

Small Talk: Sociopragmatic Discord in the Business English Classroom

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An increasing corporate need for English communicative proficiency, driven by globalization and domestic population decline, makes it imperative that low English sociopragmatic competency among corporate learners be more effectively addressed by teachers. Spencer-Oatey's *sociopragmatic interactional principles* (SIPs; Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003) offer one solution. A context-dependent framework based on SIPs offers analytical and pedagogical utility for corporate English training by helping to identify salient areas of sociopragmatic discord between learner and comparison groups. In this research, an SIP-based framework for Business English small talk in Western English-speaking groups was used to explore sociopragmatic competence in a Japanese corporate English training context.

国際化と人口減少を背景として、企業においては社員の不十分な英語力が深刻な問題になっている。なかでも、原因の一つに、社内英語研修が語用 (pragmatics—実践的な言葉の使用) の発達を十分に促していないということが挙げられる。しかし、語用論的原理 (pragmatic principles) を通して英語と日本語の使い方の違いを明らかにすることで、一段と効果的な教え方を導き出せると考える。本論はSpencer-OateyによるSIPs (sociopragmatic interactional principles; Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003) の枠組みに基づいて、企業の英語研修参加者と西洋人の社内雑談における語用の違いの調査と分析をする。

Japanese corporations have long bemoaned the failure of public English education to provide recruits proficient in communication (Aspinall, 2006). As the declining domestic population makes greater integration with global markets a necessity, English proficiency has moved up the list of priorities. The point is frequently made that public English education, with a focus on declarative knowledge of linguistic form, fails to adequately develop communicative competence (Aspinall, 2006). Japanese education is said

to be especially deficient in the development of foreign language sociopragmatic competence, or the ability to adapt to unfamiliar sociopragmatic behaviours (Tanaka, 2003).

Most Japanese companies have preferred to address this problem with corporate training, which has become a major service industry in Japan. Characteristics of English corporate training in Japan include the following: (a) training is usually infrequent, one or two hours per week; (b) training is communicative; (c) syllabi are business-situational; and (d) instructors are often native speakers. The main goal of corporate training is to develop oral proficiency by providing (a) sufficient practice to affect fluency and (b) an insight into the pragmatic systems of English speakers. This means that corporate teachers must deal explicitly with pragmatics and as a result, teaching materials are rich in speech acts, routines, strategies, and appropriateness recommendations (e.g., Vaughan & Zemach, 2008).

There is now wide consensus that explicit pragmatics instruction is beneficial (Taguchi, 2011) but acquisition of pragmatics is difficult. Language choices reflect identity (Fougere, 2008) and when recommended behaviours are perceived to conflict with a learner's own norms, there may be resistance to change (van Compernelle, 2011; Riddiford & Holmes, 2015). Acquisition is facilitated when learners can understand the underlying sociocultural values expressed by pragmatic choices, can rationalize them with their own values, and make a conscious choice to adopt or adapt behaviours (van Compernelle, 2011; Riddiford & Holmes, 2015). A pedagogical focus on pragmatic principles can help learners and teachers make those connections.

This paper explores the analytical utility of one such model of pragmatic principles: *sociopragmatic interactional principles* (SIP) proposed by Spencer-Oatey as a part of a broader theory of Rapport Management (Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003; Spencer-Oatey, 2008). The term *sociopragmatics* refers to the area of pragmatics in which the influence of sociocultural values is most pronounced on interactional behaviours (Thomas, 1983). Spencer-Oatey proposed two orders of SIPs: a *higher order* set of fundamental SIPs that are of universal human concern and a *lower order* set of SIPs, greater in number, whose

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relative cultural importance serve to describe differences in cross-cultural styles of interaction (see Table 1).

Table 1. SIPs

Level	SIP
Higher order (fundamental) SIPs (about universal human concerns)	Equity (balance)
	Cost/benefit Autonomy/imposition
	Association (involvement/detachment)
	Affective Interactional
Lower order SIPs (SIPs affecting styles of interaction)	Assertiveness
	Modesty
	Warmth (friendliness)

Note. Based on Spencer-Oatey, 2008.

