

# Pragmatic Transfer in Japanese ESL Refusals

Hisako Yamagashira

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Differing cultures have different perceptions and interpretations of appropriateness and politeness; therefore, cross-cultural communication posits inherent risks of communication failure. Pragmatic transfer occurs when L1 speakers use their own communicative strategies even though they speak the L2 language. An especially sensitive pragmatic task concerns constructing refusals. In this paper, the language patterns used to make these refusals by both Japanese and Americans in different situations are compared, and whether pragmatic transfer could be found or not is considered. Also examined is whether or not the L2 proficiency, the time spent in the States, and explicit instruction on pragmatic knowledge affect the Japanese speakers. To examine these questions, the study of Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) was replicated. The results show that pragmatic transfer does occur.

**Key words:** [language transfer] [interlanguage pragmatics] [refusal]  
[pragmatic transfer]

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## Introduction

In analyzing second language data, SLA researchers have thought that the native language plays a significant role. Lado (1957) states in his book *Linguistics Across Cultures* that learners depend completely on their native language, that is, "the forms and meanings of the native language and culture" in a second language learning situation (cited in Gass & Selinker 1994: 53). In the early days, this process of transfer, called *language transfer*, was examined through a contrastive analysis of the native language and the target language. Although both positive transfer (facilitation) and negative transfer (interference) can be studied, negative transfer (interference) is the main focus in this field.

In the early 1970's, through the morpheme order studies, Brown (1973) found a common path of development of English speaking children's acquisition of fourteen English grammatical morphemes (cited in Gass & Selinker 1994: 81). Extending Browns' findings to L2 learners, Dulay and Burt (1975) claimed that less than five percent of the errors in selected morpheme usage by ESL learners were attributable to the native languages (Gass & Selinker 1994: 80). Since this finding, many studies have been conducted to determine the incidence of interlingual and developmental errors of children and adults learning English as a second

language in both host and foreign language environments (Gass & Selinker 1994: 82). Dulay, Burt, & Krashen claim that native language influence is unimportant (1982: 173). However, Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz report that many researchers claim that transfer, such as interference, does play an important role in shaping interlanguage. Moreover, they also report that "Richards and Sukwivat (1983), Schmidt (1983), Bodman (1986), and others...have argued that transfer at the pragmatic level does exist" (1990: 55).

This kind of transfer at the pragmatic level is called *pragmatic transfer*, and it forms interlanguage pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics is defined as "the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge" (Kasper 1996: 145). In interlanguage pragmatics it is assumed that "intercultural miscommunication is often caused by learners' falling back on their L1 sociocultural norms and conventions in realizing speech acts in a target language" (Takahashi 1996: 189). Thus, Beebe views pragmatic transfer as "transfer of L1 sociocultural communicative competence in performing L2 speech acts or any other function of language, where the speaker is trying to achieve a particular function of language" (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990: 56). As L1 sociocultural communicative competence is learned in the learner's own country as well as his/her native language, and different ethnic groups have differing communication strategies, it is assumed that L1 speakers use their own communicative strategies even though they speak the L2 language.

In a discussion of Japanese communicative strategies, Ishii (1984) points out that Japanese use "*enryo-sasshi*", that is, "*modesty-consideration/anticipation*" strategy (cited in Okazaki 1993: 71). He explains that it is one of the keys to understanding interpersonal relationships and communication in Japan (ibid). Okazaki reports that *modesty-consideration/anticipation* communication is characterized by the message sender's avoidance of direct expressions of thoughts and feelings (*modesty*), and the receiver's sensitivity to the message (*consideration/anticipation*) (1993: 71). It is generally believed that "ethnically homogeneous society of Japan has made it possible for its people to understand each other by means of slight, rather than clear and exaggerated differences" (Okazaki 1993: 71). Therefore, if Japanese people use the same strategies in a different society, it is natural that they would get into trouble. In other words, the different use of strategies employed by speakers causes miscommunication. The situation becomes complicated in cross-cultural communication where all the participants may speak the same language, but do not share the same norms of communication.

