
NNS Level:	1	3	3	4	6	6	6	6	6	7	48	4.8

Situation 4: S>H: President to Employee

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	1	6	6	6	9						28	5.6
NNS Level:	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	61	6.1

Note. Directness levels range from Level 1 as being the most direct to Level 9 as being the least direct.

Higher score indicates less directness.

Table 1 shows results from the three situations in the DCT questions 1, 6, and 4 (see Appendix A-1), where subjects were asked to make a request to borrow a book. For low-imposition requests, the level of directness between NS and NNS is close in situations where S and H are of different status. A higher figure denotes less directness, and thus, we can see that NNS were less direct than NS when making low imposition requests to those of both lower and higher status. However, NNS were more direct than NS when making requests to people of equal status.

NNS had a higher variability than NS ranging from level 1 to 7 when addressing friends and from level 2 to 8 when addressing a professor. But the variability was less when NNS spoke to one of lower status. NNS responses varied from six requests in level 6, the suggestory formula, to only one request in level 7, the query preparatory. NS responses had a larger variability from level 1 to 9 when making low-imposition requests to listeners of lower status.

Table 2. Level of Directness in Requests by Native Speakers (NS) and Non- Native Speakers (NNS)

Medium Imposition Request: Observe/Audit Class

Situation 8: S<H: Student to Professor

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	6	6	7	8						30	6
NNS Level:	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	8	65	6.5

Situation 5: S=H: Teacher to Colleague

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	3	6	8	8						28	5.6
NNS Level:	1	6	6	6	6	6	6	7	7	7	58	5.8

Situation 10: S>H: Teacher to New Teacher

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	1	3	6	7	8						25	5
NNS Level:	3	4	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	8	57	5.7

Table 2 shows that NS were generally more direct than NNS when making medium-imposition requests to listeners of lower, equal, and higher status. Regarding the variability in indirectness levels, in situation 8 where requests were made to a listener of higher status, NSs ranged between 3 and 8 and

NNS ranged only between 6 and 8. Perhaps for American students there is less of a social distance in the student professor relationship than there is for Japanese students.

In situation five, where participants made a medium imposition request, asking a colleague to observe a class, the variability level ranged between 1 and 7 for NNS and 3 and 8 for NS. In situation ten, where participants made requests to a listener of lower status, NSs indirectness levels ranged between 1 and 8.

In all three situations where subjects had to make medium-imposition requests to interlocutors of different status, NNS used level 6 “permission” questions very frequently. Similarly (as shown in Table 1), NNS used level 6 90% of the time when making a low-imposition request to a person of lower status. NNS might have felt that asking for permission was a “safe” strategy at first, especially when making a request of medium imposition without regard to status differences or when addressing listeners of lower status for low-imposition requests.

Table 3. Level of Directness in Requests by Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS)

High Imposition Request: Money

Situation 3: S<H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	4	4	6	8						25	5
NNS Level:	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	6	7	7	46	4.6

Situation 9: S=H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	1	1	2	6	7						17	3.4
NNS Level:	4	4	4	4	4	6	6	6	7	7	52	5.2

Situation 7: S>H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	1	4	4	7	7						23	4.6
NNS Level:	3	3	4	4	4	4	6	7	7	*10	52	5.2

Note: *10 indicates subject did not want to make the request. Level 10 was added to the taxonomy to indicate the most indirect level.

Table 3 shows that when subjects made a high-imposition request such as borrowing money, NNS were less direct than NS when speaking to a listener of equal or lower status. When making a high-imposition request, NNS were slightly more direct with an average of 4.6, as opposed to a NS with an average of 5.

Regarding the variability in the levels of directness used, NS output ranged from level 3 to 8 when making requests to a listener of higher status, which was on the whole less direct than level 1 to 7 when speaking to a person of equal or lower status. NNS output varied from level 3 to 7 when making requests for money to listeners of higher status, 4 to 7 to listeners of equal status, and 3 to 10* for listeners of lower

status. In situation 7, where the subject was a professor who had to borrow money from a student, one NNS subject commented that one could never ask a student for money.

Table 4. Level of Directness in Requests by Native Speakers (NS) and Non-Native Speakers (NNS)

A request to a stranger in theater: Silence

Situation 2: S/H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	1	3	4	4	4						16	3.2
NNS Level:	1	2	3	4	4	4	4	7	*10	*10	58	5.8

Table 4 charts the results from situation 2, where speakers were asked to make a request to a stranger to be silent in a movie theater. When gauging the variability in the level of directness used for verbal requests, NS ranged between levels 1 and 4, and NNS ranged from levels 1 to 10. Often the NNS used the ability question, which the NS also employed; however, NNS also used the mitigated ability statement, and two opted to say nothing. This request could also be interpreted as a complaint, as participants may have opted to remain silent.