According to Spencer-Oatey, SIPs differ from previous principle models in two ways. Firstly, she asserted that SIPs should be without a “valence” orientation (Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003, p. 1635). By this she meant to avoid the suggestion that any single behaviour is universally ideal. SIPs are “scalar” (p. 1635), like the value dimensions of culture theorists (e.g., Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998). With SIPs, wherever a culture typically positions appropriateness on an SIP scale is the ideal for that culture. Secondly, SIPs are both contextually and culturally dependent (Spencer-Oatey & Jiang, 2003). The position of appropriateness on an SIP scale depends on both the norms and values of the group and the particular interactional context. In intercultural communication between groups with divergent SIP positions, different sociopragmatic choices are inevitable. Negative evaluations are instinctive, affective, and come with real-world consequences (Thomas, 1983; Tanaka, 2006). When norms of appropriateness differ significantly across groups, sociopragmatic discord—or negative affective responses—in intergroup interactions are more likely and therefore should be a pedagogical concern.

A Single Sociopragmatic Comparison Model

This paper is a report on an investigation of sociopragmatic discord in a corporate English training context in business small talk. An SIP-based framework was used to construct a comparison model of generalized sociopragmatic norms of small talk in Western English-speaking professional communities. The adoption of a single model, however, is not without controversy. As has frequently been pointed out, the majority of English interactions in the world today do not involve native speakers (Ishihara, 2012), and this is undoubtedly true for most Japanese business people also. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) pedagogical approaches to sociopragmatic instruction do not present target models to be emulated but aim, instead, to build a competence that recognizes cross-cultural difference in sociopragmatic behavioural norms and enables interactors to cope with discord when it occurs (e.g., Ishihara, 2012; Taguchi, 2011). However, this approach relies on exposing learners to copious, rich, authentic examples of interactions in order to develop a meaningful awareness of cross-group differences in sociopragmatic behaviour. Given the time and material constraints in many corporate training contexts, a single generalized model can have a similar utility in developing learner awareness but in a more efficient and focused way. An important note of caution here, however, is that it is beholden on teachers, particularly native speakers, to avoid making implications that the model is in any way superior to the learners’ own. Such models should have a comparative function rather than a target function. The justification for adopting this particular comparison model is that the discourse type that it represents is both cohesive and globally significant. English speakers in Western-based global corporations and professional organizations, regardless of cultural background, tend to develop similar sociopragmatic literacies (Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Tanaka, 2003, 2006). Given the economic and cultural dominance of this model within business English varieties, it is useful in practical terms for Japanese business people to familiarize themselves with its features (Kubota, 1999).

Constructing an SIP Framework for Small Talk

Small talk was chosen as the interactional context of the study as it is a common talk type in corporate training programs in Japan and is given significant treatment in published textbooks (e.g., Vaughan & Zemach, 2008). For Western English-speaking professional communities especially, it is both ubiquitous and multifunctional (Holmes, 2000), its primary function being in building and maintaining social relationships (Coupland, 2000; Pullin, 2010) but also, indirectly, in facilitating work-focused talk (McCarthy, 2003; Pullin, 2010). The significant amount of literature on small talk shows a number of common characteristics (see Table 2).

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Table 2. Characteristics of Business-Context English Small Talk in Western English-Speaking Professional Communities

Findings	Study
Participation in small talk is a social obligation	Holmes, 2000; Coupland, 2003
Turns are evenly distributed	Blum-Kulka, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Tracy & Naughton, 2000; Săftoiu, 2012
Status difference is ignored: register is typically informal	Blum-Kulka, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Tracy & Naughton, 2000; Săftoiu, 2012
Participation is open to all: topics are inclusive	Blum-Kulka, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Coupland & Ylanne-McEwan, 2000
Turns are quick and efficient; silence is avoided	Blum-Kulka, 2000
Small talk is co-constructed	Blum-Kulka, 2000; Săftoiu, 2012
Agreement is preferred; topic choices are low face-risk	Coupland & Ylanne-McEwan, 2000; McCarthy, 2003; Pullin, 2010
Common ground is sought	Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Mori, 2003; Pullin, 2010
Talk is stimulating: fun or interesting	Blum-Kulka, 2000
Engagement is signaled through back-channels and follow-up questions	McCarthy, 2003
Personal privacy is respected	Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998
Small talk is individual oriented	Scollon & Scollon, 1995

