

感謝表現における語用論的転移： 世界英語と日本人英語話者

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Pragmatic transfers in interlanguage expressions of gratitude in the age of World Englishes

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要旨 (Abstract)

この論文は、日本人英語話者の感謝表現における語用論的転移を、世界共通語として急速に変化している英語の観点から論じるものである。データは、日本人の EFL (外国語としての英語) 学習者のアンケートに対する英語による記述の解答から蒐集され、変数 (対話者の社会的関係、受ける利益の大小、経過時間等) を考慮に入れながら、比較分析された。英語の母語話者のデータは先行研究に拠った。結果的に、被験者の中間言語としての英語の感謝表現には、母語の日本語からの転移が発見されたが、それは世界英語の観点からすると、異文化コミュニケーションの失敗に直結すると言いきれない。

1. Introduction

This is part of growing body of research which investigates the pragmatic transfers from Japanese to English in the interlanguage expressions of gratitude by Japanese speakers of English, focusing on the sociolinguistic and socio-cultural norm similarities and differences between

the two speech communities, Japanese and American English. Although the present study models the method on Nakai & Watanabe (2000, 2002) and refers to their American English data, it examines EFL (English as a foreign language), not ESL (English as a second language), learners in Japan. The results are discussed from the perspective not only of EIL (English as an international language) but also of World Englishes, especially of Asian Englishes.

As Hymes (1972/1979) claims that “there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless” (p.15), to acquire communicative competence of a target language has been considered to be the primary goal for second and foreign language learners. It is more than Chomsky’s “Competence” or grammatical knowledge and includes discourse, strategic, and sociolinguistic competence. However, traditional English education has long placed its major emphasis on acquiring grammatical knowledge, virtually neglecting the performance side of language. Such unbalanced instruction would cause significant problems such as misunderstandings and miscommunication in cross-cultural or cross-linguistic communication. To acquire pragmatic knowledge as well as grammatical one of L2 (second language), therefore, is crucial to better understanding of the messages sent by and to people from different social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.

Based on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics by Leech (1983), Thomas (1983) defines pragmatic failures in two areas, socio-pragmatics and pragma-linguistics. Kasper (1992) gives a comprehensive overview of theoretical development and a range of issues on pragmatic transfer, and she points out the problematic nature of establishing a relevant L2 norm in interlanguage pragmatics.

As for expressions of gratitude, Eisenstein & Bodman (1986, 1993) and

Bodman & Eisenstein (1988) conduct research studies on native and non-native speakers of American English. They maintain that native speakers of American English tend to employ fixed speech act sets or semantic formulae to fulfill the functions while non-native speaking subjects, even advanced level learners of English, have considerable difficulties in their performance of thanking.

Coulmas (1981) points out that Japanese speakers of English often use apologetic expressions of English for thanking, which could be pragmatic transfer from Japanese. Matsumoto (1989) and Ide (1989) both question the cross-cultural universality of principles of politeness proposed by Brown & Levinson (1978/ 1994) and claim that Japanese politeness system is more complicated than those of Western speech communities.

Nakai & Watanabe (2000, 2002) also point out a number of differences between Japanese and American English in terms of socio-cultural and linguistic norms, and argue that pragmatic transfers from L1 (first language) to L2 by Japanese speakers of English may cause misunderstanding in their cross-cultural communication.

With regard to the changing roles of English in today's world, Crystal (1997) describes the explosive spread of EIL, pointing out that the non-native speakers of the language will outnumber the native speakers in the near future and that English will linguistically change into "new Englishes" (p. 130). Graddol (1997), after a thorough survey over the past and the present of English language, proposes the reassessment of the future roles played by the United Kingdom (UK) and its language.

Kachru (1982/1992) call such English varieties 'World Englishes' and argue that the ownership of the language should move from the exclusive group of the native speakers to a far wider range of English users. From a viewpoint of English varieties in Asia, Honna (1990, 1999) gives an

extended overview of Asian Englishes and claims that both native and non-native speakers of English take their responsibilities in mutual understandings.

Kirkpatrick & Xu (2002) argue that Chinese pragmatic norms are “more culturally appropriate”(p.269) than Anglo norms for Chinese speakers of English because they are more likely to speak with people from East Asian region. Kirkpatrick & Xu also claim that every speaker, native or non-native, must accommodate to nativised varieties of English outside his or her own speech community. Nakano & Park (2000) investigate the pragmatic aspects of thanking and other speech act performances by Japanese and Korean speakers of English and point out a significant number of similarities between the two groups, despite a few differences.