In summary, when analyzing transcribed data using Takahashi's taxonomy for requests of different levels of impositions, the findings are:

- 1) When making a low-imposition request to interlocutors of higher and lower status, NNS were more indirect than NS,

and NNS were more direct than NS when addressing people of equal status.

2) When making a medium-imposition request, NNS were less direct than NS when addressing listeners of lower, equal, and higher status.

3) When making a high-imposition request, NNS were less direct when speaking to people of equal and lower status, but more direct when addressing persons of higher status.

In Tables 5 and 6, the researcher averaged the total scores for NS and NNS indirectness levels for different levels of imposition and social status from Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4. These show that NNS were less direct than NS with listeners of different status for low, medium, and high imposition requests.

Table 5. Average level of indirectness according to speaker and hearer status

S<H				
	Book	Class	Money	Total
NS	5.4	6	5	16.4
NNS	5.8	6.5	4.6	16.9
S=H				
NS	5	5.6	3.4	14
NNS	4.8	5.8	5.2	15.8
S>H				
NS	5.6	5	4.6	15.2
NNS	6.1	5.7	5.2	17
S/H (strangers)	Request silence			
NS	3.2			3.2
NNS	4.9			4.9
				NS: 48.8
				NNS: 54.6

Table 6. Level of indirectness according to degree of imposition

Low Imposition (Book)		
S<H	NS	NNS
	5.4	5.8
S=H	5	4.8
S>H	5.6	6.1
Total	16	16.7
Medium Imposition (Observe/Audit Class)		
S<H	6	6.5
S=H	5.4	5.8
S>H	5	5.7
Total	16.4	18
High Imposition (Money)		
S<H	5	4.6
S=H	3.4	5.2
S>H	4.6	5.2
Total	13	15
Total for High, Medium & Low Imposition Requests	45.4	49.7

Findings based on CCSARP coding scale

In the following section, the same responses of subjects were charted and analyzed using the CCSARP coding scheme. The results are discussed with a focus on the results obtained from Takahashi's taxonomy.

Table 7. Level of directness in requests by native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS)

Low Imposition Request: Book

Situation 1: S<H: Student to Professor

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	5	5	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	66	6.6

Situation 6: S=H: Friends

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	5	5	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	66	6.6

Situation 4: S>H: President to Employee

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	5	6	7	7	7						32	6.4
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	70	7

Table 7 shows that NNSs are more direct than NS when making a low-imposition request to an interlocutor of equal and higher status (situations 1 and 6) but more indirect when making a request to a listener of lower status (situation 4). Similar results were found with data from Takahashi's scale,

where NS were more indirect when addressing a person of equal status. Also in common was the finding that NNS were more direct than NS when addressing a friend. In situation six, where the speaker and listener are of equal status, figures from both Takahashi and the CCSARP scales show that NS are less direct than NNS for low-imposition requests. When using the CCSARP coding scale to study data, NNS were found to be less direct than NS when making low-, medium- and high- level imposition requests to listeners of lower status, and when making a high-imposition request to people of equal or lower status.

The level favored by NS when borrowing a book from a professor or a friend was only level 7, a query preparatory. NNS had only levels 5 and 7. NNS were found to be less direct. In the situation where the president of a firm asks to borrow a book from an employee, NS were more direct than NNS, ranging in levels from 5 to 7, while NNS responses were restricted to level 7. It is interesting to note that both NS and NNS chose level 7 most frequently when making a low-imposition request.

Table 8. Level of directness in requests by NS and NNS

Medium Imposition Request: Observe/Audit Class

Situation 8: S<H: Student to Professor

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	70	7

Situation 5: S=H: Teacher to Colleague

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	5	5	5	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	64	6.4

Situation 10: S>H: Teacher to New Teacher

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	3	3	7	7	7						27	5.4
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	70	7

Table 8 shows that NS and NNS had generally the same level of directness when making medium-imposition requests to a person of higher status. NNS were more direct to a newer teacher of lower status than NS who used only level 7 requests. When making a directive to a colleague, NS were less direct (with level 7) than NNS who used level 5 “want statements,” and level 7. NNS were less direct than NS when making a medium- imposition directive to a person in a lower position. NS in this same situation, where a senior teacher asked a new teacher for permission to observe a class, used level 7, the query preparatory, and level 3, the hedged performative: *I'd like to sit in on your class, if it's OK with you.* Here, NNS used only level 7 and asked questions like, *Is it OK if I observe your class?* or *Can I observe your teaching?* When comparing the level of directness between NS and NNS for data results from

Takahashi's taxonomy and CCSARP strategies, only in situation 5, where a teacher asks a fellow teacher for a medium-imposition request, are NNS less direct than NS.

