

Fostering Heart to Heart Communication Skills, Ver. 1

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Abstract

This article describes a course designed to foster pragmatic awareness among Japanese university students. Textbook activities that utilize authentic American native speaker, Japanese second language speaker English and Japanese native speaker speech act data are described. Then, author developed materials that foster more appropriately complex output, facilitate broader pragmatic and intercultural communication conceptual understanding, and which assess pragmatic comprehension and ability are explained and critiqued.

1. INTRODUCTION

Though pragmatic awareness is vital for communicative competence (Tanaka, 2006), the pragmatic level of meaning (Thomas, 1995) is rarely taught in high school English classes in Japan, and there is a common misperception among many university students that perfect English consists of native-like pronunciation and grammar (Azuma, 1994). Still, good commercially available instructional materials are few and tend to be either too difficult for the average student or spotty in coverage. One notable exception has been the Heart to Heart textbook developed by the Sophia University applied linguistics research group (Yoshida, 2000). A key feature of this textbook is the use of speech act data from 150 American and Japanese university students on eight common speech act sets (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Textbook exercises are designed to increase students' awareness of their own communication styles, their ability to notice pragmatic differences in real speech act data, and their ability to write and role play situationally appropriate dialogs. Critical incidents also allow for analysis of speech act related intercultural communication problems.

This article provides an overview of the textbook activities, the course design and aims, and examples of supplementary materials developed for the course. The supplementary materials include task sheets that require students to analyze common social situations and write suitably complex and culturally appropriate speech acts; an annotated list of technical terms to place textbook activities in a broader pragmatic and intercultural communication conceptual framework; small group presentation materials; and, written exam item types. The article concludes with a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of the course.

2. TEXTBOOK OVERVIEW

2.1 Heart to Heart Textbook Contents

The textbook consists of twelve chapters. Eight of the chapters focus on the instruction of one common speech act set. Every third chapter is a review chapter which provides additional speech act

examples from the previous two chapters in two short dialogs and gives students more opportunity to role play the speech acts they have studied in different contexts. The rest of this article will focus on the non-review chapters that form the core of the course.

The eight speech acts or more accurately speech act sets that are covered are in order: compliments and responses to compliments, thanking, requests, refusals, complaints, apologies, proposals (i.e., invitations) and disagreeing.

2.2 *Speech Act Database*

The speech act data consists of discourse completion task (DCT) results for one situation for each of the eight speech acts covered. The DCT were completed by 150 university students in the United States and in Japan. Fifty students were native speakers of American English living in the United States. Fifty were Japanese university students who completed the DCT in English, their second language. And fifty were native speakers of Japanese who completed the DCT in Japanese. Both of the Japanese university student groups were residing in Japan, and members of neither group had spent more than half a year studying abroad.

2.3 *Major Activity Types*

Each of the eight chapters, which introduce a new speech act, are organized into six sections that progress from activities designed to foster intuitive awareness of the act, to a study of the specific speech act strategies (c.f., Ishihara & Cohen, 2010) found in the data for each of the participant groups, to application of this new knowledge and awareness to role play activities, and finally to a critical incident (c.f., Cushner & Brislin, 1996) that illustrates the kind of miscommunication speech act differences can cause in intercultural communication. Each activity type is briefly described below.

Feel the Act: The pedagogical goal of this activity type is to give students an intuitive feel for the speech act to be studied by listening to two short dialogues. One dialogue reflects an American style enactment of the target speech act and the other illustrates a Japanese style as determined by the DCT data. After listening to both dialogues, students are asked which dialogue feels more American and which *feels* more Japanese. Students can be asked which features of the dialogue influenced their answer, and the instructor can write the dialogues on the board for closer examination of the differences.

Do the Act: In this section, students read a short situation that calls for use of the target speech act, then they are asked to complete a short dialog using the target speech act and role play it with a classmate. At this point, students are not given any information on differences in American or Japanese communication styles for this act since the goal is to activate students' awareness of their own communication styles before the act is studied in detail.

