

# Learning about conflicts and cultural dilemmas

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It is not uncommon for exchange students to find themselves in difficult situations once they are abroad. More often than not, these students have had no orientation or preparation for effectively dealing with such dilemmas. Sixteen dilemmas were identified based on previous data gathered from 8 years of student exchanges between a national university in Kyushu, and with a university located in Virginia. A survey and a series of related discourse completion tasks were constructed involving three kinds of conflicts and three kinds of dilemmas—epistemic conflicts, obligation dilemmas, and prohibition dilemmas. The student ratings of the difficulty of each situation allowed teachers to better understand which ones proved to be the most problematic. Five native speaker teachers then analyzed the student responses to the discourse tasks so as to identify the pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic failure that occurred in these L2 contexts. Discussion will focus on two areas: (a) the four criteria for intercultural conflict competence, and (b) specific recommendations concerning potential problematic situations that exchange students might have and how they could better respond to them.

日米の大学間の交換留学プログラムを通じ、異文化において学生が直面する困難な状況が18通りあることが分かった。それに基づき談話的問題解決の課題を作成し、3つの苦境と3つのジレンマに対する対処法を学生たちに書かせた。その結果、第二言語を使う際に生じる語用論的かつ社会言語学的失敗が明らかとなった。本論では、学生の回答を、異文化での問題解決能力を計る4つの基準に照らして分析し、より適切な対処法を提案する。

It is not uncommon for exchange students to encounter difficult situations once they are abroad in a foreign country. While these dilemmas often involve a clash of views, values, preferences, ideas, goals, and cultural norms, Japanese students are often ill-equipped to disagree, refuse, suggest, query, or to object to the people involved. Most exchange student orientations rarely—if ever—address such issues, and the more popular EFL and ESL textbooks that you (and I) have used have one thing in common: very safe, emotion-free conversations and role plays. Often—too often, even context, culture and identity (the student / reader is not involved in the conversation.

Moreover, intercultural contexts are rarely taken into account in student texts. Students are rarely, if ever, given guidance about responding to group pressure, demands, blame, criticism, derision, and insults. Roleplays remain very superficial, and students are often never asked to discuss or defend his or her ideas, values, customs, and norms. In the end, students are short-changed when it comes to be able to appropriately respond to the complexities of living abroad, and as a result, find it difficult to assert their own rights, values, and ideas. Wright and Bolitho (1993; 1997) observe that most EFL literature is focused on raising language awareness instead of pragmalinguistic awareness, and that pragmalinguistic features are left to be picked up by the students themselves.

In this study, students were asked to respond to discourse completion tasks (DCTs) based on conflicts and dilemmas. Because the students' responses were insightful (in regard to both appropriate and inappropriate responses), the pragmalinguistic failure and success the (in)appropriateness of language structures used will then be presented. This data will then be used to emphasize the students' sociolinguistic failure and success, (relating to their relationships with various Americans). Discussion will not only focus on four criteria for intercultural conflict competence: appropriateness, effectiveness, satisfaction, and productivity, but also on the importance of *discourse competency*.

### Pragmalinguistic failure

In a nutshell pragmalinguistic control relates to the appropriateness of the language structures used. Concerning pragmalinguistic competence, there are several issues. Ron White focuses on power and status relationships, citing a

case of a concierge telling a guest "I think you had better wait in your room." The intention of the concierge did not match the status relationship and in a comparable British context, typically the statement would be used to indicate a recommendation made by a speaker with some authority or power over the hearer by virtue of status or knowledge. Rather than use a form of words which carry the force of a recommendation, therefore, the speaker could still have indicated her solicitousness by using a tentatively expressed suggestion, such as:

- If you'd like to wait in your room, someone will be along shortly.
- Perhaps you could wait in your room until someone comes from housekeeping.
- Someone will come to your room shortly.

In short, conversations are as much as about interpersonal interactions as it is about language. There are sociopragmatic "issues" that students should be aware of: register, familiarity, linguistic choice, imposition, politeness, intention, social distance between speaker and hearer, relative rights and obligations, as well as cultural and subcultural norms. White (1997) states, "Both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic problems can and do occur in intercultural communication because of differences between parties in their definition of the communicative event itself, understanding of their rights and obligations as participants, perception of relative status, and social distance interpretations assigned to specific linguistic forms. Such differences can be related to differences in subjective culture, that is, intangible attitudes, values, feelings."

