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English and Japanese: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Parental Styles of Narrative Elicitation

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To study culturally preferred narrative elicitation patterns, conversations between mothers and children from three different groups were analyzed: (1) Japanese-speaking mother-child pairs living in Japan, (2) Japanese-speaking mother-child pairs living in the U.S., and (3) English-speaking North American (Canadian) mother-child pairs. Study One, which compared mothers from the two different Japanese groups, suggests that Japanese mothers in the U.S. were more likely to prompt their children to extend the topic right after uttering *huun* ('well'). Study Two, which included the English-speaking mother-child pairs, yielded the following salient contrasts: (1) In comparison to English-speaking mothers, mothers of both Japanese groups gave proportionately less evaluation. (2) Both in terms of frequency and proportion, mothers of both Japanese groups gave more verbal acknowledgment than did English-speaking mothers. (3) However, Japanese mothers in the U.S. requested proportionately more description from their children than did Japanese mothers in Japan. At five years, Japanese-speaking children, whether living in Japan or the U.S., produced roughly 1.2 utterances per turn on average, whereas English-speaking children produced approximately 2.1 utterances per turn, a significant difference. Thus, while English-speaking mothers allow their children to take long monologic turns and give many evaluative comments, Japanese mothers, whether living in Japan or the U.S., simultaneously pay considerable attention to their children's narratives and facilitate frequent turn exchanges. The two studies reported in this paper thus suggest that these differences and similarities may be explained in terms of culture; that is, while inducting their children into a communicative style that is reflective of their native culture, Japanese mothers living in the U.S. are, at the same time, subject to the influence of Western culture. Implications of these findings are further considered in the light of improving cross-cultural understanding.

INTRODUCTION

In any society, a child's life is driven in part by particular models of what parents believe to be the "good life" and the "ideal individual." A culture consists of such shared beliefs, customs, and values (Fischer & Lazerson, 1984;

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Super & Harkness, 1980). According to specific cultural norms, distinct goals and plans for child development are implemented in a wide variety of ways. Parents, especially mothers, in each culture socialize their children differently. Through the process of socialization, children acquire the ability to recognize and interpret the variety of activities that take place in their socioculturally specific environments. Thus, children growing up in different cultures have particular experiences through which they develop diverse expectations, preferences, and even beliefs.

In this paper, "culture" is considered in relation to linguistic/discursive phenomena. As Hymes (1974) stresses, from early childhood on, children learn the appropriate social use of their language, as well as its grammar and vocabulary, based on cultural expectations. The acquisition of culture-specific communicative competence thus plays a significant role in the process of language acquisition and the development of narrative discourse skills. Miller (1982), for instance, describes a variety of culture-specific routinized interactions between mothers and their children in South Baltimore, and calls such interactions "direct instruction" (e.g., directing the children to say "please," "excuse me," and "thank you" when appropriate). Miller's study suggests that while children from lower-class families in South Baltimore use distinct styles, these children are not linguistically deprived. Rather, the children's acquisition of a culture-specific communicative style plays a significant role in the process of language acquisition and the development of language skills, such as narrative discourse skills.

Miller's study adds to a host of research that demonstrates that different cultures have different priorities with respect to caring for, socializing, and educating young children. In another such study, Heath (1982, 1983, 1986) describes children growing up in European American middle-class, European American working-class, and African American working-class families in Appalachia who have different experiences with literacy and develop different expectations concerning behavior and attitudes towards reading and writing events. In divergent cultural settings, therefore, we can observe dissimilarities in parental expectations and their resultant differing communicative styles.

Japanese children are also trained differently from children in Western societies, despite the fact that both Japanese children and their Western counterparts live in similar industrial societies and, in this sense, experience no major environmental or social differences. Nevertheless, there are significant, however subtle, differences between the two cultures. As Lebra (1976) argues, the Japanese ethos can be characterized by social relativism, within which the individual is defined by the reference groups to which he or she belongs, including household, residential area, school attended, or place of employment. On the other hand, American culture is characterized by the ethos dominated by the pursuit of individual autonomy and self-interest. As a reflection of these dissimilarities, therefore, early socialization processes in these two societies are significantly different.

Since a child must learn to speak a particular language with its culture-specific representational forms and rules of use, language practice is one aspect of early socialization that may reflect cultural differences. Caudill and Schooler (1973) found that American children, at ages two-and-a-half and six years, used verbal expression to communicate positive as well as negative emotions more frequently than did Japanese children of the corresponding ages. Also, Caudill and Weinstein (1969) found that Japanese middle-class mothers talked far less frequently to their toddlers than did American middle-class mothers. Following Caudill's *cultural transmission* model, therefore, in a characteristically individualistic society such as the United States, an individual should be verbally assertive, whereas in a characteristically group-oriented society such as Japan, an individual should be verbally restrained. Thus, language development in a given culture consists of understanding how language is used by the adults who are representing that culture.