By identifying the ways that features of small talk found in the literature relate to Spencer-Oatey's SIPs, a framework can be created within which norms of group behaviour in small talk can be understood in terms of sociopragmatic principles (see Table 3). The framework tells us, for example, that in small talk, equity is achieved by sharing the cost of creating the talk and that the benefit of the talk is psychological (enjoyment or stimulation) rather than informational. In addition to mapping onto fundamental SIPs,

the features can also be categorized in value terms, as lower-order SIPs. By doing this, our model returns principle positions for small talk of egalitarianism, collaboration (or co-construction), convergence, engagement, and a personal or individual orientation.

Table 3. Features of Small Talk Categorized by SIPs

Small talk values / Lower order SIP positions	The relation of common features of small talk to fundamental SIPs
Egalitarianism	Equity SIP (Cost of construction and benefit from small talk is shared) Turns are evenly distributed Association SIP (Sociality is expected/facilitated) Status difference is ignored: register is typically informal Participation is open to all: topics are inclusive
Collaboration	Association SIP (Interactional association is expected/facilitated) Turns are quick and efficient; silence is avoided Equity SIP (Cost of construction and benefit from small talk is shared) Small talk is co-constructed
Convergence	Association SIP (Interaction is expected/facilitated) Participation in small talk is a social right and an obligation Association SIP (Affective engagement is expected/facilitated but harmony is valued) Agreement is preferred Common ground is sought
Engagement	Equity SIP (benefit from small talk is psychological) Talk is stimulating: fun or interesting Association SIP (Affective and interactional involvement is expected/facilitated) Engagement is signalled through backchannels and follow-up questions
Personal -orientation	Equity SIP (individuals are open but a private space is protected) Personal privacy is respected Small talk is individual oriented

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Conducting the Research

The Research Instrument and Data Collection

The aim of this research was to explore areas of sociopragmatic discord between the learner and target groups. Twelve common sociopragmatically inappropriate small talk moves, as assessed by teachers, were collected from classroom field notes taken during multiple performances of a small talk role-play scenario (Appendix A). They were combined with 12 teacher-created appropriate alternatives into an (in)appropriateness assessment questionnaire (Appendices B & C). The questionnaire was given to 60 English speakers representing the comparison group and 70 learners in a single corporate training program representing the learner group. Respondents were asked to rate each move as *successful*, *neutral*, or *unsuccessful*. The interactional context and a contextualized definition of *success* in terms of relational outcomes was given in the rubric of the questionnaire and supported with verbal explanation and clarification for the learner respondents (Appendix B). General comments were collected from both sample groups to allow triangulation of the quantitative data with qualitative data.

The Samples and Representative Groups

The learner sample was drawn from learners studying on a corporate English training program, in Tokyo, on which the author was teaching (see Table 4). The sample is representative in terms of age, sex, and proficiency level of the student population in this particular training program. English proficiency level in this program is assessed by precourse placement oral interviews and by postcourse teacher assessment in terms of the following categories: fluency, accuracy, vocabulary range, range of sentence structure, interactive skills for which there are comprehensive descriptors and second rating reliability checking procedures. Level range is from 0–9.

Table 4. Characteristics of Learner Group (N = 70)

Sex		Age group				Proficiency level							
M	F	20s	30s	40s	50s	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7	L8
62	8	24	21	22	3	4	15	3	20	18	5	4	1

The comparison group sample was selected from non-Japanese professionals living and working in Japan (see Table 5). The majority of the participants were educators from public and private institutions, with a minority consisting of scientists, engineers, and other professionals. Although the individuals in the sample were unrelated professionally, they were assumed to be valid representatives of Western English-speaking professional communities due to their Western cultural origins and their use of English as a primary code in their professional lives with speakers of different L1 and L2 English varieties.