## The study

### Rationale

Kyushu Institute of Technology has three sister universities, one in Britain, another in the United States (Old Dominion University), and two more, located in Korea and in Australia. One of the benefits of such a relationship is that of student exchanges. Being one of the coordinators for the Old Dominion University exchanges program, I have realized that some students have encountered problems and issues in their study abroad. While often the students were able to adequately negotiate a satisfactory outcome, some of the students resorted to emailing the main coordinator (asking for advice), or withdrawing from many outside programs.

It became apparent that despite years and years of English education, very little instruction prepared students for potential conflicts or problems. The English they had learned was *easy, predictable, emotion-free*, and always *safe*. As the world is not easy, predictable, emotion-free, and safe, there were problems with students being able to linguistically (and emotionally) respond to problems once they were overseas.

### Research aims

It was decided to present students with a variety of discourse completion tasks involving conflicts and dilemmas so as to familiarize them with situations and language that they might encounter. This study is exploratory study, and the sole research aim is to obtain various student responses that relate to pragmalinguistic failure and success on a DCT. The results can then help guide Japanese students who want to be travel abroad.

## Materials

### Surveys / discourse completion tasks

Two surveys / discourse completion tasks were devised. The first set was based on three kinds of conflicts: (a) with roommates and friends, (b) with boy / girlfriends and parties, and (c) in the city. Conflicts centered around the following functions: (a) requests, (b) blame, (c) demands, (d) refusals, (e) derision, and (f) criticism. The psychological tension was created by group pressure, unreasonable demands, inappropriate comments, unacceptable behavior, insults, requests, invitations, unacceptable or rude behavior, and mistakes / errors.

The second set of surveys and tasks involved three kinds of cultural dilemmas: (a) epistemic conflicts (a dilemma involving two or more moral requirements, and the agent does not know which of the conflicting requirements take precedence in his situation), (b) obligation dilemmas (situations in which more than one feasible action is obligatory), and (c) prohibition dilemmas (in which all feasible actions are forbidden). Students were asked to rate the difficulty or ease of each situation (conflict or dilemma); the aim was to identify specific dilemmas that were problematic for them. Students were then asked to write down their own responses to comments in the DCT by the speakers.

### Procedures

The conflicts and dilemmas were divided up over a period of three weeks, and students were allowed one week to think through their own responses to various prompts, questions,

comments, demands, and issues. Thus, there were three sets of DCTs that were given to students over a period of three weeks. For the first set (conflicts 1 - 12), 139 papers were handed out, and 101 papers were returned. Two papers were rejected as they were incomplete. For the second set, (conflicts 13- 18, and dilemmas 1 - 3) 126 papers were handed out, and 81 were turned in. One paper was rejected as incomplete. For the third set, (dilemmas 4 -14) 126 papers were passed out, and 66 were returned. The responses indicate particular speech acts that increased and decreased conflict.

### Subjects

The participants were second year university students at Kyushu Institute of Technology majoring in engineering. As this was an elective English course, these students could be described as motivated with fairly good communicative skills.

### Data analysis and Coding

Students' numerical responses on the difficulty of each situation were encoded into SPSS and given as modes, averages, and in standard deviations. A t-test was conducted between the two surveys to indicate if there were any significant differences. As for the discourse completion tasks, responses will be coded based on the function the participant uses in his or her reply. Frequency counts will be given for each function, and five native speaker teachers will evaluate how they view the effectiveness of their responses.

## Results

The responses for both the conflicts and dilemmas are included in Tables 1 and 2.