An especially sensitive pragmatic task concerns constructing refusals. In refusal behaviors, people use indirect communicative strategies in order to try to avoid the task of offending their interlocutor, that is, a partner in the dialogue. They might use a variety of forms and contents in refusal situations. Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz mention that "refusals are a major cross-cultural 'sticking point' for many non-native speakers" (1990: 56). To avoid being impolite or rude in making a refusal, non-native speakers use indirect

strategies; however, an indirect refusal might be misunderstood by the target community. If non-native speakers do not know how to make a refusal in the target community, it is assumed that they will depend on their native culture's strategies, and transfer will occur in refusals made by non-native English speakers. Thus, the speech act of refusal is highly problematic and susceptible to misunderstanding.

In order to present evidence of pragmatic transfer in Japanese ESL learners' refusals, Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (1990) compared Japanese and American refusal strategies. They used a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) in the form of a written role-play questionnaire consisting of twelve situations (Appendix A). In order to elicit the speech act of refusal, these situations were divided into four types: request, invitation, offer, and suggestion. They also checked the differences in the order, frequency, and content of semantic formulas used by Japanese and Americans. They found evidence of transfer in all three areas (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990: 67).

In another study, Robinson (1992) examined twelve female Japanese refusals in English (six intermediate, six advanced) by using a DCT, simultaneous verbal reports, and retrospective interviews (cited in Takahashi 1996: 191). Takahashi reported that Robinson's study showed that the learners might not transfer L1 pragmatic features to the L2 if they distinguish them as "language-specific" (1996: 190). Actually, Robinson pointed out that both lower and higher proficiency Japanese ESL learners were aware of the differences in appropriate American and Japanese refusal behaviors. However, he also indicated that lower proficiency subjects were more influenced by their L1 refusal style, whereas the higher proficiency learners used only American English refusal strategies (Takahashi 1996: 195).

Other studies have also examined the use of speech act realization strategies at different proficiency levels. However, the relationship of L2 proficiency and L1 transfer in the interlanguage pragmatic level has been controversial. For example, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) hypothesized that high L2 proficiency is correlated with pragmatic transfer since previous studies showed that highly proficient Japanese ESL learners often used a typical Japanese formal tone when performing refusals in L2. However, their study did not clearly confirm the predicted proficiency effect (cited in Takahashi 1996: 194).

Besides proficiency effects, exposure to input which increases pragmatic knowledge should be considered. It is reported that Japanese ESL learners approximate native speaker norms better than EFL learners in their production of refusals (Takahashi & Beebe 1987, as cited in Kasper and Schmidt 1996: 159). Thus, Japanese people who study in the United States get more diverse and frequent input needed for pragmatic development than learners in Japan do.

In this study I use Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's Discourse Completion Test (DCT), because I am interested in how Japanese ESL speakers react in refusal situations. While Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz's study examined only the DCT responses, I conduct a follow-up interview to discuss the subjects' responses. I hypothesize that they use *modesty-*

*consideration/anticipation* communication strategies, and therefore they prefer indirect refusals. I then compare the results to native speakers' responses. Moreover, I focus on how much Japanese subjects' L2 proficiency, the time spent in the States, and whether they have had explicit instruction in their behavior in the refusal situations affect their responses.

My research questions are:

1. Is there pragmatic transfer when Japanese speakers make refusals in English?
2. If native Japanese speakers' refusals are different from those of native English speakers, does the L2 proficiency of the Japanese speakers affect their pragmatic transfer or not?
3. Does the time spent in the U.S. affect pragmatic transfer or not?
4. Does explicit instruction on pragmatic knowledge affect their behavior or not?

## Method

### Subjects

Nine Japanese (three males and six females) and eight Americans (three males and five females) participated in this study. The Japanese subjects are 3 undergraduates and 6 graduate students at three different American universities. All the Japanese participants in my study are in their 20's, except for one in her 30's, similar to the subjects in the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study. On the other hand, although the Americans (AEs) are all graduate students at West Chester University, their ages are higher than those in the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study. In the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study, the mean age is 28.9, while in my study the mean age is 33.6.

When the Japanese are responding in Japanese, they are "JJs," and when they respond in English, they are "JEs"; in other words, the JJs and JEs are the same subjects. Only JJ subjects were asked to fill out a background questionnaire in Japanese to provide the following information:

1. The score on the TOEFL (the official TOEFL score).
2. The length of time spent in the States.
3. Whether or not he/she received explicit instruction in classroom settings on pragmatic knowledge.