Think about the Act: Here, students study the linguistic means or *types* of expressions used by the DCT participants to enact each speech act. For example, for refusals students learn that the DCT participants used six types of expression or strategies for the situation given in "Do the Act". The six strategies were the expression of positive opinions, thanking, apologizing, giving alternatives, making direct refusals and providing reasons for refusing. Using this knowledge, students listen to short dialogs that utilize each strategy type to see if they can identify the type. After this, they look back at the dialogue they wrote to see which strategies they used in their own English for situation one (Do the

Act).

Cross-Cultural Communication Notes: Students now examine a graph, which displays the numbers of each speech act strategy type used by each of the three participant groups. They are asked to compare each of the groups to find similarities and differences and to consider possible cultural and linguistic reasons for the differences. Even students with very limited intercultural experience can be encouraged to consider reasons for the native Japanese speaker strategy choices and for the potential effect of English as a second language on the other Japanese participant group. If students' English abilities are low, this phase of the lesson is best done in Japanese.

Use What You've Learned: For this activity, students listen to and role play model dialogs before completing their own short dialogs for two new situations. The goal now is for students to imitate the American style for the target speech act so as not to cause any misunderstanding. The textbook provides a short list of "useful expressions" to help the students. The author found, however, that the students needed more guidance to be able to write appropriately complex dialogues. The task sheets designed to facilitate this complexity are explained in section 3.1 below.

Cultural Eye-Opener: Each non-review chapter ends with a critical incident that illustrates a potential speech act based intercultural misunderstanding. Causes for the misunderstanding can be clearly related to communication style, cultural norms, and value differences, which may be influencing the enactment of the targeted speech act. An example of one way to facilitate a deep analysis of these critical incidents is given in section 4 below.

3. SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

3.1 Task Sheets

Task sheets have been designed for each non-review chapter that give students more detailed guidance for each dialogue completion task than is provided in the textbook. Students are told which speech act strategy types and the number of types that they should use, in order to make their dialogue pragmatically appropriate for each situation. Advice is sometimes linked to the list of technical terms in 3.4; thus, providing a broader conceptual framework for this activity as well as facilitating class discussion and student presentations (see section 4). It is left up to the student to decide the best sequence for the speech act types.

The task sheet in 3.2 is for refusals. Students are asked to complete dialogues for three situations. The task sheets are begun in class and completed as homework. The situation and task instructions are identical to those in the textbook, but the instructions regarding the role-play method and for writing the dialog for "you" have been added by the author. Also, in the "you" instructions for situation 3, students are admonished to consider the social distance and the power difference between Dr. Kane and "you" – a university student at Dr. Kane's university in the United States – when writing their dialog. These two terms are explained in the technical terms handout (3.4.1).

3.2 Refusing American Style Task Sheet Example (Writing space omitted)

Situation 1 : Ski Trip. A friend of yours, Jennifer, asks you to go on a ski trip with her and her friends next weekend, but you don't feel like going because you don't like some of the people who are going.

Task: Write an American style refusal to Jennifer.

Role-Play: Act out your dialog with your partner using the *Look-Look-Up-Speak* method.

Jennifer: How about going on a ski trip with us next weekend?

You: (Write your refusal here. Take care not to hurt your American friend's feelings or cause a misunderstanding. Give ONE reason for your refusal, and use at least TWO other refusal types. Use appropriate expressions from page 37.)

Jennifer: OK. I understand.

Situation 2 : Concert Ticket. Your classmate, Tony, plays in a jazz band. He is going to have a concert soon, and he asks you to buy a ticket to the concert. You really do not want to go, because it will cost you \$50, and you feel that this is too expensive.

Task: Write an American style refusal to Tony.

Role-Play: Act out your dialog with your partner using the *Look-Look-Up-Speak* method.

Tony: Would you like to buy a ticket and come to the concert? I'm sure you'll have a good time.

You: (Write your refusal here. Take care not to hurt your American friend's feelings or cause a misunderstanding. Give ONE reason for your refusal, and use at least TWO other refusal types. Use appropriate expressions from page 37.)

Tony: OK. Perhaps next time.

Situation 3 : Party Invitation. Dr. Kane, a professor at your college, invites you to a party at his house. But since you don't like him very much, you don't feel like going.