As a Japanese scholar of sociology of language, Suzuki (1975, 1986), after making a brief survey over the changes in Japan’s language and education policies after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, proposes “Englic” (1975, p.217) or denationalized and nativized English variety in Japan as a supplementary language for international communication. Nakayama (1990, 1994), in favor of multiculturalism, claim that the production target and the recognition model should be differentiated to solve the problems in the traditional English education in Japan.

2. Method

2. 1 Subjects

One hundred and nine subjects participated in the study. They are four groups of Japanese native speakers. One is comprised of 36 university students who are juniors and seniors majoring in English language at a private university in Japan (Group A). Another group is comprised of 25 college students who are juniors majoring in English language at the same

university (Group B). The next group includes 28 junior students of English language and literature department at a municipal university in Japan (Group C). The last group is comprised of 20 junior students of economics at still another private university in Japan (Group D). Almost all of the subjects have eight to nine years of English learning experience in formal EFL (English as a foreign language) settings. As shown in Table 4, the overall level of their English proficiency is intermediate, though they are varied from lower to upper intermediate or pre-advanced.

2. 2 Instrument

The instrument for collecting data is a discourse completion test (DCT) that includes ten different situations where gratitude is to be expressed. I employ the questionnaire of Nakai & Watanabe (2000, 2002) which model on that of Eisenstein & Bodman (1986). As shown in Appendix 1, each situation of the questionnaire is designed to include the same kinds of sociolinguistic variables such as social distance between interlocutors, the quality and quantity of given benefits, and the lapse of time. Question 1 is considered to be the basic situation, where the speaker is supposed to thank a socially equal listener immediately after a benefit of medium degree is given. Based on this situation, each of the other settings has a different degree or type of sociolinguistic variable. In other words, the ten situations represent ten different combinations of formality, benefit, and time lapse, which require a variety of responses ranging from no expression of gratitude through a short one to a lengthy and elaborate one. The questionnaire is written in English. The subjects are asked to respond in writing in English by indicating what they would say if they were in each of those situations. The questionnaire is made open ended so that the subjects could respond in any way that they wish. In addition, to

compensate for some of DCT's weaknesses, the questionnaire is designed to elicit the internal thoughts and feelings of the respondents by suggesting that they write whatever they think and feel in the given spaces.

2.3 Procedures

First, out of the data, I pick only the answers that express what the respondents would actually say in the given situations and then categorize them according to their functions. I adopt the functional categories of Nakai & Watanabe (2000, 2002).

Secondly, based on the categories stated above, I examine all the four sets of data quantitatively; I count the numbers of the semantic formulae and the words each group employs to respond to each situation.

Next, I take a closer look at some of the situations, where I find large quantitative gaps among the data from four groups of Japanese speakers of English (JSE), and I compare them with the data from native speakers of American English (ANS) reported in Nakai & Watanabe (2002). Comparing and contrasting the typical functions in the two kinds of data, JSE and ANS, I analyze the patterns of the four kinds of JSE data, Groups A to D, to find any similarities and differences among those four and the American data, which might indicate some pragmatic transfers.

Then, after that, I examine the JSE data, focusing on two variables, social-status inequality and proficiency level differences.

Finally, some similarities and differences in socio-cultural norms found in pragmatic studies are discussed in terms of the type of instruction or attitude to ESL/EFL pragmatics. The perspective of World Englishes, especially of Asian Englishes, will also be dealt with.

3. Findings and analyses

3. 1 Quantitative results

In terms of quantity, one of the most distinctive features of the data, as Charts 1 and 2 show, is the similarity between JSE subjects and ANS counterparts as well as that between four kinds of JSE data. They have roughly, though not completely, the same patterns of changes or up-and-down variations depending on the ten situations. They employ a larger number of words and semantic formulae in Questions 4, 9, and 10 while in Questions 3, 6, and 7 they use a smaller amount. As for social distance between interlocutors, for example, all the JSE data from Questions 1, 3, and 5 demonstrates a tendency similar to the Bulge theory (Wolfson, 1994); the closer to the two ends of the scales of such social variables as distance and status, the less the amount of utterances becomes.