The results are as follows:

Subject	TOEFL	Time in the U.S.	Explicit instruction
Male 1	600	7 years & 8 months	Yes
2	583	7 years	No
3	545	10 months	Yes
Female 4	613	8 months	No
5	578	1 year & 6 months	No
6	577	4 years & 10 months	No
7	577	8 months	No
8	535	1 year & 11 months	Yes
9	510	3 months	No

## Materials and Procedures

All subjects were asked to fill out a Discourse Completion Test (DCT). The DCT was a written role-play questionnaire consisting of 12 situations. The 12 DCT situations were divided into four types: three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each type included three status differentials: higher, lower, and equal (see Appendix B). Each situation could only be answered by a refusal. The directions were written out on the DCT.

In addition, Japanese subjects were asked to fill out the same DCT in Japanese. In translating the questionnaire into Japanese, I changed the names of the place and the hotel in order to make the settings Japanese places. For example, "New York" and "Lutece" changed into *Fukuoka* and the famous and expensive *Hotel Otani*. I also added an explanation to promote refusals in a situation where I thought Japanese would probably prefer to accept. For example, in #6, I added *Boss noticed that you did not accept his advice* in parentheses.

Thus, Japanese subjects were given the two questionnaires, in English and in Japanese, at the same time because I did not have enough time to give them the questionnaires separately. After reviewing the questionnaires, I conducted follow-up interviews with some of them to clarify their responses. Some follow-up interviews were conducted on the telephone.

## Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used the same semantic formulas as Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz (see Appendix C for a complete list). For example, if a respondent refused an invitation to a friend's house for dinner, saying "*I'm sorry, I already have plans. Maybe next time,*" this was coded as: [expression of regret] [excuse] [offer of alternative] (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990: 57). I also coded the order of semantic formulas used in each refusal. In the above example, [expression of regret] was first, [excuse] second, and [offer of alternative] third (ibid).

The total number of semantic formulas of any kind used for each situation was obtained for each of the three subject groups. Thus, I counted the frequency of each formula for each situation and made lists. After that, the similarity between JJ and JE responses and the dissimilarity between JE and AE answers were checked. Grammatical accuracy was not examined.

## Results & Discussion

### Research Question One:

Is there pragmatic transfer when Japanese speakers make refusals in English? I found pragmatic transfer from Japanese occurs, especially in a request situation with higher status. At the same time, when I compared my results with those in the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study, I found some differences in the subjects' refusals of request, invitation, and offer.

The results are as follows:

**1) Requests** All groups in all situations used excuses, but the order in which the excuse appeared was different, especially when the refuser had a higher status than the requester. This is shown in the following table.

**Table 1:** Typical Order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Requests,  
Refuser status = higher

Group	Order of formulas			
	1	2	3	4
JJ	Positive opinion (6)/ Pause filler (2)	Excuse (8)	----	----
JE	Positive opinion (5)/ Pause filler (2)/ Regret (2)	Excuse (3)/ Regret (2)/ Can't (2)	Excuse (4)/ Can't (1)/ Not possible (2)	Excuse (1)
AE	Regret (5)/ Positive opinion (2)	Positive opinion (1)/ Can't (2)	Excuse (4)	Can't (2)

(JJ = Japanese speaking Japanese; JE = Japanese speaking English; AE = American speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answered with this category. Not all formulas are represented in this table.)

According to this data, the responses of JJs and JEs differed substantially from those of AEs, especially in the first position. JJs and JEs started with *positive opinion* (e.g., *I know you are doing a fine job...*) or *pause filler* (e.g., *"Well"*), whereas many AEs started with *regret* (e.g., *I'm sorry...*) more than *positive opinion*. In the second position were *excuses* given by eight JJs. JEs' *excuses* appeared in the second and the third positions, whereas the *excuses* of AEs were only given in the third position. Thus, the responses of JEs resembled those of AEs in the second, third and fourth. However, JJs and JEs tended to omit *regret* when they were higher status than the requester. Moreover, although JEs and AEs stated "*can't*" explicitly after the second position, the two JEs were the highest proficiency subjects, and one has been longest in the United States.