Task: Write an American style refusal to Dr. Kane.

Role-Play: Act out your dialog with your partner using the *Look-Look-Up-Speak* method.

Dr. Kane: How about coming over to my house Sunday night? We are having a barbecue party.

You: (Write your request here. Consider the social distance (*SD*) and relative power (*P*) difference when writing your refusal. Give ONE reason for your refusal, and use at least TWO other refusal types. Use appropriate expressions from page 37.)

Dr. Kane: All right. Maybe next time.

3.3 Instructor Feedback Examples

When students role-play their dialogues in pairs, it is not possible to listen carefully to each student's enactment of the targeted speech act. Requiring students to write out their dialogues as homework provides for better opportunities to discover common problems and to provide systematic advice that is linked to the pragmatic and intercultural communication concepts that the students are

taught in this course (see section 3.4).

Students' dialogs are corrected for grammar errors and for potential pragmatic problems that the instructor thinks may cause misunderstandings or a loss of rapport (Spencer-Oatey, 2004) with an American interlocutor. Oral role-plays may be conducted both before and after students receive written feedback on their written role-plays.

Below are written feedback examples for four different speech act sets. The underlined comments serve to categorize the type of feedback. Arrows indicate the instructor's revision of a student's problematic dialogue. Italics mark instructor comments and are also used to draw students' attention to more specific elements. Items in bold are linked to the list of technical terms in 3.4.

3.3.1 Compliment and Response Feedback

Nice Example: Sit. 2: "Oh, I really like your furniture. I like how it is arranged. Who thought of this arrangement?"

3.3.2 Thanking Feedback

Enthusiasm Constraint: Sit. 1: "I didn't know you were such a nice cook. It was delicious."
→ "I didn't know you were such a great/wonderful/fantastic cook. Everything was delicious."

More Specific Compliments: Sit. 3: "What a nice surprise! Thank you Terry. It is great."
→ "What a nice surprise! Thank you Terry. This is great. White's my favorite color."

3.3.3 Requests

Explanations: *In situation 1, you need to explain why you need a letter of recommendation because your professor needs to know what kind of letter to write.*

I want to: "I was sick, so I want to borrow your notes." → "I was sick last week, so I *would like* to borrow your notes."

Borrow vs. Lend: In situation 2, be careful to use borrow and lend correctly. In this situation, you need to borrow a classmate's biology class notes, and you want your classmate to lend the notes to you. Examples: "Do think I could borrow your notes?" "If possible, could you lend me your notes? I'll return them tomorrow morning."

3.3.4 Refusals

Type C Apologies/Negative Tone: For practice, you should avoid the use of apologies in refusals. Americans do use type C when refusing, but much less so than Japanese do. Also, it can add an unwanted negative tone to your refusal. This may create an awkward situation. More positive politeness strategies are appropriate here.

Sit. 2: "I can't go because I already have other plans. I'm sorry." → "That sounds wonderful. I love jazz and would really love to hear your performance, but I spent all of my money on a new computer this month. So, I really can't afford to go this time. Perhaps next time!"

Vague or Unconvincing Reasons: Sit. 1: "Oh, I'm sorry. I have to do my homework. Thank you for asking me though." → Oh, I really wish I could go, but I have tons of homework to do this weekend (because I was sick last week). Thanks for asking me though."

Missing Request: "Hi, Dr. Robins. Are you busy right now? I need a letter of recommendation for a

scholarship.” → “Hi, Dr. Robins. Are you busy right now? I need a letter of recommendation for a scholarship. Do you think you could write one for me?//I wonder if you could write it for me.”

Rude Example: Sit. 1: “I can’t go because I don’t like some of the people who are going.” *Be careful! Maybe your friend likes them!! **Positive politeness**, even if it is a white lie, is probably necessary here.*

3.4 Pragmatic Technical Terms List

The following list of annotated technical terms was compiled from work in pragmatics and intercultural communication, in order to provide a broader and richer conceptual framework for the course (c.f., Cutting, 2002; Dodd, 1995; Lustig & Koester, 1999, Tanaka, 2006). The terms are indexed to the first chapters in Heart to Heart to which they are deemed relevant. These concepts are taught explicitly in class in conjunction with specific speech act sets, homework feedback and student presentations (section 4). The items in bold are referred to elsewhere in this article.