A closer look at discrete items of quantitative differences, however, reveals another aspect of the data. As shown in Tables 1, 2, and 3, Group B always employs the largest number of words and semantic formulae among the four JSE groups while Group D the smallest. Compared with the ANS data, JSE subjects almost always employ fewer words and fewer semantic formulae to express their gratitude than native speakers of American English do. They use the average of 1.5 semantic formulae in 5.7 words while ANS use 2.2 in 7.4 (Nakai & Watanabe, 2002). Especially in such situation as Question 6 (a small benefit) and Question 7 (a service encounter), JSE are more likely to opt to say nothing than the ANS counterparts do. On the other hand, ANS use approximately twice the number of semantic formulae than JSE do in Questions 9 and 10, thanking to a subordinate and for a large benefit, respectively. In terms of proficiency levels of English, Group B, assumedly the most competent of the four

Japanese groups, shows the most similar quantitative tendency to that of ANS. In Questions 3 (to a stranger), 4 (for a previous treat), and 8 (for an embarrassing information), Group B even exceeds ANS in terms of the amount of utterances. See Tables 1, 2 and 3 for more details.

In the responses to an unexpected offer of a rare book wanted for a long time (Question 10), I found a largest quantitative gap between JSE and ANS data. JSE employ 2.1 semantic formulae in 7.5 words to respond the offer while ANS use 4.4 semantic formulae in 12.2 words, which indicates more lengthy, more elaborate, and more interactive speech behavior is expected in this situation in American English community. Although Japanese respondents use the largest numbers of, semantic formulae and words, 2.1 and 7.5, respectively, the numerical gaps between JSE and ANS are still the largest.

3. 2 Qualitative results

In quality, the data including the internal thoughts and feelings of the subjects demonstrates different aspects of the data in a number of situations. As Tables 5-1 through 5-5 show, Japanese speakers of English tend to make their expressions of gratitude more polite not by combining different semantic formulae, but by making a single semantic formula longer. This is what precedent studies point out. (Coulmas, 1981; Nakai & Watanabe, 2002)

In terms of socio-cultural norm difference, the answers to Question 4 (a previous benefit), for example, demonstrate one of the typical pragmatic transfers from Japanese to English by JSE. The JSE subjects not only employ the largest amount of words and the second largest number of semantic formulae but also show that the majority refer to, thank for, and/or offer to repay the previous benefit. Out of 109 subjects, 34 (31.2%)

explicitly re-thank, 20 (18.3%) express their intention to repay and 36 (33.0%) internally think of re-thanking or repaying. Moreover, a large number of subjects feel indebted to the giver even though they say nothing explicitly. On the other hand, ANS subjects hardly mentioned and thanked for the previous treat; only one (8.3%) does (Nakai & Watanabe, 2002). This might be one of the reasons Group B even outnumbered ANS in the amount of the words and semantic formulae.

Another distinctive feature of JSE data is the use of apologetic expressions for thanking. In Questions 3, 5, and 6, quite a number of Japanese subjects respond to the situations by “sorry” or “I’m sorry,” which never appear in ANS data. As Ide (1989) and other scholars point out, Japanese speakers use apologetic expressions to express their gratitude when they feel indebted to others for something. (Cholley, 1975; Matsumoto, 1989)

In terms of social status difference between interlocutors, the answers to Questions 1, 2, and 9 indicate the Japanese speakers’ sensitivity to people with different social status, superior and subordinate. As Tables 5-5 and 5-6 show, JSE subjects employ more long and polite thanking expressions to superior than to subordinate while they use more short expressions to subordinate than to superior. Especially, this holds true with Question 7 (service encounter) where JSE participants are more likely to opt out to say nothing, because customers are usually regarded socially higher than service providers are. See Tables 5-1 to 5-6 for the details.

3. 3 Discussions

Pragmatic transfer, if it is positive, is assumed to help non-native speakers succeed in their cross-cultural communication. Negative transfer, on the other hand, used to be called “pragmatic failure” (Thomas, 1983) and

considered to be a cause of potential cross-cultural communication breakdown. Socio-linguistic knowledge of a target speech community, therefore, has been regarded as crucial to successful cross-cultural communication. Non-native speakers of the language have always been encouraged or required to accommodate themselves to socio-cultural norms of the target language communities, mostly the USA or the UK.