In the lower status situation, all the groups showed similar results and I could not find any evidence of transfer. The results are as follows:

**Table 2:** Typical Order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Requests,  
Refuser status = lower

Group	Order of formulas		
	1	2	3
JJ	Apology (cf. regret)*(7)/ Excuse (1)/Acceptance (1)	Excuse (6)/ Alternative (2)	Nonverbal avoidance (4)
JE	Regret (7)/Pause filler (1)/ Direct "No" (1)	Excuse (8)	Alternative (2)
AE	Regret (5)/ Positive opinion (1)/ Excuse (1)/Empathy (1)	Excuse (4)/ Alternative (2)	Alternative (2)

(JJ = Japanese speaking Japanese; JE = Japanese speaking English; AE = American speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answered with this category. Not all formulas are represented in this table.)

\*In Japanese apology and regret are different, but may both be realized as "I'm sorry" in English. JE "I'm sorry" responses are coded as regret, not apology, although they could be translations from Japanese apologies (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz 1990: 59).

These results did not show much difference, because JJs, JEs, and AEs showed similar order; there was no evidence of transfer. However, these results reveal an interesting insight. Four JJs used *nonverbal avoidance* at the end, which JEs and AEs did not use at all. They used *nonverbal avoidance* after *excuse* or *alternative*. For example, "*I'm sorry. I have something, and I have to do it today, so...*"(subject 3), "*I'm sorry. My child is sick, and I have to take care of her, so...*"(subject 4, 6), or "*...I'll be able to stay late tomorrow, so...*"(subject 7). When I asked them about these expressions, they explained that they expected the interlocutors to understand their refusal intentions through these expressions. Thus, they tried to avoid saying "*no*" directly. However, they did not use this strategy in English at all.

When I compared these results to the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study, I realized that they found pragmatic transfer not only with higher status, but also with lower status. For example, they reported that AEs started with *positive opinion*, or *pause filler*, second *regret*, and the third *excuse*, whereas JJs and JEs started with *regret* or *apology* and second *excuse*. However, in my study, AEs started mainly with *regret* (not second.) Thus, AEs' responses in my study were very similar to the JJs and JEs. Because the AEs in my study represent a different age level as compared to those in the Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz study (mine: 33.6; theirs: 28.9), the different form of refusal might be associated with age.

**II) Invitations** In these sections, the evidence for pragmatic transfer was not substantial. The results of my study are as follows:

**Table 3:** Typical Order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations,  
Refuser status = higher

Group	Order of formulas			
	1	2	3	4
JJ	Pause filler (4)/Gratitude (3)	Excuse (6)	Nonverbal avoidance(2)	-----
JE	Pause filler (2)/Gratitude (2)/ Positive opinion (2)/ Regret (2)/ Excuse (1)	Excuse (5)	Nonverbal avoidance (1)	-----
AE	Positive opinion (2)/ Regret (2) /Gratitude (1)/ Direct "No"(2)/Empathy (1)	Excuse (5) Regret (2)	Excuse (2) Regret (1)	Alternative (1)

(JJ = Japanese speaking Japanese; JE = Japanese speaking English; AE = American speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answeredmerican speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answered with this category. Not all formulas are represented in this table.)

The JJs' and JEs' order of formulas were similar; but the JEs' and AEs' orders were also similar. Therefore, as an overall result, there was no obvious evidence of transfer except in one JE's use of *nonverbal avoidance* (see Table 3; order 3). Although two JJs and one JE used *nonverbal avoidance* at the end, AEs never used it. On the other hand, the JE and AEs started using similar order of formulas. For example, they used *positive opinion*, *regret*, or *gratitude*. Although JJs also used *gratitude*, JEs and AEs were more similar than JJs and JEs. Thus,

although there was no transfer evident in the overall results, there was still one small difference which might be the result of transfer.

In the equal status situation, there was evidence of transfer only at the first position. See Table 4.

**Table 4:** Typical Order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Invitations,  
Refuser status = equal

Group	Order of formulas		
	1	2	3
JJ	Apology (1)/ Regret (3)/ Pause filler (2)	Excuse (5)	Nonverbal avoidance (2)
JE	Regret (3)/Pause filler (3)	Excuse (5)	Excuse (2)/ Gratitude (1)
AE	Regret (4)/ Gratitude (2)	Excuse (7)	Gratitude (3)/Alternative (2)

(JJ = Japanese speaking Japanese; JE = Japanese speaking English; AE = American speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answered with this category. Not all formulas are represented in this table.)