**Table 1. Participants' responses to conflicts**

Conflicts involving Friends / roommates			
	Modes	Average	Std Dev
Conflict 1: Requests - Friends drinking alcohol	3	3.28	1.27
Conflict 2: Blame - Lost homework is blamed on you	4	3.72	1.20
Conflict 3: Demands - Roommate demands you leave for the day	4	3.52	1.66
Conflict 4: Refusals - Roommate refuses to loan you \$5.00	4	4.16	1.21
Conflict 5: Derision - About not knowing American football	3	3.60	1.35
Conflict 6: Criticism - You are criticized for buying the wrong CD	4	3.64	1.68
Conflicts involving Boy / girlfriends and Parties			
Conflict 7: Requests - Boy / girlfriend requests to stay over	5	4.04	1.30
Conflict 8: Blame - Boy / girlfriend blames you about being rushed	3	3.72	1.17
Conflict 9: Demands - Best friend urging you to date someone	4	4.08	1.46
Conflict 10: Refusals - Boy / girlfriend refuses to leave party	4	3.92	1.18
Conflict 11: Derision - Boy / girlfriend insults you because you are late	6	4.60	1.44
Conflict 12: Criticism - The people at a party insult your food	4	3.76	1.16

Conflicts in the City			
Conflict 13: Requests - A drunk man asks you for money	4	3.84	1.28
Conflict 14: Blame - You are lost and friend blames you	3	4.08	1.41
Conflict 15: Demands - You demand to be served what you order	3	2.80	1.52
Conflict 16: Refusals - Clerk refuses to accept travelers checks	5	3.76	1.73
Conflict 17: Derision - Japanese baseball teams are insulted	3	3.00	1.22
Conflict 18: Criticism - Suggestion for the art museum is criticized	4	3.00	1.63

Note: N = 25.

**Table 2. Participants' responses to dilemmas**

Epistemic Conflicts			
	Modes	Average	Std Dev
Dilemma 1: Family wants your honest opinion about dinner	3	3.44	1.44
Dilemma 2: Your friends insist that you buy sexier clothes	4	3.12	1.66
Dilemma 3: Your friends insists that you date his brother / sister again	3, 4, 5	3.72	1.64
Dilemma 4: You are told not to go out at night as it is dangerous	3	3.16	1.40
Dilemma 5: Leaving a rock concert without friends	3	3.28	1.30
Obligation Conflicts			
Dilemma 6: Going with host family's son or cleaning the house	3	3.12	1.33
Dilemma 7: Writing a report or demonstrating judo / karate	5	4.12	1.53

Dilemma 8: Class bike ride or spending the day with boy / girlfriend	5	4.52	1.35
Dilemma 9: Being home by 11 o'clock but friends want to stay	3	3.72	1.72
Dilemma 10: Going with friends to a party or do homework	2	3.12	1.45
Prohibition dilemmas			
Dilemma 11: Watching a sex video at host family's house	3	3.60	1.75
Dilemma 12: Your friends want to copy your homework	3	3.16	1.43
Dilemma 13: Political argument with two friends	4	3.36	1.46
Dilemma 14: Your boy / girlfriend wants to stay out later	3	3.88	1.66
Dilemma 15: Evacuation, but you want to take your stereo	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	3.52	1.96

Note: N = 25.

**Figure 1. Examples of sociopragmatic failure**

(i.e., is the appropriate speech act performed and at the right time?) What is the most appropriate speech act in this situation?

Conflict Type	Inappropriate Speech Acts	Examples of Inappropriate Student Responses
Conflict 1: Requests - Friends drinking alcohol		
Conflict 2: Blame - Lost homework is blamed on you	Observation Opining Insult	1. "Oh bother. I don't need to do your homework. And I have a dislike for you. So, I don't want to say sorry." 2. NO. I can't accept that. You are shameless. 3. You are crazy. I don't have to do your homework.
Conflict 3: Demands - Roommate demands you leave for the day		
Conflict 4: Refusals - Roommate refuses to loan you \$5.00	Assertion	1. "You are very stingy."
Conflict 5: Derision - About not knowing American football	Insults Threat Assertion	Part 1.  1. Really? American football don't have high popularity among Japanese. So, It's not crazy. You are crazy.  Part 2.  1. "I'm from earth. You hope to make me angry. American football Is no popullly sports in Japan." 2. "You are crazy! I don't know anything about American football, but I know about sumo Is the best game In the world. Do you know sumo?" 3. "What? Do you baseball? If you [don't] know, you must be come from Mars." 4. "It's too bad. I will hit your face." 5. "You are so crazy man. Soccer is more interesting than American football." 6. "You are impolite."
Conflict 6: Criticism - You are criticized for buying the wrong CD	Assertion Opining	1. "You don't know music. So you say nothing." 2. "I don't like you. Your's taste in music is different from mine."
Conflict 7: Requests - Boy / girlfriend requests to stay over		