3.4.1 Student Handout (Abbreviated)

Here is a list of technical terms (専門用語) from pragmatics and intercultural communication that we will use in this course. These terms will help us to understand and talk about the cultural, linguistic and communication style differences, which we will find in the Cross-cultural Notes data and in the Cultural Eye-openers of our textbook, Heart to Heart. The chapter numbers are only guidelines: these terms may be useful in other chapters as well.

speech act	An action performed by the use of a linguistic utterance(言語的発話). 発話行為。
hedge	It is important to hedge when making cultural comparisons because cultural differences are rarely 100%, but rather a matter of degree. 垣根ことば。
vague	Not clear. Vague words depend on the context to make their meaning clear. 曖昧。Vagueness. (Ch. 2~)
ambiguous	The state of having more than one possible meaning. 両義(のあること); 多義性、曖昧さ。Ambiguity. (Ch. 2~)
polysemous	A word having more than one meaning at the same time. Linguists say that polysemy is a basic feature of human language and communication! (Ch. 2~)
indirect	Avoiding saying something in a clear or obvious way. Not going or not expressing something in a straight line. 控え目、間接的。Indirectness. (Esp., Ch.10)
direct	Saying exactly what you mean in a way that nobody can pretend that they do not understand. 率直的; 直接的。Directness.
question	質問。
context	The physical and linguistic environment of a linguistic message. コンテキスト、文脈。(Ch. 4~)
context-dependent	The condition in which the exact meaning of a word depends on the context. (Ch. 4~)
persuasion	The act of persuading or getting someone to do something or to believe in something. 説得すること; 説得力。(Esp., Ch.10)

high-context communication	A communication style in which most of the meaning is in the context and not in the words themselves. Speakers must use contextual information to guess what the speaker wants to say. (Ch. 2 “Why do you always apologize”, Ch. 4 “Dr. Macintosh...” & Ch. 7 “You should’ve told me”)
low-context communication	A communication style in which most of the meaning is in the words themselves. The listener does not need to guess (much). (Chs. 2, 4 & 7)
enthusiasm constraint	Showing a lack of enthusiasm about something (熱意の欠如). This may be interpreted negatively as meaning “no”, for example, when the person says “yes.” (Ch.10 Eye-opener) (Tannen, 1984)
interjections	A short sound, word or phrase spoken suddenly to express emotion or enthusiasm. E.g., Oh! Wow! Ow! Oh-my-god! (SYN, exclamation) 間投詞；感嘆詞。
indebtedness	恩や義理。(Ch. 2 “Why do you always apologize” & Ch. 8.)
reciprocity	互惠主義。(Chs. 2 & 8)
social distance	社会的な距離(SD). The degree of closeness between the S (speaker) and H (hearer). Age, status and degree of familiarity are three important factors that determine SD. Examples from close to distant: family (brother or sister), best friend, classmate, first time acquaintance, a stranger. (Ch. 4~)
relative power	相対的権力(P). The relative degree of power that S or H have over each other. For example, a boss has relatively more power than his/her employee. A professor has relatively more power than his/her student. (Ch. 4~)
ranking of imposition	押し付けのランク(R). The degree of imposition caused to S or H because of the speak act. For example, how much will it inconvenience S or H, or cause them to lose face (メンツを失う)? The R for a request for the salt is much smaller than the R for a request for a letter of recommendation. (Ch. 4~)
FTA	Face threatening act. Speech acts that threaten someone’s face. 面目を脅かす(発話)行為。FTA weight (W) = SD (S, H) + P (S, H) + R. (Ch. 4~)
face	A person’s public self-image. One’s dignity (尊厳、自尊心). The desire to be respected. The expectation that one’s public self-image will be respected. 体面、面目、メンツ。(Ch. 4~)
positive face	The need to be connected, to belong to a group. 積極的の面目は「連帯」(solidarity)の願望である。(Ch. 4~)
negative face	The need to be independent, not imposed on by others. The right to have freedom of action. This is also called independence face because it is the psychological need for independence from others. 消極的/独立的のメンツは「独立」(independence)の願望である。(Ch. 4~)
negative politeness	Showing awareness of another’s right not to be imposed on. (Ch.10) 消極的丁寧さ、独立的丁寧さ。E.g., Could I use your pen? (Ch. 4~)
positive politeness	Showing solidarity with another. 積極的丁寧さ、連帯丁寧さ。E.g., Hey, how about letting me use your pen? (Ch. 4~)
psychological distance	The past tense in English sometimes communicates psychological distance and not past time. (Ch. 4)