In these results, JJs and JEs started in the same way; however, some AEs didn't use *pause filler*, but they used *gratitude* such as "thanks" or "thank you." Some AEs also used *gratitude* at the end, but their expressions were a little different. For example, two of them said, "thank you, **anyway**" and one of them, "thank you, **though**." Only one JE used "thanks, *anyway*" as AEs did, and of the female subjects, she is the one who has stayed in the U.S. the longest. On the other hand, two JJs used *nonverbal avoidance*. Their answers, for example, were "Oh, I'm sorry. I have already planned, **so...**" and "On Sunday, I have something to do, **so....**" When I asked the subjects about this point, they explained that they avoided saying "no" directly. Instead, by saying, "so...", they expected that the interlocutor would get the message of "no" from the context. This tendency also appeared in the lower status refusers. Five JJs also used *nonverbal avoidance*. They used this strategy in the same way as they did with equal status, but it did not appear in English.

Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz reported that JJs and JEs both tended to omit *apology/regret* in situations where the refusers were in a higher status position. However, my results showed that two JEs started with regret. One of them (subject 1) has stayed the longest of all my subjects in the U.S.; the other (subject 8) received explicit instruction on pragmatic knowledge in a classroom setting. These results imply that the length of time in U.S. as well explicit instruction promote ESL learners' awareness of appropriate behavior in refusal situations in the target community. I will return to this point later because it is related to my other research questions.

**III) Offers** Although my results were similar among JJs, JEs, and AEs, differences were seen when they refused food (#9). In this situation, a friend offers another piece of cake. After the reply, the friend says, "Come on, just a little piece." Interestingly, the three JJ and JE subjects



accepted the second offers, whereas AEs continued their refusing. I did not comment on this particular situation when I added an explanation to promote refusals, because I wanted to avoid biasing the data by using the word "refusal". However, because of this consideration, three of the Japanese subjects finally accepted the offer. On the other hand, six Japanese subjects did refuse in this case, even without my comments. Therefore, the responses of the three who did accept could be the result of pragmatic transfer, because none of AEs accepted the offer the second time.

In the study of Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, the researchers discuss the situation in which the cleaning woman breaks a vase and the head of the household refuses to accept her offer of payment. They reported that all respondents started by letting the cleaning woman off the hook (e.g., "*That's OK*", or "*Never mind*"), but JJs and JEs added a statement of philosophy such as "*Things break anyway*," or "*Be careful from now on*," whereas AEs just let the woman off the hook. In my study, however, three AEs presented the same type of statement of philosophy as JJs and JEs. Thus, although Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz find evidence of pragmatic transfer in this example, my study did not show any difference between the AEs and JJs on this occasion. Therefore, even though JEs in my study also used statements of philosophy, I cannot conclude they are evidence of transfer.

**IV) Suggestions** Native Japanese and native English refusals were very similar in terms of the order and the frequency of formulas in refusals of suggestions. As an interesting point, one JJ and JE used *nonverbal avoidance* such as "*so...*" at the end of the sentences with equal status, whereas one AE used "*thanks, anyway.*" See Table 5.

**Table 5:** Typical Order of Semantic Formulas in Refusals of Suggestions  
Refuser status = equal

Group	Order of formulas		
	1	2	3
JJ	Excuse (6)/ Pause filler (2)	Excuse (3)/ Nonverbal avoidance (1)	----
JE	Excuse (3)/ Direct "No"(2)	Excuse (3)/ Nonverbal avoidance(1)/ Gratitude (1)	Reason (1)
AE	Excuse (4)/ Direct "No"(2)	Excuse (5)/ Gratitude (2)	Gratitude (1)

(JJ = Japanese speaking Japanese; JE = Japanese speaking English; AE = American speaking English. (5) means 5 subjects answered with this category. Not all formulas are represented in this table.)

Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz also did not comment on any transfer in this section. They reported that JEs resembled AEs more than JJs, that is, there was no evidence of pragmatic transfer. In my result, one JJ and JE used the *same nonverbal avoidance*, but this resulted because I gave him both questionnaires at the same time, so this might have affected his answers. If I had given them to the subject at different times, the results might have been different.