Conflict 8: Blame - Boy / girlfriend blames you about being rushed	Assertion Insult	Part 1. 1. You are persistent. I hate you. 2. Your sense is crazy. My girlfriends is much more pretty than your sister. I love her. Part 2. 2. No. It's all your fault. You should noticed it.
Conflict 9: Demands - Best friend urging you to date someone	Assertion	Part 2. 1. "If I like her. I would go to date. But I really hate her. So I don't go."
Conflict 10: Refusals - Boy / girlfriend refuses to leave party	Assertion	Part 1. 1. Oh my god. I'd recognized you as my important girlfriend. But now you aren't my friend.
Conflict 11: Derision - Boy / girlfriend insults you because you are late		
Conflict 12: Criticism - The people at a party insult your food	Insult Assertion	Part 1. 1. You're foolish. This is very delicious. 2. You are rude! This is a recognized food. 3. This party is very uninteresting. I'm very bored.
Conflict 13: Requests - A drunk man asks you for money	Command Threat Statement	1. Thank you. But I am not rich. Go away! 2. I went to bank. So have many money. Part 2. 3. That is not right! I have no money. If you don't go away, I will call a policeman.
Conflict 14: Blame - You are lost and friend blames you		
Conflict 15: Demands - You demand to be served what you order	Insult Assertion	1. You are crazy! Bring me my order. 2. I think that this particular meal is very bad. I don't' want to eat this meal.
Conflict 16: Refusals - Clerk refuses to accept travelers checks	Assertion Command Insult	1. Don't you know me? I am a son of the Japanese Prime Minister. I can make your fired. 2. Don't be so rude. 3. You really have some crazy ideas. 4. OK. Please call the manager. As a salesclerk you are a failure. 5. You should solve this problem first. And you should apologize for your rudeness.

Conflict 17: Derision - Japanese baseball teams are insulted	Assertion Slur	1. You talk sheer nonsense. 2. How rude you are! 3. You really have some crazy ideas. Japanese team is strong.
Conflict 18: Criticism - Suggestion for the art museum is criticized	Insult Assertion	1. Hmmmm.....You are pigheaded. 2. You are crazy. Don't you understand art? 3. It's nonsense. [ to go to the park ] 4. You are [a] kid. What do you do in the park? You're idea is crazy.

**Figure 2. Examples of sociopragmatic failure**

(i.e., is the appropriate speech act performed and at the right time?) What is the most appropriate speech act in this situation?

Dilemma	Inappropriate Speech Acts	Examples of Inappropriate Student Responses
Dilemma 1: Dinner with homestay parents	Assertion	Part 2. I don't have it. It's very a bad tasting.
Dilemma 2: Shopping and picking out sexy clothing	None	None
Dilemma 3: Your friend insisting that you date his brother / sister.	Assertion	Part 1. 1. Ummm...No! I don't want to meet him. I hate him. 2. So so. I want to dater her again, but she may not want to date with me. I find she was very bored with me. Part 2. I am on bad terms with her because we had a quarrel yesterday.
Dilemma 4: Going to a nightclub though your homestay parents think it's not safe to go out at night.	None	None
Dilemma 5: You are at a rock concert in the U.S, but you want to go home because of the noise. Your friends might be bothered by your absence.	None	None
Dilemma 6: You have to help clean your homestay's family house though the homestay's son wants you to go out with him.	Assertion	1. And I don't like you. You are impudent.



