Akademika

Jurnal Sains Kemasyarakatan dan Kemanusiaan
Journal of Social Science and Humanities

Giving Directions: An Analysis of Strategies Used by Japanese Speakers of English

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses some of the cross-cultural differences that arise when people of different linguistic backgrounds give directions. It attempts to focus on the strategies used by Japanese speakers to give directions in English as compared to directions given in Japanese. These strategies for giving directions are also compared to those used by native speakers of English. This paper intends to provide an understanding how Japanese speakers of English give directions in ways that are different from those of native speakers of English.

ABSTRAK

Kertas ini mengkaji beberapa perbezaan silang budaya yang muncul apabila masyarakat yang berbeza latarbelakang linguistik mereka memberi tunjuk arah. Perbezaan silang budaya ini dapat diperlihatkan penumpuan kepada strategi-strategi yang digunakan oleh orang-orang yang berbahasa Jepun untuk memujuk arah dalam bahasa Inggeris jika dibandingkan tunjuk arah yang dilakukan dalam bahasa Jepun. Strategi-strategi untuk menunjuk arah ini akan dibandingkan dengan penggunaan tunjuk arah yang digunakan oleh mereka yang berbahasa Inggeris. Kertas ini bertujuan untuk menunjukkan dan memberi kefahaman mengapa orang-orang Jepun yang berbahasa Inggeris memberi tunjuk arah yang berbeza dengan tunjuk arah yang diberikan oleh orang yang berbahasa Inggeris.

INTRODUCTION

The theory of speech acts was first introduced by Austin in his lectures of the 1950's, particularly the William James lectures delivered at Harvard in 1955. His notes from these lectures were later published as *How to Do Things with Words*. Although the exact nature of speech acts has been the subject of much discussion and debate, Austin's basic definition is still valid. According to Austin (1961:6-7), *a speech act is the issuance* of an utterance which is intended to accomplish or perform a specific act.

In this paper we are examining a class of speech acts known as directives. *Directives* , according to Searle (1976:11), are "... attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something." Like other speech acts, directives may be either direct or indirect, depending on whether they have more than one illocutionary effect. Directives are used while giving directions in both Japanese and English. In some ways the entire act of giving directions may be classified as a directive, as it represents an attempt to transfer the speaker from point A to point B.

The intent with which a speech act is uttered suggests its *illocutionary force*. Speech acts may either be direct of *indirect*. *Direct speech acts* are those that have only have one possible illocutionary effect whilst *indirect speech acts* are those speech acts that have more than one illocutionary effect. For the purpose of this paper we are viewing directness and indirectness as two poles on a continuum, the *direct/indirect speech act* continuum. Various kinds of directives are more or less direct depending on how they are ordered on the direct/indirect speech act continuum. This does not mean that an indirect directive has more illocutionary effects than a moderately indirect directive. Rather, our use of such a continuum is motivated by the fact that in some languages (e.g. English), indirectness appears to vary in terms of politeness but independent of the degree of formality in the situation, while in others (e.g. Japanese), politeness appears to be independent of indirectness, but varies in terms of formality. Because certain types of English directives seems to native speakers of that language to be more or less polite, and because certain types of Japanese directives seemed more or less formal, we ordered directives on a direct/indirect continuum.

Locator remarks are types of descriptive statements which serve to locate the speaker on a physical or mental map. A speaker who is giving directions uses locator remarks in order to enable the hearer to check his or her position while they are following thoses directions at a later point in time. Locator remarks enable the hearer to determine wheather they are in fact following the directions correctly or not. As speech acts, locator remarks are representative, but take on a directive-like form of their position in the overall context of a direction-giving discourse.

Politeness, according to Brown and Levinson (1978), addresses the needs and want of the hearer. Politeness is a goal which is achieved in an interaction through the use of various strategies. The strategies which are used to achieve depend partly on the speech style of the speaker, and partly on the linguistic resources available to the speaker. Politeness strategies discussed in this paper relate to the use of directives and the use of locator remarks in giving directions. In this paper, politeness refers to the strategies used to address the positive and negative face of the hearer. The grammatical and lexical strategies of Japanese which are commonly

assumed to indicate politeness (e.g. verbal inflections, honorific particles, lexical replacement, etc.) are taken, in our analysis, to be indicators, of levels of formality as well. For example in one of the Japanese interviews, the interlocutors were srtrangers. As such they used a verbal affix, – *masu*, in order to show respect. In spite of the use of direct imperatives in this conversation, it still marks formality.

Formality is a concept closely related to politeness. Like indirectness, it is one of the strategies which speakers may use to achieve the goal of politeness. Formality is a way of showing respect among interlocutors. It varies with a degree of perceived distance in the social roles of the interlocutors or with how well the speakers know each other. Just as with politeness, the ways in which the degree of formality in a conversation is marked depend partly on the speaker and partly on the linguistic resources of the language being used.