More specifically, from an early age, Japanese children go through the enculturation process of *omoiyari* ('empathy'), which is embedded in the larger context of Japanese culture (Azuma, 1986; Clancy, 1986; Doi, 1973; Lebra, 1976; Shigaki, 1987). As Clancy (1986) argues, a Japanese individual who is truly empathetic does not rely on explicit verbal cues to understand someone's wishes because these should be intuited through more subtle cues of gesture and tone. The elliptical, affect-oriented style favored by Japanese mothers (e.g., Bornstein, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, & Ogino, 1990) illustrates that they are sensitive to their children. More important, the empathetic style used by Japanese mothers helps their children acquire this subtle communicative style (Azuma, 1986; Shigaki, 1987). Furthermore, Japanese mothers tend to think that, in the preschool period of development, children mature emotionally and learn to be polite and obedient (cf. Hess, Kashiwagi, Azuma, Price, & Dickson, 1980). In other words, Japanese mothers believe that even preschool children should be capable of reading the minds of others and putting themselves in another person's position in order to understand that person's feelings. From an early age on, therefore, children go through the process of empathy training highly valued in Japanese society (Clancy, 1986). Verbosity is traditionally frowned upon, and proverbs like "Silence is golden," "Still waters run deep," and "The mouth is the source of misfortune" are favorably used. In Japanese society, mothers, as primary caregivers, thus induct their children into a subtle interactive communicative style.

PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The purpose of the present study is to examine culturally preferred narrative elicitation patterns. The underlying assumption is that since the mother is generally the primary interactant for a young child, the child's early conversational context is shaped by maternal questions and prompts. As a

natural extension of this assumption, the mother, either implicitly or explicitly, provides her child with culturally appropriate narrative forms. Thus, as a result of social interactions, young children's narratives are shaped into culturally preferred patterns. In the following report, two major questions are addressed:

(1) How do parents guide their children in the acquisition of culture-specific styles of narrative?

(2) Are there any style similarities and/or differences in narrative elicitation between mothers of five-year-olds in different cultures?

METHODS

Subjects

Conversations between mothers and children from the following three groups were analyzed to study culturally preferred narrative patterns: (1) 10 middle-class Japanese five-year-olds and their mothers living in Japan; (2) 8 middle-class Japanese five-year-olds and their mothers living in the United States; and (3) 8 English-speaking middle-class Canadian five-year-olds and their mothers.

None of the Japanese mother-child pairs living in Japan had lived overseas at the time of interview. All the Japanese mother-child pairs living in the United States had lived in the United States for more than one year but less than three years. Also, since all the Japanese five-year-olds living in the United States were enrolled in local preschools, they were mainly exposed to English at school. In their homes, however, Japanese had remained their primary language.

Each group is balanced in terms of gender and the children's average age. Mothers were asked to tape-record conversations at home with their children, discussing past experiences in as natural a way as possible. Some mother-child pairs talked about more events than others. Thus, to establish a comparable data base, I decided to analyze only the initial three narrative productions by each mother-child pair.

STUDY ONE

Narrative discourse devices in Japanese

The first study I will discuss was designed to provide detailed information regarding how discourse devices employed by Japanese mothers shape their children's narrative style. Specifically, I will discuss two major types of discourse devices: (1) the listener's *un* ('uh huh') in response to the narrator's *ne* ('you know') and (2) the listener's use of *huun* ('well').

Example 1 below is from Sachi, a 5-year, 9-month-old Japanese girl living in Japan. Sachi and her mother are in the middle of a conversation about how her teacher was disguised as a spook at a birthday party that was held in preschool.

Example 1. Sachi and her mother's interaction

(Note: CHI: Child, MOT: Mother)

MOT: *tanjoobi kai de obake yashiki shite*,
'At a birthday party, (you) played a haunted house.'

CHI: *ehtto* ***ne***,
'Um, you know,'

(MOT: ***un***)
'uh huh'

CHI: *sensei uso tsuiten yan.*
'the teacher was a liar.'
koo shite ***ne***,
'(She) did this, you know,'

(MOT: ***un)***
'uh huh'

CHI: *sensei ga* ***ne***,
'the teacher, you know,'

(MOT: ***un***)
'uh huh'

CHI: *omen kabutte*,
'put on a mask,'
koo shite ***ne***,
'and did this, you know,'

(MOT: ***un***)
'uh huh'

----------(omit segment)----------

CHI: *datte sensei **ne**,*
'because the teacher, you know,'
(MOT: ***un***)
'uh huh'

CHI: *Kumagumi san no heya e itta toki **ne**,*
'when (we) went into the *Kumagumi* (Bear Class) room, you know,'
(MOT: ***un***)
'uh huh'

CHI: *konna kao yatta mon.*
'(we found her face) was like this.'
(MOT: ***ah so***)
'uh really'

CHI: *obake no kao yatta mon.*
'(Hers) was a spooky face.'