In sum, my first research question is confirmed: there is some evidence of pragmatic transfer on requests, especially with higher status, and refusals of an invitation with equal status also showed some evidence of pragmatic transfer.

### Research Question Two:

My second research question is whether the L2 proficiency of the Japanese speakers affects their pragmatic transfer or not. When I examined the male with highest proficiency (subject 1), as well as the highest proficiency female (subject 4), I could not find any evidence of transfer. They tried to avoid saying "no" in Japanese; however they used "no" in English. Thus, they clearly distinguished between how to respond in Japanese and in English.

On the other hand, after filling out the questionnaire, the subject of the lowest proficiency, subject 9, told me that she could not answer in the way she had wanted to because of her insufficient English. Her length of stay in the U.S. is also the shortest (three months). When I examined her answers, I found that she used her L1 strategies to answer the questions in English. For example, she wrote for question # 4, *"Oh! Sunday? I am terribly sorry but I have some private plan to visit New York with my family. I already purchased our tickets. So, I hope you understand me, but..."* in Japanese. She seemed to expect the interlocutor's understanding by her explanation. In English, she answered for the same question, *"I'm sorry. Next Sunday, we will go to N.Y. We bought air tickets already."* In this case, the interlocutor is a higher status; therefore, she tried to use very polite words in Japanese. However, what she wanted to say in Japanese was basically the same in English. She tried to avoid saying "no" directly in both Japanese and English. From this example, I assume that she used the same strategy to refuse in both ways, and I think this is the evidence of pragmatic transfer from Japanese.

In sum, the highest proficiency male and female subjects were both aware of the differences in appropriate American and Japanese refusal behaviors. However, the lowest proficiency subject was more influenced by her L1 refusal style. This result is similar to that reported by Robinson (1992, as cited in Takahashi 1996: 195). Thus, when L2 proficiency is lower, the L1 refusal strategy seemed to be used, and as a result, pragmatic transfer can be seen.

### Research Question Three:

My third research question is whether the time spent in the U.S. affects pragmatic transfer or not. Among the females, subject 6 has stayed the longest in the States. When she refused in the situation in which a friend invites her to dinner (question # 10), she added, *"Thanks, anyway,"* as American people say with the same status, which no other Japanese subjects did. Therefore, I speculate that the time spent in the U.S. affects her language pattern more like the AEs. Subject 1 has stayed the longest in the U.S. among all the study

participants; his answer is also similar to those of the American subjects. For example, he used "*No, thanks*" or "*No, I can't*," while Japanese subjects tried to avoid answering "*no*" (question # 11 & 12). Thus, the two of them showed some evidence that longer time spent in the U.S. could cause them to respond more like AEs. Further evidence is seen in the subject who has been the shortest time in the States, since she seemed to depend on her L1 in her answer. In her case transfer has occurred.

#### Research Question Four:

My last research question is whether explicit instruction on pragmatic knowledge affects the subjects' behavior or not. Two male subjects 1 & 3 and one female subject 8 said that they had received some explicit instruction on pragmatics. However, neither of the male subjects could remember exactly whether the instruction occurred in a classroom setting or not. Subject 3 told me that he might have learned it at English conversation school, not in the classroom setting of his regular school. He also mentioned that he had many American friends at the English conversation school. He said that he might have learned from them.

On the other hand, subject 8 was sure that she had learned it in an American Culture class. This was an English course when she was a high school student; her teacher had studied in the U.S. and returned to Japan. She also mentioned that it was easy for her to refuse in English because she did not know the deep meaning of English words. For example, she wrote for question #5 "*Thank you, but I am sure that I will be tired of the new diet*" in Japanese, whereas for the same question, "*No. I think I am not able to do it because it seems to take a long time*" in English. She also wrote for question # 6, "*I think it is a good idea, but I like this way*" in Japanese. In English, she wrote, "*No, thanks. I like this way.*" Thus, she avoided using "No" in Japanese, but she used "No" directly in English.

Moreover, when I discussed these results with subject 8, she explained that she felt "*enryo*," that is, *modesty*, when she refused in Japanese. As Ishii pointed out, Japanese use "*enryo-sashii*," namely *modesty-consideration/anticipation*" communication strategy (Okazaki 1993: 71), and she seems to use this strategy to avoid direct expressions in refusal situations when speaking Japanese. Therefore, my initial hypothesis was directly confirmed in at least one case. The other instances where JEs used indirect responses, such as *nonverbal avoidance*, also support this hypothesis.