In this paper, *giving direction* refers to the act of explaining how to find a particular destination to a person who is unfamiliar with the location of their destination. A *Japanese interview* is one in which both participants spoke Japanese. An *English interview* refers to one in which both participants spoke English regardless of whether they are native speakers of English or not.

HYPOTHESIS

Our general hypothesis in this study is that native speakers of Japanese use English to give directions in ways different from that used by native speakers of English. We believe there are two reasons for this. One is that native speakers of Japanese use characteristically Japanese strategies for giving directions when they speak English. The second is that Japanese speakers of English often have less control of the range of linguistic strategies available to native speakers of English for giving directions.

We began our study by focussing on directives in giving directions in Japanese and English. Observation shows that people appeared to be following a relatively standard format in giving directions. This format varied some from individual to individual, but markedly so depending on the linguistic resources available to the speaker. At the start of our study, we had thought we might find that Japanese speakers would tend to use more indirect directives in their speech, while English speakers would tend to use more direct directives. The data did not support this, it appeared that the use of direct versus indirect directive in giving direction was only a matter of individual style rather than cultural.

This finding leads us to consider the direction-giving discourses as a whole rather than as a set of individual speech acts. When looked at this

way, it soon becomes apparent that the Japanese and English scripts for giving directions are different. Specifically, the Japanese script for giving direction called for much greater use of locator remarks than did the English script. This observation was verified by comparing the amount of text devoted to directives and to locator remarks in the Japanese and English interviews. Not only is a greater portion of the Japanese interviews devoted to locator remarks than is the case with the English interviews, but Japanese speakers giving directions in English use a substantially higher number of locator remarks than do native-speakers of English.

DATA COLLECTION

The participants in the interviews were female graduate students in their twenties. Women were selected as candidates for the interviews in order to rule out variables related to gender. The data was collected in the form of taped interviews. Two topics were chosen for the interviews. Topic A consists of giving direction to the campus library at either Georgetown Unversity or George Washington Unversity, Washington D.C.USA. Topic B is giving directions to the National Zoo in Washington D.C. Participants were aware that they were being taped; since the scripts for giving directions were somewhat conventionalized in each culture.

In order to account for the possibility of formal and informal strategies in Japanese, two of the Japanese speakers knew the people they were interviewing. One of the Japanese interviews was done with two people who had not been previously acquainted. The same situation applied to the English interviews: two of the interviews were between friends and one was done between peoples who had not met before. However, since English speakers in their twenties of the same status do not normally speak formally with people their peers, no differences among the English speakers was expected in this regard. None of the Japanese people were acquainted with the people who interviewed them using English.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this paper we will discuss two strategies used by both speakers of English and Japanese in giving directions. The first of these involves the use of directives which may be placed along a continuum of direct/ indirect speech act. The second of these involves the used of locater comments to provide some form of mental map of the area which the hearer will be travelling.

In English several kinds of directives appear in the data. We called them imperatives and mitigated directives. Imperatives are the most

direct form of directives in the data. There are several kinds of mitigated imperatives; some are characterized by the presence of modal or auxiliary verbs, some by the presence of a mitigating adverb, and some solely by the presence of a subjects pronouns such as 'you'. These may be ordered along a direct/indirect continuum as shown in Figure 1.

Direct   Indirect
—————————+————————+————————+——————————+————————
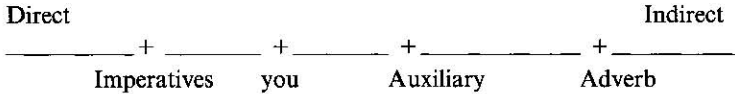   Imperatives   you   Auxiliary   Adverb

Figure 1

Japanese also has several kinds of directives. For example, in our data, there are two kinds of imperatives. One kind of Japanese imperative is characterized by the presence of the grammatical-lexical marker: *kudasai*. This imperative is typically used in formal speech such as one would use with a stranger. It is, however, a very direct speech act. Another kind of Japanese imperative is marked by the gerund affix-te. This form characterizes informal speech but is no more or less direct than the *kudasai* form. In our data Japanese indirect directives are characterized by a syntactic structure in which the referent of the subject in ambiguous; it could be the speaker, the hearer, or an indefinite third person. Figure 2 illustrates the placement of Japanese directives on the direct/indirect speech act continuum.
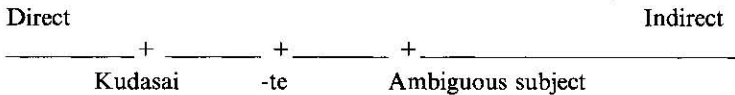
Direct   Indirect
—————————+————————+————————+——————————————————
        Kudasai   -te   Ambiguous subject