down grader	Word or phrase that lowers the strength or certainty of an expression. Example: Your notebook got a little wet in the rain (Ch. 8). Do you have a second? 格下げ。
hesitation words	Words like uhhh, ummm, etc. Hesitating is a way of softening a speech act.
passive	The passive hides the agent of the action. (Ch. 8)
forbearance	A promise not to do something again. This is a type of apology. 自制。(Ch. 8, 9)
main idea	The most important idea or speech action that one wishes to communicate. 主旨。
supporting idea	Specific information, reasons, examples, solutions, etc. that make the main idea more believable. バックアップするより詳細な理由、事例、解決案など。 Evidence/support for an opinion. 意見の裏付け。
inductive	The supporting idea to main idea (SI-MI) pattern in chapter 11. 帰納的。 SI only is an indirect inductive pattern that just suggests the MI. The listener has to guess it. Inductive patterns are more common among East Asian speakers.
deductive	The main idea to supporting idea (MI-SI) pattern (Ch. 11). 演繹法。
“my opinion style”	MI only. This pattern is used mostly by JE perhaps based on a stereotype of American directness that does not realize the need to support one’s opinion.

4. Small Group Presentations

Each student is required to work in a small group to summarize one of the eight chapters that form the core of the course. The instructor meets with each presentation group at least once outside of class to facilitate a discussion of the most relevant issues for each chapter and to help students brainstorm the handout. These sessions provide an opportunity to re-teach relevant concepts from the list of technical terms and to urge students to come up with concrete examples from their own experiences.

In section I, students are asked to summarize the major differences between the three groups of DCT study participants that they think their classmates should try to remember, and to explain why they think these differences are important. They are asked to do this summary in both Japanese and English. In section II, students are asked to write one original dialog for each of the three chapter role-play situations, each of which should clearly illustrate the American style of communication for the situation. Students write in English only in this section. In Section III, the students translate the critical incident into Japanese, and answer the instructor’s questions about the Eye-Opener. They are instructed to write their answers in both English and Japanese. By requiring students to write in Japanese for sections I and III, the intention is to first of all allow for a deeper analysis than would be possible in English alone, and secondly, to ensure that their classmates can fully understand their presentations. At the beginning of each section, the presenters who wrote the section are asked to “sign” their names in order to encourage full, balanced group participation and a sense of authorship. Finally, instructor comments are inserted and set off in italics whenever felt useful or to point out problems with the students’ handout. The instructor goes over and elaborates on these points after the students finish their oral presentation.

4.1 Chapter Five Group Presentation Handout Example

I. C. C. Notes Summary (Preparer's Signature)

断り方に関しては、アメリカ人は日本人よりもハッキリと断るが、そのまえに相手の気持ちを考えた表現をする傾向にある。そして、アメリカ人は多くの人が自分の情報を言うことでフォローする。対して、日本人は、アメリカ人よりも言葉にして謝罪をする。なぜなら、まず最初に、相手に対して謝罪することによって、自分が申し訳ないという気持ちを伝えるためである。これらをまとめて分かることは、アメリカ人は、謝罪を言葉にせず、まず断ることが、正しい断り方で、日本人は、まず謝罪することが失礼じゃないと考えている。これが、日本とアメリカの文化の違いである。

The Americans tend to refuse more directly than group J, but before refusing they use expressions that show concern for the others feelings. And, a lot of Americans follow with information about themselves. By contrast, both Japanese groups, especially JE, apologize more than the Americans do. The Japanese apologize first to convey their feelings of regret to the other party. To summarize what we understand, the correct way for Americans is to refuse requests without apologies, but the Japanese groups think that they should first apologize so as not to be impolite. This is a cultural difference between Japan and the United States.