Today, however, the reality of English has totally changed. As Crystal (1985/1997) states, the non-native speakers of English have outnumbered its native speakers, and also English spoken in some Asian and African countries or districts such as India, the Philippines, and Singapore is now considered to be a distinct variety of the language with its own linguistic characteristics. So, as Kachru (1992) argues, the paradigm of learning/teaching pragmatic knowledge and practices of English for cross-cultural communication has to shift from monomodel approach to polymodel approach. The latter does not presuppose the identical functional roles of English in a homogenous L2 speech community the former did. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002), for example, claim that Chinese variety of English is more appropriate than Anglo model because Chinese speakers of English are more likely to use the language with people from East Asian regions than with those from the “inner circle” (Kachru, 1985). Their claim, though it is not based on any empirical data, sounds quite valid in that there are more than one model for English as an international language today. Nakano & Park (2000), for example, points out a number of similarities as well as differences between Korean and Japanese speakers of English. Such empirical studies, however, are still small in number. More research is urgently needed on socio-linguistic similarities and differences between non-native and non-native varieties of English, especially English used as a foreign language in the “expanding circle”

(Kachru, 1985).

4. Conclusion

The investigation of the interlanguage expressions of gratitude by Japanese speakers of English in EFL settings reveals a number of pragmatic transfers from Japanese to English. In quantity, JSE participants almost always employ smaller amount of words and semantic formulae than ANS subjects do though their overall patterns of variation are similar. In quality, Japanese speakers of English tend to express their gratitude based on their native language norms. They are re-entry of thanks to previous benefit, use of apologetic expressions for thanking, and sensitivity to social status difference between interlocutors, for example.

There are several limitations to the study. First, the English proficiency levels of the subjects could be more precise. Although different and contradicting claims are made regarding the relation between cross-cultural pragmatic transfers and proficiency levels of the language, it surely is worth considering the effectiveness of instruction of pragmatics to ESL/EFL learners. (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Maeshiba et al. 1996, Bardovi-Harlig 2001) Second, more empirical studies on the pragmatic aspects of the performance by a wider variety of non-native speakers of English, especially from the districts in the “expanding circle,” are needed. In the same light, language models for instruction is also an important issue to consider. Without them, we would never reach better understanding of the nature of cross-cultural communication in the age of World Englishes.

Note: This is a revised version of the paper orally presented as a panelist in the symposium “Toward World Englishes: A proposal from an EFL country”

at 13th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA) in Singapore, on December 19, 2002.

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Appendix 1:

The Questionnaire

Please read the following descriptions of situations and think of what you might say in response, if any, in the first-provided space. Say as much or as little as you wish – you may choose to say nothing in several circumstances. In addition, in the second space, write what you might think and feel but not say in actual situations.

- Q 1 : You invited a friend to your dinner party. He/she brings you your favorite (e.g. wine, cake, or fruit).
- Q 2 : Your academic advisor lends you some books which he/she thinks you need to read for your research.
- Q 3 : When you get on a bus, you find you don't have enough change. Then, a stranger on the bus offers to exchange money.
- Q 4 : You meet a friend you haven't seen since he/she treated you to coffee and cake a month ago.
- Q 5 : Seeing you are very busy, your close friend returns the video you rented from the video shop for you.
- Q 6 : When you go out a school building, a friend walking ahead of you holds a door for you.
- Q 7 : At a supermarket, you pay for your groceries, and the cashier bags them and hands them to you as usual.
- Q 8 : A friend of yours tells you that a cleaning-tag is on your jacket.
- Q 9 : You teach at a high school. One of your students gives you a cassette tape of your favorite rock band he/she recorded for you.
- Q10 : When you visit your friend, you find a rare book you have been looking for for a long time, and when you say so, he/she gives it to you as a gift.