Dilemma 7: Writing a report for the teacher despite a promise to your friends to demonstrate judo.	None	None
Dilemma 8: Your school is having an all-day hike and your girl / boyfriend wants you to spend the day with him / her.	Assertion	Part 2. 1. I can't understand. You are a self-centered person.
Dilemma 9: Being at a party and you want to go home. Your friends don't want to leave.	None	None
Dilemma 10: Having to do homework vs. going to a party.	None	None
Dilemma 11: Watching an adult "sex" video at your homestay family's home.	Insult	Part 1. 2. You are foolish Part 2. 1. But I don't want to watch it. You are crazy.
Dilemma 12: Your friends want to copy your homework.		
Dilemma 13: Two American friends are discussing politics.	Insult	I agree with you. I think he is crazy.
Dilemma 14: You are on a date, and you need to go home at 11:00. Your date wants to go to another club.	None	None
Dilemma 15: An evacuation of the school means you have to leave behind an expensive stereo system. You can only bring necessities, though you want to bring this stereo.	None	None

**Figure 3. Examples of sociopragmatic success**

(i.e., is the appropriate speech act performed and at the right time?) What is the most appropriate speech act in this situation?

Conflict Type	Appropriate Speech Acts	Examples of Appropriate Student Responses
Conflict 1: Requests - Friends drinking alcohol	None	None
Conflict 2: Blame - Lost homework is blamed on you	None	None
Conflict 3: Demands - Roommate demands you leave for the day	None	None
Conflict 4: Refusals - Roommate refuses to loan you \$5.00	Suggestion Observation	1. OK. If you lend me five dollars, I would pay back six dollars. 2. Ok. I have mistaken thinking. Money is very important and you understand it.
Conflict 5: Derision - About not knowing American football	Inquiry Joking Observation	Part 1. 1. Really. Please told me about American football. Part 2. 1. Then I get back Mars. Bye, bye! 2. You say too hard. I am a Japanese, not be from Mars. Not be so strange.
Conflict 6: Criticism - You are criticized for buying the wrong CD	Inquiry	Part 2. 3. Sure. Could you tell me what music is the best? I will change it.
Conflict 7: Requests - Boy / girlfriend requests to stay over	Observation Statement	Part 1. 1. I will miss my homestay family. 2. But my homestay family will be anxious that me. 3. I don't think so. I think that my homestay family might object. Part 2. 3. Sorry. I can't stay over your apartment.
Conflict 8: Blame - Boy / girlfriend blames you about being rushed	Observation Excuse	1. Don't shift the responsibility to me. We must take responsibility for our actions. 2. I'm sorry. My school is having a group hike ride on Saturday. It's very important to do it.

<p>Conflict 9: Demands - Best friend urging you to date someone</p>	<p>Excuse Observation Explanation</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. Umm, I have something to do. Part 2. 2. I'm so sorry. I don't dislike her. I don't want to give her hope. 3. I have a girlfriend whom I love. If she seems me dating your sister, she hates me. 4. OK. You need me so much. So, I can't refuse your offer. But, my feeling isn't change. So I may hurt her feeling.</p>
<p>Conflict 10: Refusals - Boy / girlfriend refuses to leave party</p>	<p>Observation Statement</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. I want to have fun much more. But I realize the limitations. Shall we go home? Part 2. 1. OK. I bear for an hour. Let's enjoy the party. 2. I am really tired. I can't move. So, I can't back home without your help.</p>
<p>Conflict 11: Derision - Boy / girlfriend insults you because you are late</p>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Conflict 12: Criticism - The people at a party insult your food</p>	<p>Suggestions Explanation Empathize Assertion Apology</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. Try it. It tastes good. 2. Please eat some Japanese. Surely everyone say "delicious." Part 2. 3. It really delicious. Try it. 4. This food is called "Nikujaga". "Nikujiyaga" is very delicious. 5. It may look disgusting, and I thought like that too. But you I really like this food. 6. Yes, this is very delicious. Don't judge by looking. 7. I want to make you happy. So, I bring some Japanese food. But I make you unhappy. I'm sorry.</p>
<p>Conflict 13: Requests - A drunk man asks you for money</p>	<p>Explanation</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. I have no reason that I have to give you the money. Please go away. 2. I don't have much money. And I am very hungry. I can not give you some money. 3. You work too hard. I don't have money. I'm very poor. Part 2. 3. I am a poor student. And I have to go to my friend's house.</p>