Table 9. Level of directness in requests by NS and NNS

High Imposition Request: Money

Situation 3: S<H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	70	7

Situation 9: S=H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	2	4	7	7	8						26	5.6
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	70	7

Situation 7: S>H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	2	7	7	7	7						30	6
NNS Level:	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	7	*10	73	7.3

Comparing the level of directness between NS and NNS for a high-imposition request, Table 9 shows that the levels were slightly different depending to the listener's degree of power. NNS were more indirect than NS when addressing a person of equal or lower status but similar to NS with a level of 7 when speaking to a person of higher status. NS had a larger variability, using level 2, where the illocutionary force is explicit, level 4, where the obligation is expected, level 7, referring to willingness or ability, and level 8, a strong hint. All NNS used level 7s with the exception of one participant who preferred not to borrow money from a student under any circumstances.

In situation 9, where the speaker tries to borrow money from a friend, NS with an average of 5.6 were more direct than NNS with an average of 7. There were similar results with data according to Takahashi's scale. NS were more direct with a level of 3.4 than NNS with a level of 5.2. NS were found to be more direct to their friends than NNS were in a high-imposition request.

Table 10. Level of directness in requests by native speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS)

A request to a stranger in theater: Silence

Situation 2: S/H

Subject:	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	Total	Average
NS Level:	7	7	7	7	7						35	7
NNS Level:	1	6	7	7	7	7	7	7	10	10	69	6.9

Table 10 presents the higher level of directness used by NNS when making a request to a stranger in a theater to be silent. NNS usage ranged from an imperative, level 1 "Stop talking!" to level 10, remaining silent. In both Takahashi's and the CCSARP coding schemes, NNS were more direct than NS, but with Takahashi's taxonomy, NNS were more direct than NS when strangers.

Table 11. Average level of indirectness according to speaker and hearer status

S<H	Book	Class	Money	Total
NS	7	7	7	21
NNS	6.6	7	7	20.6
S=H				
NS	7	7	5.6	19.6
NNS	6.6	6.4	7	20
S>H				
NS	6.4	5.4	6	17.8
NNS	7	7	7.3	21.3
S/H (strangers)	Request silence			
NS	7.2			7.2
NNS	6.9			6.9
				NS: 65.6
				NNS: 68.8

Table 11 shows the difference in the level of directness used by NS and NNS in regard to the status of the addressee. NS are more indirect than NNS when making a request to someone of higher status but more direct to people of equal and lower status. A comparison of the total average scores of

directness levels for NNS and NS reveals that NNS are less direct than NS when making requests to listeners of various status levels.

Table 12. Level of indirectness according to degree of imposition

Low Imposition (Book)	NS	NNS
S<H	7	6.6
S=H	7	6.6
S>H	6.4	7
Total	20.4	20.2
Medium Imposition (Observe/Audit Class)		
S<H	7	7
S=H	7	6.4
S>H	5.4	7
Total	19.4	20.4
High Imposition (Money)		
S<H	7	7
S=H	5.6	7
S>H	6	7.3
Total	18.6	21.3
Total for Low, Medium & High Imposition Requests	58.4	61.9

Table 12 depicts results on the level of indirectness according to the degree of imposition. NNS were more direct than NS with respect to low-imposition requests, but NS were more direct for medium- and high-imposition requests. Takahashi's chart also produces similar results, with NNS being less direct than NS for medium imposition requests.

To summarize, the differences in the level of directness used by NS and NNS to make requests based on the

CCSARP coding scheme are as follows:

- 1) NNS were more direct than NS when making a low imposition request to an addressee of equal or higher status, but otherwise more indirect than NS when speaking to a person of lower status.
- 2) For medium imposition requests, NNS and NS generally had the same level of directness when making directives to a person of higher status. NNS were more direct than NS when speaking to a peer, and more indirect when addressing a person of lower status.
- 3) For high-imposition requests, NNS were more indirect than NS when making requests to someone of equal or lower status but had the same level of directness when addressing a person of higher status.