Figure 2

CLASSIFICATION IN ENGLISH INTERVIEWS

IMPERAVITES

These are the most direct form of directives in the data. Imperatives have only one illocutionary force and so may be classified as direct speech acts according to Searle's criteria. The subject is implied and refers to the person being spoken to. In our three English interviews there are ten such imperatives. Below are three examples:

1. Come out of the metro station
2. Walk straight ahead of you
3. Take a right turn

MITIGATED DIRECTIVES

Mitigated directives in our data have more than one illocutionary effect. Typically they are assertions with the secondary illocutionary effect of directives. This means they are indirect speech acts. In the data the subjects of mitigated directives are always explicit. Some mitigated directives have auxiliaries or modals which render their effect as more indirect. Below are two examples:

1. You would go up
2. You can get to Virginia Avenue

Other mitigated directives are characterized solely by an explicit subject. Example:

1. You cross the street
2. You come out of the metro station

Still other indirect directives include a mitigating adverb such as *just*, as in example below:

1. You just take the metro
2. You just have to look at the metro man

Altogether there are 32 mitigated directives in our English interview data.

LOCATER REMARKS

Locater remarks have been discussed on page 3. Below are English examples of locater remarks.

1. It's on the red line toward Shady Grove from here
2. There's the George Washington Hospital on the left
3. You will see a couple of white houses

There are nine locater remarks in our English interview data.

CLASSIFICATION IN JAPANESE INTERVIEWS

KUDASAI IMPERATIVES

A *kudasai* imperative is one of the most direct ways of stating imperatives in Japanese. Below are two examples:

1. Soosimasuto, ano, maeni, ippon michi ga arimasu node sono mici o dondon *massugu itte kudasai.*

Then, well, *please keep going straight* (on) the street ahead of you.

2. Annaiban o mite kudasai

Look at the info-board

There are a total of two *kudasai* imperatives in our Japanese interview data.

-TE IMPERATIVE

These directives are known as *-te* gerunds in Japanese. According to Jordan and Noda, (1988:49):

> In sentence-final position and with period intonation, an affirmative verbal gerund may accur as an informal request. When sentence-particle *yo* or *ne* follows the gerund, the resulting sequence is more typical of gentlestyle. This usage is typical of casual-style... These request sentences, unlike those ending in/gerund + kudasai/ are not classified among those ending with a regular sentence-final form.

The means that *-te* imperatives are used in more informal situations, such as in conversations among friends. For the most part, *-te* imperatives occurred in the Japanese interviews where two people know each other well while the *kudasai* imperative occurred in the interview among previously unacquainted interlocutors. If the position of the gerund is at the end of the sentences, then it would be a very direct directive. However in casual conversations, these verbs are used as gerunds in such a way that it is not clear where separate sentences begin and end. When used in this way, the directive is not quite as direct as the *kudasai* imperatives, but not as indirect as the ambiguous subject statements. Below are examples of *-te* imperatives.

1. Soko o watatte *moratte*
   Cross the bridge
2. Soko o mata o toorinukete
   Go past the building
3. Soko o *toorisugimasite*
   Go past that

Altogether there are twelve examples of *-te* imperatives in the Japanese interview data.

AMBIGUOUS SUBJECT STATEMENT

Ambiguous subject statements have the primary illocutionary effect of an assertion and the secondary effect of a directive. This means that they are indirect speech acts. The subject of such a statement may be indeterminate, or the speaker, or the hearer. Examples:

1. Kaidan *o orimasu*
    Go down the stairs
2. Massugu *ikimasu*
    And still *keep going*

There are three ambiguous subject statements in our Japanese interview data.

LOCATOR REMARKS

Locator remarks in Japanese serve the same function as their counterparts in English.

Examples:

1. Liibii sentaa ni mein entoransu ga atte
    There is the main entrance to Leavey Centre
2. Sokokara hashi o ano burijji ga arimasu node
    There is a bridge
3. Ippon michi ga arimasu
    There is one street ahead of you

There are 21 examples of such locator remarks in our Japanese interview data.

CONCLUSION

Table 1 summarizes the findings of the last section:

TABLE 1. Speech Act Classification

Interview No.	Directives		Representatives	Directives		
	Imp	Mit	Locaters	Kudasai	-te	Ambig
English						
1.	5	5	2			
2.	0	12	6			
3.	5	15	1			
Total	10	32	9			
Japanese						
4.			7	1	4	3
5.			7	0	2	1
6.			7	1	6	7
Total			21	2	12	11

Imp = Imperatives: *Mit* = Mitigated directives; *Locaters* = Locater Remarks; *kudasai* = kudasai imperatives; = *te* imperatives; *Ambig* = Ambiguous subject statements

DIRECT AND INDIRECT DIRECTIVE

Our initial hypothesis was that Japanese speakers would use indirect speech acts to a greater extent than English speakers. Even a cursory examination of Table 1 however, shows that the use of directives in giving direction in English, at least, is a matter of individual style. For example, the English speaker in the first interview uses mitigated directives about as frequently as she uses imperatives. Direct and indirect directives are about equally mixed in her speech. The speaker in the third interview, on the other hand, uses mitigated directives three times as often as she imperatives.