Conflict 14: Blame - You are lost and friend blames you	Excuse Request	1. Sorry all....I was late because I had helped my grandparents. 2. Please stop blaming me for the delay. It is not all my fault.
Conflict 15: Demands - You demand to be served what you order	Assertion	1. Hmm...But I don't like this meal. This is salty. 2. Thank you. I am going to try it, but I can't pay you money. 3. First, you must say sorry. I can't eat this meal. I don't like tomatoes.
Conflict 16: Refusals - Clerk refuses to accept travelers checks	Request	1. Please call the manager that you know about this. I have no time.
Conflict 17: Derision - Japanese baseball teams are insulted	Observation Questioning Request	1. I think it's a prejudice. You know Japanese baseball player such as Ichiro sun fast, don't you? 2. The Japanese baseball teams are not a joke. Please stop insult the teams.
Conflict 18: Criticism - Suggestion for the art museum is criticized	Agreement Suggestion	1. Let's share a mutual opinion. Then, let's decide the place to go. 2. Let's try it. Sometimes it's fun to try a new thing like that.

**Figure 4. Examples of sociopragmatic success**

(i.e., is the appropriate speech act performed and at the right time?) What is the most appropriate speech act in this situation?

Dilemma	Appropriate Speech Acts	Examples of Appropriate Student Responses
Dilemma 1: Dinner with homestay parents	Compliment	Part 1. 1. Those foods are novel for me. I am interested in them. I think they have particular tastes for me. Part 2. I think they have good tastes. I eat heartily because I eat many foods.
Dilemma 2: Shopping and picking out sexy clothing	Opining	Part 1. 1. It is too sexy for me. I have not weared very sexy clothes. 2. We are adult. But adult must keep to the morality. 3. I don't think so. I like casual clothes. These pants and shirts is too sexy.
Dilemma 3: Your friend insisting that you date his brother / sister.	Excuse Explanation	1. I want to refrain from the dating because I'm busy. 2. Unfortunately, there was something happened. I didn't enjoy it very much.

<p>Dilemma 4: Going to a nightclub though your homestay parents think it's not safe to go out at night.</p>	<p>Excuse Apologizing Assertion Request Opining Explanation</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. I have a promise to meet my friends. I'm looking forward to play with them. 2. I meet my friend. I look forward to play with he. Please permission. 3. Yes, I have to meet my friends. I had promised them since one years ago. Part 2. 4. Thank you for worrying me. I want to keep the promise for them. Sorry. 5. But my friend waits for me. I can't trouble for my friend. 6. He is my best friend. Please permission. 7. No, they are very important friends, and I don't want to get out from its promise. 8. Well, But I am an adult. So, you should treat me accordingly. 9. Mom. Sometimes I must have fun with my friends too. I just want to release tension.</p>
<p>Dilemma 5: You are at a rock concert in the U.S, but you want to go home because of the noise. Your friends might be bothered by your absence.</p>	<p>Opining</p>	<p>1. Hmmm... I don't think so. Rock music is disagreeable to my ears. 2. I can't stand it. My ears are very hurt. I rest for a while. 3. I'm having so much fun, too, but my ears are beginning to hurt. I want to leave once.</p>
<p>Dilemma 6: You have to help clean your homestay's family house though the homestay's son wants you to go out with him.</p>	<p>Compromise Assertion Request Suggestion</p>	<p>Part 2. 1. Ah, yes let's. But wait a minute. I'll clean the car or house soon. 2. I want to go with you, but we have to listen to your dad. 3. If I confirm it to your family, and they permits it, I go out to have fun with you. 4. Ok. Please help the cleaning. Let's end early and go to play together.</p>
<p>Dilemma 7: Writing a report for the teacher despite a promise to your friends to demonstrate judo.</p>	<p>Inquiry Explanation Invitation</p>	<p>1. Can I finish it at home? I have an event after this? 2. Teacher, I have an appointment with my friends today. I hope you can give time for me. 3. Teacher!! Do you feel like looking demonstration of judo? 4. I'm sorry. I promised my friends that I would demonstrate judo and karate for them. So I can't write a report about Japan.</p>
<p>Dilemma 8: Your school is having an all-day hike and your girl / boyfriend wants you to spend the day with him / her.</p>	<p>Inquiry Opining Explanation</p>	<p>Part 2. 1. Oh, sorry. I love you. So understand please. 2. I see. But if I am not there my classmate will be worry. I'm really sorry. 3. I'm sorry, but I as a part of the class, [ I must ] attend it.</p>