Summary and Conclusion

When analyzing for levels of directness used by NS and NNS according to Takahashi's Taxonomy, average scores show that on the whole NNS were less direct than NS to addressees of different status and for low-, medium-, and high-imposition verbal requests. The same data analyzed with the CCSARP coding scheme showed that NNS are more direct than their NS counterparts when making a request to someone of higher status but less direct to listeners of equal or lower status. For a low-imposition request, NNS were more direct than NS but for medium- and high-imposition requests, NNS were more indirect. Looking at each of the ten situations, it is possible to find similar results by using both Takahashi's and CCSARP coding scales. These are:

- 1) NS are more indirect than NNS for low imposition requests to listeners of equal status.
- 2) NNS are more indirect when making a low-imposition request to addressees of lower status.
- 3) For a medium-imposition request, NNS are more indirect than NS when addressing someone of lower status.
- 4) For a high imposition request, NNS are more indirect than NS when addressing someone of equal status.
- 5) When speaking to a stranger, NS are more direct than NNS.

Thus, in most situations, NNS were more indirect than NS. Even when the NNS were more direct, the difference in the levels of directness between them was not very much. When comparing results from this research in relation previous studies, a number of differences were found. Fukushima and Iwata (1985) observed that advanced level NNS were more direct than NS when addressing someone of higher status. This study, however, has found that NNS were not always more direct than NS. Rose (1996) observed that JE could be just as direct or indirect to addressees as AE, but for low-imposition requests, NNS were more direct than NS when addressing lower status individuals. This study revealed the opposite. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) found that NNS were more direct than NS when a higher-status person was speaking to a lower-status person. This study found that NNS were more indirect than NS when addressing a person of lower status for low- and medium-imposition requests. When the total scores of levels of directness were averaged for both NNS and NS, using both Takahashi's and the CCSARP coding manual, NNS were more indirect than NS.

Though this study involved an exceedingly small number of subjects and is hardly representative of all AE and JE speakers, one can speculate that the differences between these findings and those of the previous studies might be attributable to the passing of time: in the intervening years with more opportunities to travel, study abroad programs, combined with the emphasis placed on communicative competence. JEs' English proficiency could have improved.

One other issue that should be taken into consideration when dealing with cross-cultural comparisons of pragmatic requests is the fact a low-imposition to one person may seem weighty to another. In effect, the degree of imposition for any request is always, at least to some degree, negotiated in interaction. While this study shows that there are general tendencies in politeness requests between Japanese NNS of English and American NS, ultimately, there is no cultural dichotomy. It is difficult to specify precise differences in the level of directness used by NS and NNS apart from how interactants determine the specific level of directness appropriate to the situation, in addition to other variables of interactions, such as age, gender, and perhaps even class.

Implications for teaching English

What is of particular importance, especially for teachers to have recognition of the necessity of teaching pragmatics in conjunction with grammar? For teachers who are already including pragmatics in their classes, their work may be yielding fruitful results as seen in this study. Grammar is the letter of the law, but pragmatics is its spirit. Students should be given the information needed to assess a situation correctly and be equipped with the linguistic

tools—grammatical structures and lexical items—to respond appropriately.

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Appendix:

Discourse Completion Questionnaire

1. You are interested in a book that the professor has. You want him/her to lend it to you. You say--?
2. You are at a movie theater and someone who is sitting next to you keeps on talking to his/her friend. You cannot hear the movie.
You say--?
3. You have asked your father-in-law to join you for lunch. When it is time to pay the bill, you realize that you do not have your wallet or credit cards. Ask for money.
4. You are a president of a company and see that your employee is reading a book that you want to read. You want him/her to lend it to you. You say--?
5. You want to observe your colleague's class while he/she is teaching. You say--
6. Your friend has finished reading a book that you would like to read. You want to read it so you ask him/her to lend it to you. What do you say?
7. You are a professor at college and have invited your students out for lunch. You realize that you left your wallet in your office. You need to ask one of your students to lend you money. You say-

8. You want to observe or audit a course. Ask the professor if you can observe the class.
9. You are at a restaurant with your friends having dinner. You suddenly realize that you have left your wallet at home. You want your friend to lend you some money. What do you say?
10. You are a teacher who must observe a new teacher's class. Ask the new teacher to let you come in while she is teaching.