MOT: *obake no kao yattan.*
'(Hers) was a spooky face.'
he:!
'Dear!'

Spoken Japanese is often produced in smaller units than traditional grammatical ones, such as a sentence or a clause. These smaller units are often marked by the particle *ne*, which corresponds to 'you know,' 'right?,' 'don't you agree?,' or a tag question in English. The particle *ne* also serves as a marker of what Maynard (1989) calls a "pause-bounded phrasal unit," which would correspond to what Chafe (1980) calls an "idea unit"--a series of brief spurts in narrative discourse. As Uchida (1986) mentions, children constantly use *ne* at the boundary of a grammatical construct, such as a sentence or phrase boundary. Sachi's narrative in example 1 (above) supports the explanations derived from other researchers (e.g., Maynard, 1989; Uchida, 1986). That is, these smaller parts (i.e., pause-bounded phrasal units), segmented by sentence- or clause-final particles (e.g., *koo shite **ne**,* 'did this, you know') as well as particles within a sentence (e.g., *sensei **ne***, 'the teacher, you know'), serve as units in oral Japanese discourse.

More importantly, the particle *ne* contributes to the harmonious mutual understanding that is highly valued in Japanese society. The effectiveness of *ne* in this regard is also evidenced in example 1. Responding to the child's *ne* ('you know'), the mother frequently shows brief acknowledgment with *un* ('uh huh') and thus scaffolds the child's narrative production. That is, by uttering *ne*, the speaker may elicit the listener's brief verbal acknowledgment; in return, the listener's frequent brief acknowledgment *un* is a discursive device that helps the narrator construct a sentence, thereby facilitating narration. For this reason, *ne* is sometimes called an interactional particle (Maynard, 1992), by which the

narrator seeks the listener's acknowledgment and thus tries to establish narrator-listener rapport. In this way, this mutual exchange is particularly important in Japanese society, in which people tend to attach a significant meaning to rapport and empathy (Doi, 1971; Lebra, 1976). As mentioned above, the mother's frequent verbal acknowledgment thus helps construct mutually shared frameworks.

In studying any narratives, researchers must recognize the importance of the listener's brief acknowledgments, which have been called "back-channeling" (Schegloff, 1982). Uchida (1986) has claimed that without listeners' proper brief acknowledgments, the storyteller would not be able to tell folktales rhythmically. Likewise, in discussing Japanese conversation, Maynard (1989) has stated, "Storytelling is a joint activity between the storyteller and the story recipient. The recipient plays an important role by co-authoring the text as well as by negotiating the meaning of the Narrative Event" (p. 99). As far as Japanese narrative is concerned, the story recipient's brief acknowledgments effectively signal that he or she shares common ground with the storyteller.

In this paper, however, I intentionally avoid using the term "back-channeling" because this term implies an unconditional signal to go on talking. In the context of mother-child interactions in particular, the Japanese mother speaks few words and few utterances per turn, and instead, often simply shows attention, which, in fact, serves to divide the child's utterances into small units. Because of this nature, in this paper I use alternative expressions such as "brief verbal acknowledgment" or "statements showing attention." As shown in example 1, the *ne--un* sequence fulfills both of these functions.

A second discursive device used by many Japanese mothers to show attention is *huun* ('well'). In Japanese adult discourse, *huun* has been described as serving a prefacing function signaling the introduction of a new topic (Maynard, 1989; Yamada, 1992). The Japanese mother-child interaction, however, reveals that the use of *huun* has the following three different functions: (1) prefacing of topic-extension, (2) simple verbal acknowledgment, and (3) prefacing of topic-switch.

When a child talks about a particular incident, if the mother says, *huun, sorekara* ('Well. Then?') or more extensively *huun, sorekara doo shita no?* (Well. Then, what did you do?') the mother's use of *huun* indicates that she wants the child to extend the topic. Thus, this use of *huun* serves as prefacing of topic-extension. Notice that in examples 2 and 3 below, *huun* comes right before the topic extension statement:

Example 2. Ayaka (a Japanese girl in Japan, aged 5;3)

CHI: *ocha gashi mitai na yatsu tabeta.*
'(I) ate something like a tea cake.'

MOT: *honto.*
'Really.'
huun. [prefacing of topic-extension]
'Well.'
sorekara?
'Then?'