In the Japanese data, the fourth interview contains five example of direct directives (1 kudasai imperatives and 4 -te imperatives), but only three indirect directives (i.e. ambiguous subject statements). It is clear that there is not as much variation among the speakers of Japanese that we interviewed as there is among the English speakers with respect to the ratio of direct to indirect directives. On the basis of our data it appears that English speakers vary their use of direct and indirect directives more than Japanese. Our conclusion is that the use of direct versus indirect directives in giving directions is a matter of individual style in both Japanese and English.

DIRECTION-GIVING STRATEGIES: DIRECTIVES AND LOCATOR REMARKS

As our initial hypothesis proved to be unverifiable, we began to look at the direction-giving discourses as more than a mere assemblage of speech acts. It became apparent that people being interviewed were using as least two different strategies coherently throughout the direction-giving discourses in order to respond to the request for directions. The direction-givers used these two strategies in tandem always with the goal of enabling the inquirer to find her way to her destination. One of these strategies used directives in order to move the inquirer through a mental landscape of the area being traversed in the course of the direction-giving discourse. The second of these strategies involved the use of descriptive comments as locator remarks to help build up the image of the mental map through which the direction-giver is moving the inquirer.

The use of the directives and the locator remarks together is a common feature of the Japanese and English interviews. Most of the interviews contain more than five locator remarks; all of them contain over ten directives. The interview with the Japanese speakers, however, show that use of locator remarks is a much more common strategy in the Japanese script for giving directions. In each of the Japanese interview there are seven locator remarks. None of the English interview have so many (though the speaker in the second interview uses six locator remarks).

The difference in the Japanese and English strategies for using locator remarks and directives is a significant one. The English interviews contains a total of 42 directives and nine locater remarks. The Japanese interviews contain a total of 25 directives and 21 locater remarks. Classifications such as directives and locater remarks as what statisticians call nominal categories and are thus amenable to certain tests of significance such as the chi-square test. We used third test to see if this difference between the Japanese and English interview was significant. Table 2 contains the data on which the calculation was performed.

TABLE 2

	Directives	Locaters
English	42	9
Japanese	25	21

$X^2 = 7.15$ df $= 1$ p $< .01$

The results of this test indicate that there is less than a one percent chance that this distribution of remarks is a chance occurrence. The most likely explanation is that Japanese and English speakers use locator remarks and directives in different ways.

The hypotheses that Japanese and English speakers use different scripts with respect to directives and locater remarks is supported by other evidence. One is the tendency of Japanese speakers to transfer their native language to English. In separate English/Japanese interviews where both participants speak English but in which the interviewer is a speaker of English and the subject is a speaker of Japanese, a total of 28 directives are used with a total of 24 locator remarks. This is shown by the data in Table 3.

TABLE 3

	Directives	Locaters
English/ Japanese	28	24
Japanese	25	21

$X^2 = 0.0235$ df $= 1$ p $<$ Not Significant

The data in Table 3 indicate that there is no statistical significance to the differences between the English/Japanese and the Japanese data. It would appear that the same script for giving direction was being used in both cases, as the chi-square test indicated there was no significant difference in the distribution of locater remarks and directives in the two sets of data.

There is, however, a significant difference between the English/ Japanese interview and the English interviews as in Table 4.

TABLE 4

	Directives	Locaters
English	42	9
English/ Japanese	28	2

$X^2 = 8.34$ df $= 1$ p $< .005$

The results of this chi-square test indicate that there is less than one-half of a one percent chance that the Japanese speakers differed from the English speakers in this way by accident. As the Japanese speakers differ the English speakers in their use of directives and locater remarks as much when they speak Japanese and when they speak English, it would appear that they are still following the same format for giving direction no matter which language they were speaking.

SUMMARY AND RESIDUE

The study shows that cross-cultural factors do play a role when members from different speech communities give directions. The degree to which different expectations about the proper level of formality mandated by the speech situation resulted in Japanese speakers tending to speak more formally in their own language when speaking to strangers compared to English speakers. Two of the Japanese interviews were conducted between people who were friends, and one was conducted between strangers. However, all the English/Japanese interviews were conducted between strangers. While we do not think that is seriously affected our research, it would be good to examine this factor in a more detailed analysis in an effort to enhance understanding of direction fiving discourses especially in a cross-cultural context.

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