What specific refusal types do Americans use that show concern for the other's feelings? What about the "zabuton" effect? What kind of information do the Americans give about themselves? Can you give an example? Why do you think JE use the most direct refusals (E) of any group, and why do they use the most apologies?

II. Dialog Examples (Preparer's Signature)

Situation 1:

A: Hi B.

B: Hi A. I'm planning to go to the sea this summer with my friends.

A: Wow, that's a good plan. Where will you go?

B: We are going to Okinawa. How about coming with us?

A: That sounds wonderful, but I already have other plans. [A & F]

B: That's regrettable.

This refusal includes only two types and still sounds a little abrupt. I suggest adding an interjection like wow to express more enthusiasm for B's plan. Also, adding a type B thanking expression would soften the refusal more. For example, "Wow, that sounds fantastic, but I already have other plans. Thanks for asking me though."

Situation 2:

A: Hi B.

B: Hi A. I'm going to go to a festival this weekend.

A: Oh, that sounds like a nice plan. Who are you going with?

B: Some of my friends. Would you like to come with us?

A: I'm sorry, but my family has already made plans. [C & F]

This illustrates the typical Japanese style, not the American style. A more typical American refusal would be: "Oh, I wish I could, but my family has already made other plans for this weekend. Thanks for asking though!"

**Note: this situation is very similar to situation 2...too similar!*

III. Cultural Eye-Opener (Preparer's Signature)

"I'm not so good at it."

Yukari is staying in New York for one year to study sociology at a university. One day her classmate, Cathy, found out that Yukari's hobby is playing the violin. A few days later Cathy said to Yukari, "Yukari, I am planning a big party for my mother's 60th birthday. I wonder if you could play the violin at the party. I'm sure my mother will like it. It would make the party very special." Yukari, feeling modest and not so confident in playing in front of many people, said, "I'm really sorry, Cathy. I really can't. I'm not so good at the violin." Cathy could not understand why Yukari refused the proposal, because Cathy would not refuse such a good opportunity to show her talent to other people. Cathy would have understood if Yukari had given clearer reasons for her refusal.

(日本語訳)

「あんまり上手じゃないの…」

ゆかりは社会学を勉強するためNYに1年間滞在しています。ある日、クラスメートのキャシーは、ゆかりの趣味がヴァイオリンを弾くことだと知りました。数日後、キャシーは「私は、60歳の母親のために大きなパーティーをしたい!! もしあなたがパーティーでヴァイオリンを弾いてくれたら母がすごく喜ぶわ。すごく特別なパーティーにしたいの。」と言いました。ゆかりは謙遜の気持ちと多くの人の前で弾く自信がないのもあって、「本当にごめんなさいキャシー。私はあんまり上手じゃないのよ。」キャシーはなぜゆかりが断ったのか分からなかった。なぜならキャシーはみんなに才能を見せるチャンスだと思ったから。もしゆかりがちゃんと断った理由を言ったならキャシーは理解したでしょう。

(1) Why couldn't Cathy understand Yukari's refusal?

ゆかりが断った理由をキャシーが理解できなかったのはなぜか?

Yukari did not clearly reveal her reason for refusing in spite of the difference in cultures.

ゆかりが文化の違いがあるにも関わらず、理由を明確に明かさなかったから。

(2) Why do you think Yukari refused?

あなたはゆかりが断ったのはなぜだと思いますか?

She refused because she was modest and lacked confidence, which are typical reasons for Japanese to refuse.

ゆかりは謙虚でなおかつ自信がなかったという典型的な日本人の考え方だったから。

Do you think that she was also worried about disappointing or embarrassing Cathy? Was she worried about harming Cathy's face (and her own)?

キャシー。または、自分のメンツを脅かす心配もあったと思いますか?

- (3) If you could play the violin fairly well for an amateur, do you think you would refuse in the same situation?