## Conclusion

From my study, it appeared that pragmatic transfer in refusal situations occurs most frequently in a request situation when the refusers were higher status than the requester. In other situations, the results of pragmatic transfer were less obvious, but there was small evidence. For example, AEs tended to say, "*thank you/thanks, anyway*" at the end, or started

with the word "*thank you*" when they talked to the same status interlocutor in an invitation situation. Only one JE answered this way, and it was only once out of 12 situations.

Comparing my results to those of the Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz study, there were several different points. They reported they found transfer in the request situation with lower status as well as with higher status, and in the invitation when the refuser is in a higher status, whereas my results did not. In addition, they reported the cleaning woman's case in an offer situation as the instance of pragmatic transfer, but my result did not show any difference.

Thus, although I replicated the Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz study, my results showed some differences. These differences might have occurred because of the AEs' age differences in my study. This suggests that further research on differences among AE subjects of different ages could show interesting results. In addition, my time and the number of my subjects were limited; this might also have affected the results. Therefore, a study with more time and more subjects is needed.

However, through this research, the time spent in the States, the L2 proficiency of the Japanese speakers, and explicit instructions on pragmatic knowledge are shown to affect pragmatic transfer. If a subject is immersed in English, his/her response is more similar to that of AEs. Moreover, the lower L2 proficiency subject used her L1 refusal style, whereas the highest L2 proficiency subjects used only American English refusal strategies. In addition, the subject who had received explicit instructions on pragmatic knowledge responded to the refusal situations appropriately in English.

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## Appendix A

### Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

Instructions: Please read the following 12 situations. After each situation you will be asked to write a response in the blank after "you." Respond as you would in actual conversation.

1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

**Worker:** As you know, I've been here just over a year now, and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Worker:** Then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

2. You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes.

**Classmate:** Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Classmate:** O.K., then I guess I'll have to ask somebody else.

3. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a printing machine company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants in New York.

**Salesman:** We have met several times to discuss your purchase of my company's products. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest at Lutece in order to firm up a contract?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Salesman:** Perhaps another time.

4. You are a top executive at a very large accounting firm. One day the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** Next Sunday my wife and I are having a little party. I know it's short notice but I am hoping all my top executives will be there with their wives. What do you say?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Boss:** That's too bad. I was hoping everyone would be there.

5. You're at a friend's house watching T.V. He/She offers you a snack.

**You:** Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel just terrible. My clothes don't even fit me.

**Friend:** Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've been telling you about?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friend:** You should try it anyway.

6. You're at your desk trying to find a report that your boss just asked for. While you're searching through the mess on your desk, your boss walks over.

**Boss:** You know, maybe you should try and organize yourself better. I always write myself little notes to remind me of things. Perhaps you should give it a try!

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Boss:** Well, it's an idea anyway.

7. You arrive home and notice that your cleaning lady is extremely upset. She comes rushing up to you.

**Cleaning lady:** Oh God, I'm so sorry! I had an awful accident. While I was cleaning I bumped into the table and your china vase fell and broke. I feel just terrible about it. I'll pay for it.

**You:** (Knowing that the cleaning lady is supporting three children.)

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cleaning lady:** No, I'd feel better if I paid for it.

8. You're a language teacher at a university. It is just about the middle of the term now and one of your students asks to speak to you.

**Student:** Ah, excuse me, some of the students were talking after class recently and we kind of feel that the class would be better if you could give us more practice in conversation and less on grammar.

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Student:** O.K., it was only a suggestion.

9. You are at a friend's house for lunch.

**Friend:** How about another piece of cake?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friend:** Come on, just a little piece?

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

10. A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this friend's husband/wife.

**Friend:** How about coming over for dinner Sunday night? We're having a small dinner party.

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Friend:** O.K., maybe another time.

11. You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** I'd like to offer you an executive position in our new offices in Hicktown. It's a great town-only 3 hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position.

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Boss:** Well, maybe you should give it some more thought before turning it down.