Table 5. Characteristics of Comparison Group (N = 60)

Sex			Age group					Country of origin					
M	F	*	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	USA	Can.	UK	Aust.	Ire.	Other
44	14	3	2	21	25	11	1	19	6	27	4	2	3

Note. * = sex unknown; Can. = Canada; Aust. = Australia; Ire. = Ireland.

Method

The learner sample was asked to complete a paper version of the questionnaire as part of an intercultural awareness section of their training program. Members of the group for comparison were recruited through word-of-mouth snowball-type sampling by utilizing various professional networks. Participants responded through an online version of the questionnaire.

To address both the extent and nature of pragmatic discord, it was decided to combine a quantitative and qualitative approach to the analysis. The initial quantitative analysis was used to identify whether sociopragmatic discord was evident between the groups and if so, to what degree. Participants evaluated the pragmatic success of each item and scored it 1 point for *successful*, 0 points for *neutral*, and -1 point for *unsuccessful*. In each group, a mean for each item was calculated. Means were then compared between the groups. Difference between means for an item was taken as a measurement of potential pragmatic discord. High mean difference was assumed to represent discord. Items with a high significance of sociopragmatic discord, as shown in unpaired *t* tests, were categorized qualitatively according to the SIP framework. The interpretive analysis was triangulated with comments collected from the comparison group respondents to improve validity.

Results

Quantitative Analysis

Of the 10 items showing the greatest mean difference between the groups (the top 10, see Table 6), 8 items were from the learner-generated list of conversational moves (taken from classroom field notes). Overwhelmingly, sociopragmatic discord occurred because the comparison group evaluated the item more negatively than did the learner group. Among the top 10 items, 7 items were given a mean *unsuccessful* evaluation by the comparison group; among these same 10 items, only three received a mean unsuccessful evaluation from the learner group.

Table 6. Top Ten Examples of Pragmatic Discord

Rank	Conversational move	Means		
		Comparison group	Learner group	Difference
1	We have four seasons in Japan.	-.73	.31	1.04
2	That presentation was terrible!	.22	-.70	.92
3	What do foreigners think about Ichiro?	-.77	0.00	.77
4	Why do you know about hanami?	-.22	.54	.76
5	What's the famous food in your hometown?	-.07	.62	.69
6	How's Japan?	-.09	.54	.63
7	Can you use chopsticks?	-.75	-.23	.52
8	What's your hobby?	.03	.44	.41
9	This is the first time I've come to this conference.	.67	.30	.37
10	Japan is a small country.	-.63	-.29	.35

Note. 1 = successful; 0 = neutral; -1 = unsuccessful

Qualitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis showed the existence and significance of pragmatic discord, but a qualitative analysis was needed to shed light on the nature of this discord. In the following, I will use the small talk SIP framework to explain the observed discord in principle terms. Observed discord occurred within three SIP positions: (a) egalitarianism, (b) convergence, and (c) personal-orientation.

Egalitarianism SIP Position (Participation Is Open to All; Topics Are Inclusive)

Discordant moves likely to conflict with topic inclusivity are the items ranked 5—What's the famous food in your hometown? (mean difference .69), and 6—How's Japan? (mean difference .63). The first move appears to depend on the interlocutor coming from a country that promotes or popularizes regional foods, which is not universal. The second move requires a certain amount of knowledge unlikely to be available to a new arrival (as the role-play specified). The discord measured in the item ranked 8—What's your hobby? (mean difference .41) superficially appears to be related to topic exclusivity, but may in fact be a case of lexical failure in which the commonly used Japanese word, *shumi* (interest or pastime), has been inappropriately translated to the less commonly used English word, *hobby*.

Convergence SIP Position (Agreement Is Preferred; Common Ground Is Sought)

The convergence SIP position provides a good explanation for the majority of the discord observed. Preference for agreement is seemingly threatened by the item ranked 2—That presentation was terrible! (mean difference .92), which seeks agreement with a strong negative opinion. However, its small mean *successful* evaluation from the comparison group (.22) hides a certain amount of intra-group discord. Some British respondents interpreted the move as friendly ironic. "I'm British, so I like moaning," wrote one participant in explanation. On the other hand, American respondents' evaluations were overwhelmingly negative.