もしあなたが上手にヴァイオリンが弾けたとして、ゆかりと同じ状況ならどうしますか？

We would refuse once and wait to see Cathy's reaction. 1回断って様子見。

What if Cathy seemed very disappointed, and didn't repeat her request?

- (4) Can you sense any cultural differences between Yukari and Cathy?

Yes. Yukari's way of thinking is typical of many Japanese who are modest and lack confidence in such formal situations. Cathy's desire to show case her talent to a lot of people, on the other hand, illustrates a typical, positive American attitude. These are the cultural differences.

ゆかりは謙虚でなおかつ自信がなかったという典型的な日本人の考え方で、キャシーは多くの人に才能を見せるチャンスだという、アメリカ人らしい強気な考え方という文化の違いがあった。

Americans like Cathy may see this is a more informal, relaxed situation, so they would not be worried about making a few mistakes. Americans would probably be less face sensitive in this situation. 日本人よりメンツに敏感ではないでしょう。

5. Formal Assessment Issues

The assessment of pragmatic comprehension and ability is a new area in second language testing, and there are as yet no commonly accepted methods or measures (Hudson, Detmer & Brown, 1995; Brown, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). One reason is that unlike other areas of language, such as grammar, listening or reading comprehension, there is usually no single correct answer. Furthermore, what is an appropriate answer in one situation, may be totally inappropriate in another situation, or presenting even more difficulties for pragmatic test makers, an expression that conveys a pragmatically appropriate meaning when uttered in one tone of voice, may be totally inappropriate in a slightly different tone of voice (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010), making the written assessment of pragmatic competence difficult.

In this article, the focus will be limited to a brief description of the type of written assessment items developed for this course and a look ahead at possible ways of improving this component of the course. Also, it should be pointed out that, that the small group presentations and office hour discussions with presentation groups are important alternative means of assessment.

Below are some examples of assessment items used in a 100-point written exam. The multiple-choice items in section I, were designed to test students ability to identify the major differences between the three groups that participated in the Heart to Heart DCT study. Section II, tests students' ability to recognize the strategy types used in each speech act set. Section III, tests comprehension of the vocabulary in the pragmatic and technical terms list (c.f., section 3.4). This, of course, is not a test of pragmatic comprehension or ability per se. Next, the dialog items in section IV were drawn from students' written task sheet homework (c.f., section 3.2). Responses that were deemed inappropriate were matched against responses that closely fit the textbook DCT data for the American university students. Earlier versions of tests developed for this course used two or so written discourse completion items instead, but such items take more time to grade and limit the number of items that can be included in a test. Section V tests students' ability to comprehend and analyze the critical incidents in

the textbook. Here, I have just included the information given to the students to help them prepare for the test. For examples of the kinds of questions asked in this section of the test, refer to the questions for the Cultural-Eye Opener in the refusals group presentation handout in 4. 1 above.

5.1 Assessment Item Examples

I. C.C. Notes (20 points... 2 pts. each)

1. JE and J groups use more...expressions than A when thanking.
 - a. thanking b. complimenting c. pleasure d. obligation
2. Which group use the most polite request types?
 - a. American students b. Japanese students learning English c. Japanese students

II. Dialog Analysis (40 points... 2 pts. each)

Compliments & Responses. A: No Mention; B: Compliments; C: Question; D: Thanking; E: Information

A: Hi, Richard. (3) I really like your jacket.

B: (4) Thank you.

Requests. A: Very Polite Request; B: Polite Request; C: Casual Request

A: Hey, Midori, (5) could you pass me the sugar?

B: Sure. Here you are.

III. Vocabulary Matching: Find the correct technical term for each of the following items, and write the answer on your answer sheet. (10 points... 1 pt. each)

a. hesitations b. a vague word c. face d. negative politeness e. positive politeness
 e. context f. softener g. social distance h. relative power

6. A word that is not very clear.
7. Can I use your pen?
8. Hey, how about letting me use your pen?
9. The degree of closeness between the speaker and the hearer.

IV. Dialogs: Choose the most typical American style dialog line (台詞) for each of the following situations. (10 points... 1 pt. each)

10. Situation: B bought a new pair of shoes.

a. A: Hey, those are nice shoes. Are they new? B: Yeah, I got them at...

b. A: I really like your new shoes. B: Thanks. They're my favorite pair.