12. You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave work.

**Boss:** If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work.

**You:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Boss:** That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

## Appendix B

### Classification of Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

#### Stimulus According to Status of Refuser

Stimulus type	Refuser Status (relative to interlocutor)	DCT item	Situation
Request	Lower	#12	Stay late at night
	Equal	#2	Borrow class notes
	Higher	#1	Request raise
Invitation	Lower	#4	Boss's party
	Equal	#10	Dinner at friend's house
	Higher	#3	Fancy restaurant (bribe)
Offer	Lower	#11	Promotion with move to small town
	Equal	#9	Piece of cake
	Higher	#7	Pay for broken vase
Suggestion	Lower	#6	Write little reminders
	Equal	#5	Try a new diet
	Higher	#8	More conversation in foreign language class

## Appendix C

### Classification of Refusals

#### I. Direct

- A. Performative (e.g., "I refuse")
- B. Nonperformative statement
  - 1. "No"
  - 2. Negative willingness/ability ("I can't." "I won't." "I don't think so.")

#### II. Indirect

- A. Statement of regret (e.g., "I'm sorry...", "I feel terrible...")
- B. Wish (e.g., "I wish I could help you...")
- C. Excuse, reason, explanation (e.g., "My children will be home that night."; "I have a headache.")
- D. Statement of alternative
  - 1. I can do X instead of Y (e.g., "I'd rather..." "I'd prefer...")
  - 2. Why don't you do X instead of Y (e.g., "Why don't you ask someone else?")
- E. Set condition for future or past acceptance (e.g., "If you had asked me earlier, I would have...")
- F. Promise of future acceptance (e.g., "I'll do it next time"; "I promise I'll..." or "Next time I'll..." – using "will" of promise or "promise")
- G. Statement of principle (e.g., "I never do business with friends.")
- H. Statement of philosophy (e.g., "One can't be too careful.")
- I. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
  - 1. Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (e.g., "I won't be any fun tonight" to refuse an invitation)
  - 2. Guilt trip (e.g., waitress to customers who want to sit a while: "I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.")
  - 3. Criticize the request/requester, etc. (statement of negative feeling or opinion); insult/attack (e.g., "Who do you think you are?"; "That's a terrible idea!")
  - 4. Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request.
  - 5. Let interlocutor off the hook (e.g., "Don't worry about it." "That's okay." "You don't have to.")
  - 6. Self-defense (e.g., "I'm trying my best." "I'm doing all I can do." "I no do nutting wrong.")
- J. Acceptance that functions as a refusal
  - 1. Unspecific or indefinite reply
  - 2. Lack of enthusiasm



## K. Avoidance

1. Nonverbal
  - a. Silence
  - b. Hesitation
  - c. Do nothing
  - d. Physical departure
2. Verbal
  - a. Topic switch
  - b. Joke
  - c. Repetition of part of request, etc. (e.g., "Monday?")
  - d. Postponement (e.g., "I'll think about it.")
  - e. Hedging (e.g., "Gee, I don't know." "I'm not sure.")

## Adjuncts to Refusals

1. Statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement ("That's a good idea..."; "I'd love to...")
2. Statement of empathy (e.g., "I realize you are in a difficult situation.")
3. Pause fillers (e.g., "uhh"; "well"; "oh"; "uhm")
4. Gratitude/appreciation

## 要 旨

異なる文化は、適切な行動や丁重さについて、異なる理解と解釈をする。そのため、異文化間コミュニケーションには、意思疎通がうまくいかないことがありうる。語用の転移が生じるのは、母語話者（例えば日本人）が学習目標言語（例えば英語）で話しているが、話されている言語の文化に合った対応をせず、自国の会話のやり方で対応する時である。特に断る場面ではそれが起こりやすいと推測される。この論文では、12の場面において日本人とアメリカ人の断り方の違いを較べる。日本人が同じ場面において、日本語で断る場合と英語で断る場合に違いが見られるか否かを調べ、語用の転移があるか否かを考察する。そのため、Beebe, Takahashi and Uliss-Weltz (1990) が行った、談話を完成する形式の質問に答える方法を用いてその結果を比較考察する。また、日本人の英語力やアメリカでの滞在期間の長さ、あるいは英語での断り方を教室で教えられたか否かが、日本人の英語での断り方に影響しているかどうかをも考察する。