Breaches of the common ground SIP position potentially explain much more of the discord. The tendency for Japanese interlocutors to highlight the distinction between Japaneseness and non-Japaneseness in intercultural interactions proved problematic for the comparison group, when doing so is perceived as irrelevant to the interaction in progress. Discordant items ranked 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10 were all perceived by the comparison

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sample as divergent in terms of this principle. Comments attested to the strength of the negative evaluations:

- “basically inappropriate” (American female),
- “condescending” (British male),
- “It’d signal to me this isn’t someone I’d really want to know further” (American female),
- “stereotypes . . . prejudices” (Brazilian-Australian male),
- “you-are-a-foreigner questions” (British male),
- “insulting” (Canadian male), and
- “ignorant” (British female).

The transfer of such sociopragmatic behaviours into similar real-world contexts is therefore likely to be problematic for this learner group.

Personal-Orientation SIP Position (Small Talk Is Individual-Oriented)

As in the convergence SIP analysis, discordant moves that appeared to breach the SIP position on individual-orientation were all related to being or not-being Japanese, and when perceived to be irrelevant to the context, were negatively evaluated by the comparison group. The item ranked 3—What do foreigners think about Ichiro?—is a case in point and was the most negatively evaluated by the comparison group (-.77), but the indirect highlighting of the Japanese–non-Japanese divide in other moves (e.g., 1, 7, and 10) also seemed to cause negative evaluations from the comparison group, such as “The best ones . . . are about the other person themselves, not about their country, or generalisations about what ‘everyone else in the entire world except Japanese people’ think about a certain thing” (British female).

As well as discord, sociopragmatic accord was also observable in the data. The samples were in close accord on the privacy position within the personal-orientation SIP position. Items that could be interpreted as impinging on privacy or personal space all had small mean differences, such as the invitation—If you’re free, let’s go and eat sushi together! (mean difference .30), the inquiry about marital status—Are you married? (mean difference .30), and the hotel inquiry—Which hotel are you staying at? (mean difference 0.00).

Data were not collected relating to other parts of the framework due to design and scope limitations of the research instrument; further research will be needed to determine whether and how the two groups align or not in terms of register, collaboration, and engagement.

Finally, the item ranked 9—This is the first time I’ve come to this conference (mean difference .37) was not interpreted as particularly discordant, due to positive evaluations from both groups. The difference was only of degree; evaluations may have been affected by contextual uncertainty inherent in the use of the imaginative role-play scenario.

Conclusion

In this study I compared sociopragmatic appropriateness assessments of business context small talk conversational moves made by a learner sample group from a Japanese corporate training program and a comparison sample group of English-speaking professionals. Participants in the comparison sample group were assumed to represent a cohesive and globally important business English discourse type and therefore a useful comparison sample for learners in English corporate training programs in Japan. The results revealed significant areas of sociopragmatic discord and sociopragmatic accord, as measured along principle positions based on an SIP framework of small talk derived from research into comparison group norms. Discord was observed in terms of the respective egalitarianism, convergence, and personal-orientation SIP positions of the two samples. Accord was primarily observed in the personal-orientation SIP position where it relates to privacy. These positions of discord and accord are assumed to be generalizable to corporate training programs in Japan. As negative evaluations arising from sociopragmatic discord can impact on real-world communicative goals, they should be addressed by pedagogy. The SIP framework may have utility here also, as a pedagogical tool. Although the design of the research instrument, based as it was on single conversational moves, failed to address all SIP positions in the framework, this does not mean that those positions are invalid, but rather that further research is needed to assess them. Future research should also focus on the utility of SIP frameworks in different interactional contexts and different learning contexts.

Bio Data

Jo Williamson has taught English in the UK and Japan for 20 years, the last 10 in the corporate training sector in Japan. Based on his experiences, his primary research interests are pragmatics and intercultural communication, especially across groups where sociocultural differences lead to frequent unintentional evaluations of impoliteness—a situation he calls “sociopragmatic discord.” He holds a DELTA and is currently putting the finishing touches to his MA dissertation on teaching sociopragmatics.