11. Situation: B invites you to go on a camping trip with his friends next weekend, but you can't go.

a. A: I'm sorry, but I'm very busy next week B. I'm really sorry.

b. A: Oh, I'd love to, but I really can't B. I have a big math test on Monday.

V. Cultural Eye-Opener: Read the following eye-opener and answer the questions below.

(20 points)

These questions will come from the Eye-opener questions handout. You will be expected to show

your understanding of the linguistic and cultural reasons for the problem AND to be able to give your own opinion based on what you have learned in this class AND from your experiences in Japanese or other cultures.

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, I would like to highlight the advantages that I have found in using Heart to Heart as the basis for this course, and then discuss some of the drawbacks with this textbook and issues that need to be addressed to improve the course further.

First, this is the only textbook that I know of that presents actual cross-cultural speech act data for students to analyze. Although a more substantial database would be desirable, the limited amount of data presented for each speech act set in this textbook has the advantage of not overwhelming students. In addition, there are multiple strategy types given for each speech act. The inclusion of both English and Japanese language DCT results for the Japanese informants allows for insights into both cultural and second language effects. The task sheets, group presentations and class discussions give students many opportunities to increase their awareness and understanding of key cultural and linguistic influences on their English communication. It opens them up to a whole new level of language meaning (Thomas, 1995).

A second strength of this textbook is that as students progress through the book, they can see that several speech act strategies are used in more than one speech act set. For example, compliments are used not only in the compliment and response speech act set of the first chapter, but as one thanking strategy in chapter two. Thanking which is examined in chapter two is also a strategy type used in compliment responses as well as in refusals. Explanation and information strategy types appear in the complement, refusal, complaint, apology and disagreement speech act set data. Cumulatively, this gives students a much richer picture of the use of speech acts than most published materials do.

Each time the course has been taught, certain themes have emerged. One that is particularly noteworthy is that detailed information and explanations seem more important for Americans than for Japanese in a number of speech act situations. For example, when students complete task sheets and presentation handouts for compliments and responses (chapter 2), refusals (chapter 5), complaints (chapter 7), apologies (chapter 8) or disagreements (chapter 10), their explanations or reasons for their disagreement are almost invariably much more succinct and less detailed than seem sufficient to native speakers, illustrating quite vividly over the length of the course the relatively high-context communication style of Japanese speakers and the low-context communication style of Americans. This provides multiple teachable moments for the instructor to provide examples of the amount and kind of information that would be more satisfying for native English speakers, and thus more pragmatically successful.

Through their homework, presentations and class discussions students have many opportunities to become aware of both cultural and linguistic influences on their English communication abilities and to practice more native-like strategies.

There are some drawbacks to the Heart to Heart textbook that present issues for further course design and improvement. Although too much information may be more confusing than helpful, the strength of the DCT database leaves much to be desired. For example, the speech act data provided is

just for the first of the three situations given. This can give an incomplete and misleading picture of typical speech act patterns. Also, the language support is rather limited and sometimes seems to be skewed towards casual English expressions. Although the textbook provides an excellent basis for raising students' awareness of the pragmatic level of meaning in English, students probably need more creative and powerful ways to practice speaking English based on their newly acquired knowledge of pragmatic and communication style differences for this training to have a more lasting effect.

In the future, I would like to explore the introduction of corpus-based learning to give students access to a wider range of natural English expressions for the production of the speech acts being studied (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). The development of better assessment items is also an issue. For example, items need to be designed to more clearly focus on either comprehension or on production. In the examples of assessment items presented in this paper, there is especially a need for more items that test for students' ability to produce situationally appropriate speech acts. There is room for improvement in the list of technical terms, too. In particular, there should probably be more examples given of positive and negative politeness, and the instruction of politeness in general could be better linked to the rest of the course. Finally, the cooperative principle (Tanaka, 2006; Koizumi, 2001; Yule, 1996; Grice, 1975), which most students will have encountered in required English linguistic courses taught in Japanese, should be introduced to provide a more complete explanation for why native speakers tend to require more detailed explanations.

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