<p>Dilemma 9: Being at a party and you want to go home. Your friends don't want to leave.</p>	<p>Excuse Explanation</p>	<p>1. I'm a junior high school student now. So I obey my parents. 2. Sorry, but I have to be home. I already promised that. I had a good time, have a nice time.</p>
<p>Dilemma 10: Having to do homework vs. going to a party.</p>	<p>Excuse Request</p>	<p>Part 1. 1. No thank you. I need to do my school work. I'm sorry that I can't go to your party. Part 2. 2. Thank you. But I can't go your party. Please understand me.</p>
<p>Dilemma 11: Watching an adult "sex" video at your homestay family's home.</p>	<p>Suggestion</p>	<p>Part 2. 1. If my host family come to house. I'm afraid such a thing. Let's see it other place.</p>
<p>Dilemma 12: Your friends want to copy your homework.</p>	<p>Explanation Assertion</p>	<p>1. Oh, just do it yourselves. If you don't do that, it's meaningless to you. 2. No. You should do your homework without copying my homework.</p>
<p>Dilemma 13: Two American friends are discussing politics.</p>	<p>Questioning Explanation</p>	<p>1. Why do you think he is the worst president in history? 2. I think every people in the world have their right and wrong.</p>
<p>Dilemma 14: You are on a date, and you need to go home at 11:00. Your date wants to go to another club.</p>	<p>Explanation</p>	<p>1. I'm sorry. I can't do that. I love my homestay family and don't want to break their heart.</p>
<p>Dilemma 15: An evacuation of the school means you have to leave behind an expensive stereo system. You can only bring necessities, though you want to bring this stereo.</p>	<p>Inquiry Opining</p>	<p>1. All right. May I bring it? This is expensive and it's my treasure.</p>

## Discussion

These initial results serve as a reminder about what fuels conflict and what helps to resolve it. The speech acts that increased tension were as follows: observations, opining, insulting, assertions, threats, commands, and slurs. The Japanese students seemed to resort to these speech acts so as to reestablish status, or to increase distance. However, in resolving conflicts, students resorted to the following speech acts: requests, suggestions, assertions, observations, apologies, inquiries, jokes, statements, excuses, explanation, empathizing, agreement, compliments, compromising, and opining.

This data does suggest that there is a *disconnect* for some students as to how their replies (speech acts) can affect others and bring about the wrong effect, one that might impede their ability to adjust socially to their new environment. Gaines (see table 3) provides an analysis of the perlocutionary terms and how speech acts can affect others. Teachers who are interested in pragmatics or student exchanges might want to further explore this area so as to help students to better negotiate and mediate issues.

In short, it is important for students to realize that all speech acts have a perlocutionary effect upon the *feelings*, *thoughts*, or *actions* of the listener. In addition, the issue of the perlocutionary effect (and *pragmalinguistic control*) also is related to the four criteria for intercultural conflict competence discussed by Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001): appropriateness, effectiveness, satisfaction, productivity.

**Table 3. An analysis of some perlocutionary terms**

1	2	3	4	5
Involuntary	Voluntary	Epistemic	Motivational	Practical
Startle	Placate	Confuse	Convince	“get H to do A”
Amuse	Intimidate	Enlighten	Persuade	= “get H to
Surprise	Insult	Deceive	Inspire	(start)
Shock	Entertain	Edify	Deter	(continue)
Astonish	Anger	Teach	Incite	(finish)
	Frighten	Convince that	Dispose	(stop)
	Soothe	Persuade that		(doing A)
	Humiliate			

Note: Gaines (1979, p. 209)

### Appropriateness

Appropriateness refers to the degree to which the exchanged conflict behaviors are regarded as proper and match the expectations generated by the insiders of the culture. Our evaluations of proper and improper behavior stem, in part from our ingrained cultural socialization experiences. Appropriate conflict behaviors can be assessed through understanding the underlying values, norms, social roles, expectations, and scripts that govern the conflict episode.

### Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to the degree to which conflict adversaries achieve mutually shared meaning and integrative goal-related outcomes. Effective encoding and decoding

processes lead to mutually shared meanings. Interaction effectiveness has been achieved when multiple conflict meanings are attended to with accuracy, and mutually desired interaction goals have been reached. Interaction ineffectiveness occurs when content or relational meanings are mismatched, and intercultural noises and clashes jam the communication channels.

**Satisfaction**

Individuals tend to be more satisfied in interaction scenes in which their desired identity images are elicited or validated. They tend to experience dissatisfaction when their desired identity images are denied or disconfirmed. To the extent that important identities of the communicators have been bypassed or patronized, they will experience interaction dissatisfaction. To achieve conflict interaction satisfaction, we have to understand the cultural premises that surround the use of exchanged messages in the conflict negotiation process itself.

**Productivity**

After a protracted conflict discussion, conflict parties would like to feel they have accomplished something. Productivity is closely related to outcome factors, such as the generation of new ideas, new plans, new momentum, and new directions in resolving the conflict problem. In an unproductive conflict, both sides feel that they have wasted their time and energy by being involved in the conflict in the first place, and that both sides have lost sight of the original goals in the conflict episode. In a productive conflict, both

sides feel that they have mutual influence over the conflict process, and they both think that they have gained something as a result of the conflict.

The students' orientation to communication can also be briefly addressed. Whereas an unproductive conflict discussion reflects a win-lose (to lose-lose) orientation to conflict, a productive conflict discussion reflects a win-win orientation to conflict. See table 4.

**Table 4. Win-lose versus win-win conflict orientation core characteristics**

Win-Lose Conflict Orientation	Win-Win Conflict Orientation
Ignore Cultural Differences	Respect Cultural Differences
Identify Devaluation	Identity Validation
Win-Lose to Lose-Lose Attitude	Win-Win Collaborative Attitude
Insensitivity to Conflict Context	Sensitivity to conflict Context Goals
Argue and Defend Self-Interest	Uncover Deeper Conflict Needs and
Conflict Position	Assumptions
Competitive or Passive Aggressive	Collaborative or Give-and-Take
Conflict Mode	Compromising Mode
Engage in Mindless Behavior	Practice Mindful Conflict Skills
Rigidity of Conflict Posture	Willingness to Change

Note: Ting-Toomey & Oetzel (2001), p. 61.

Conflict parties who practice a win-lose orientation in approaching an intercultural conflict often ignore or suppress cultural differences, bypass or invalidate salient identities of the other conflict parties, focus exclusively on self-interest



conflict goals, and react mindlessly and defensively in a conflict situation. In contrast, conflict parties who practice a win-win orientation to conflict tend to accept and respect cultural differences, validate salient identities of their conflict opponents, hold a collaborative mind-set, attempt to uncover deep-seated needs and interests in the other conflict parties, and try to practice mindful conflict management skills. In unproductive conflict discussions, conflict parties often strive for a win-lose outcome and may even end up with a lose-lose outcome. During these unproductive discussions, they often feel that their conflict goals have been ignored, critical relationship issues are side-stepped, and conflict stalemate is the only outcome. In productive conflict discussions, by comparison, conflict members often feel that their conflict goals have been fully addressed, important relationship issues are acknowledged, salient content issues in the conflict have been dealt with affirmatively and a synergistic, win-win outcome can be accomplished.

### Conclusion

This data does indicate other areas for teachers of pragmatics to explore. How students judge the appropriateness and effectiveness of particular responses to situations might be of interest. Using the data from *oral* discourse completion tasks might also highlight areas of concern, as this data would be more realistic. Yet, exploring the stories that students bring back with them on their exchanges will be a means of developing better discourse and oral completion tasks and material. The more teachers understand the contexts, the pressures, and the people behind conflicts and dilemmas, the better teachers can prepare students. In short, by discussing

various student responses to DCTs, and *why* they are effective or ineffective, students can then begin to gain some kind of awareness of their own discourse competency. This ability might even impact the students' own *L1* interactions as well. As Ron White states, the development of pragmatic and strategic competencies is important so that users of English will have the means of participating effectively in the variety of discourses and have a means of challenging and *changing* these discourses in creative and empowering ways.

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