Appendix 2:

Table 1. Numbers of English semantic formulas

group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total	ave
A	65	55	47	78	47	29	25	54	56	71	527	14.6
B	50	37	40	63	35	28	11	53	47	71	435	17.4
C	54	39	40	40	44	30	28	41	49	63	428	17.1
D	33	24	21	39	20	19	13	29	26	31	255	12.7
total	202	155	148	220	146	106	77	177	178	236	1645	15.0
ave	1.89	1.44	1.36	2.04	1.35	0.97	0.71	1.62	1.63	2.17	150	1.5

Table 2. Numbers of English words

group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total	ave
A	251	263	194	355	194	120	83	160	226	253	2099	58.3
B	189	185	171	281	156	89	47	151	203	245	1717	68.6
C	175	190	184	174	168	76	67	118	185	198	1535	54.8
D	116	108	82	177	73	62	47	81	90	130	966	48.4
total	731	746	631	987	591	347	244	510	704	826	6317	57.9
ave	6.83	6.91	5.79	9.14	5.47	3.18	2.24	4.68	6.46	7.58	57.9	5.79

Table 3. Native-speakers' data (adopted from Nakai & Watanabe, 2002)

group	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total	ave
S. F.	2.42	1.92	2.08	2.25	1.83	1.17	1.17	2.25	3.0	4.42	270	2.25
words	7.83	8.0	5.58	10.42	7.5	1.5	2.08	5.0	12.25	12.25	74.08	7.4

- Key: 1) S. F. stands for semantic formula;
 2) Ave. stands for average number per subject;
 3) For total and average numbers irrelevant responses are excluded from data.

Table 4. Levels of English proficiency: STEP

group	1	Pre-1	2	Pre-2	3	4/5	NE	total	TOEIC	TOEFL
A	0	1	13	7	5	0	10	36	7	2
B	0	2	15	2	3	0	3	25	6	2
C	0	1	19	2	0	0	6	28	6	6
D	0	0	0	3	8	0	9	20	0	0
total	0	3	47	14	16	0	28	109		

- Key: 1) STEP stands for Society for Testing English Proficiency;
 2) TOEIC stands for Test of English for International communication;
 3) STEP Grades 1 to 4/5 roughly correspond to advanced, upper-intermediate, intermediate, pre-intermediate, high-beginner and beginner, respectively.

Table 5-1. Numbers of semantic formulas: Group A (36)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	8
ve	13	12	12	0	0	1	1	0	0	8	47
ap	0	4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	7
long	1	6	2	7	8	3	0	3	6	0	36
short	19	13	14	2	24	29	21	21	23	14	180
total	36	35	29	10	33	33	22	24	29	27	278

Table 5-2. Numbers of semantic formulas: Group B (25)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ve	10	8	8	0	7	0	0	1	6	9	49
ap	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	3
long	3	3	7	9	3	4	0	5	0	0	34
short	13	11	9	1	12	19	10	15	18	12	120
total	26	22	25	10	23	23	10	21	24	22	206

Table 5-3. Numbers of semantic formulas: Group C (28)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	10
ve	8	13	8	0	3	1	0	0	5	9	47
ap	0	5	3	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	11
long	0	5	4	6	2	0	0	4	0	0	21
short	15	4	6	1	14	24	21	13	16	12	126
total	25	29	23	7	19	25	21	19	22	25	215

Table 5-4. Numbers of semantic formulas: Group D (20)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5
ve	4	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	26
ap	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
long	2	2	2	4	1	0	1	1	0	0	13
short	12	12	9	3	17	17	12	13	19	8	122
total	20	20	18	7	18	17	13	14	20	19	166

Table 5-5. Numbers of semantic formulas: Groups A-D (109)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	7	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	9	23
ve	35	39	34	0	10	2	1	1	11	36	169
ap	0	9	5	1	2	0	0	2	0	2	21
long	6	16	15	26	14	7	1	13	6	0	104
short	59	40	38	7	67	89	64	62	76	46	548
total	107	106	95	34	93	98	66	78	95	93	865
ave	0.98	0.97	0.87	0.31	0.85	0.89	0.60	0.71	0.87	0.85	7.93

Table 5-6. Numbers of semantic formulas: ENS (Nakai & Watanabe, 2002)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9	Q10	total
so	3	2	2	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	12
ve	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
ap	0	3	4	0	4	0	0	0	1	0	12
long	8	0	0	0	3	0	0	1	0	1	13
short	0	9	8	0	3	11	12	7	10	4	64
total	11	14	16	0	14	11	12	8	12	6	104
ave	0.91	1.16	1.25	0	1.16	0.91	1.0	0.66	1.0	0.5	8.66

Key: so = Thank you so much;
ve = Thank you very much;
ap = I appreciate ...
long = Thank you for ...
short = Thank you/Thanks a lot/Thanks.