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Appendix A

The Role Play Scenario and Small Talk Moves

The Scenario	
Small talk goals are about relationships – not information. Successful small talk builds and maintains relationships. With this in mind, imagine that you are attending an international conference in Tokyo on business. During a coffee break, a foreign attendee starts talking with you.	
Learner-derived moves	Teacher-created moves
What's your hobby?	Have you been here before?
What's America (your country) like?	How long are you here for?
What's the famous food in your hometown?	Nice weather today!
I can't speak English	What's your favourite music?
Do you like beer?	I work in car manufacturing
Why do you know about hanami?	I hope you're enjoying your visit
We have four seasons in Japan	Are you married?
How is Japan?	Which hotel are you staying at?
What do foreigners think about Ichiro?	How's business?
Japan is a small country	That presentation was terrible!
Can you use chopsticks?	Where are you from in the US (your country)?
If you're free, let's go and eat sushi together!	This is the first time I've come to this conference

Appendix B

Questionnaire for Japanese Respondents

English Small Talk Moves in Business Communication

Name: _____ Date: _____ Sex: Male/Female

Age: 20s/30s/40s/50s/60s

English Level: Pre-intermediate / Intermediate / Upper-intermediate / Advanced

Small talk goals are about relationships—not information. Successful small talk builds and maintains relationships and is enjoyable. With this in mind, imagine that you are attending an international conference in Tokyo on business. During a coffee break, a foreign attendee starts talking with you. It is the first time you have met. As part of the conversation, which of the following conversation moves below do you think would help the small talk be successful?

Please choose a category for each item: S = successful, N = neutral, U = unsuccessful

SMALL TALK QUESTION / COMMENT	S	N	U
1 What's your hobby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 What's America* like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 What's the famous food in your hometown?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Have you been here before?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 I can't speak English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 How long are you here for?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Nice weather today!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 What's your favorite music?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Do you like beer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 I work in car manufacturing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Why do you know about hanami? **	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 We have four seasons in Japan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 How is Japan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 I hope you are enjoying your visit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Are you married?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 Which hotel are you staying at?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 How's business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 What do foreigners think about Ichiro?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 That presentation was terrible!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 Where are you from in the US? *	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 Japan is a small country.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22 This is the first time I've come to this conference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23 Can you use chopsticks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24 If you're free, let's go and eat sushi together!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Imagine he/she is from the US ** Imagine he/she has just mentioned 'hanami'

Williamson: *Small Talk: Sociopragmatic Discord in the Business English Classroom*

If you wish to add comments to explain any of your choices, please write here and continue onto the next page.

Appendix C
Questionnaire for Non-Japanese Respondents

English Small Talk Moves in Business Communication

Name: _____ Date: _____ Sex: Male/Female
Age: 20s/30s/40s/50s/60s
Country/Nationality: _____ Length of stay in Japan: _____

Small talk goals are about relationships—not information. Successful small talk builds / maintains relationships and is enjoyable. With this in mind, imagine that you are attending an international conference in Tokyo as a professional. During a coffee break, a Japanese attendee starts talking with you. It is the first time you have met. As part of the conversation which of the following conversation moves below, made by your interlocutor, do you think would help the small talk be successful?

Please choose a category for each item: S = successful, N = neutral, U = unsuccessful

SMALL TALK QUESTION / COMMENT	S	N	U
1 What's your hobby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 What's America* like?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 What's the famous food in your hometown?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 Have you been here before?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 I can't speak English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 How long are you here for?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 Nice weather today!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 What's your favorite music?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 Do you like beer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 I work in car manufacturing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 Why do you know about hanami?***	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 We have four seasons in Japan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 How is Japan?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14 I hope you are enjoying your visit.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 Are you married?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 Which hotel are you staying at?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 How's business?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 What do foreigners think about Ichiro?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 That presentation was terrible!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 Where are you from in the US?*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21 Japan is a small country.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22 This is the first time I've come to this conference.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23 Can you use chopsticks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24 If you're free, let's go and eat sushi together!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

* Imagine he/she is from the US *** Imagine he/she has just mentioned 'hanami'

If you wish to add comments to explain any of your choices, please write here and continue onto the next page.