Example 3. Satoshi (a Japanese boy in the U.S., aged 5;3)

MOT: *huun.* [prefacing of topic-extension]
'Well.'
ano sensei nante namae daro?
'What is that teacher's name?'

CHI: *wakan nai.*
'(I) don't know.'

On the other hand, if the mother says to the child *huun*, and the child then continues his or her story, it can be interpreted that the mother simply acknowledges what the child has said. As shown in examples 4 and 5 below, the function of this *huun* ('well') is thus very similar to the function of the previously mentioned *un* ('uh huh'):

Example 4. Akio (a Japanese boy in Japan, aged 5;6)

CHI: *niwatori mo ita.*
'(I) saw chickens, too.'

MOT: *huun.* [simple acknowledgment]
'Well.'

CHI: *de ne gyuunyuu nonda.*
'And, you know, (I) drank milk.'

Example 5. Koshiro (a Japanese boy in the U.S., aged 5;9)

CHI: *yellow team ga katta mitai.*
'The yellow team seems to have won the game.'

MOT: *huun.* [simple acknowledgment]
'Well.'

CHI: *Shusuke nante ikkai mo irerenakattanda yo.*
'Shusuke couldn't throw (it) in even once, I tell you.'

Further, if the mother says, *huun, hoka ni nani shita no kyoo yoochien de?* ('Well. What else did you do in preschool today?') the use of *huun* signals a preface to a new topic. Notice that in examples 6 and 7, *huun* comes right

before the topic-switch statement. Specifically, in example 7, Teru's mother changes the topic of conversation from play to lunch:

Example 6. Sachi (a Japanese girl in Japan, aged 5;9)

MOT: *huun.* [prefacing of topic-switch]
'Well.'
sonnara ne, eh tto hora ano yoochien no otomari hoiku atta ja nai.
'Then (changing the topic), you know, um (you) had overnight schooling.'

CHI: *un.*
'Yeah.'

Example 7. Teru (a Japanese boy in the U.S., aged 5;1)

CHI: *Yuri chan to Aki kun to boku.*
'Yuri and Aki and I.'

MOT: *huun.* [prefacing of topic-switch]
'Well.'
obento kinoo wa takusan nokoshite kita kedo.
'Speaking of lunch yesterday, (you) left a lot.'

As can be seen in these examples, *huun* indicates a certain mental transition; while uttering *huun*, the mother evidently decides whether to continue the current topic or terminate it and introduce a new one. Overall, we may be able to conclude that the more the mother uses this discourse device of prefacing of topic-extension, the further the child develops the topic. As can be seen above, however, statements showing attention can be used for the purpose of controlling children's utterances (e.g., prefacing of topic-switch). That is, while sometimes *huun* is used by the listener to preface topic-extension, at other times *huun* is used by the listener to take the floor through topic-switch.

RESULTS

Two types of discourse devices in Japanese were statistically analyzed, namely, first, the child's *ne* ('you know') immediately followed by the mother's *un* ('uh huh') and second, maternal prefacing *huun* ('well').[1] For the first discourse device (*ne* followed by *un*), I counted frequencies of the child's *ne* immediately followed by the mother's *un* and conducted a two-way (group × gender) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on this frequency variable. This test revealed that there was no significant effect of group or gender.[2] As far as this variable is concerned, therefore, whether living in Japan or the United States, Japanese mothers use the same strategy to support their children's narrative production.

For the second discourse device (the use of *huun*), I conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) for the three dependent variables, (1) prefacing of topic-extension *huun*, (2) simple acknowledgment *huun*, and (3) prefacing of topic-switch *huun* ('well').[3] MANOVA followed by a series of analyses of variance (ANOVA) revealed that compared to Japanese mothers living in Japan, Japanese mothers living in the United States were more likely to use *huun* ('well') as prefacing of topic-extension.[4] This result indicates that compared to Japanese mothers living in Japan, Japanese mothers living in the United States were more likely to give their topic-extension prompts right after uttering *huun*.

STUDY TWO

In earlier research Minami and McCabe (1991a) found that Japanese elementary-school children living in the United States tend to tell concise stories that are cohesive collections of several experiences. Minami and McCabe also found that this succinct narrative style exhibited by Japanese children shows a remarkable contrast to European-American children's narrative style, which is often a lengthy story that details a single experience and often revolves around the solution of some problem.

To identify the discourse patterns that may account for such differences in early mother-child interactions, Study Two includes the narratives of North American parent-child pairs collected by McCabe and Peterson (1990, 1991)[5] in addition to the previously discussed two Japanese groups. Consider, for example, the following dialogue between a five-year-old Canadian girl, Kelly, and her mother. Unlike the Japanese five-year-olds' narratives previously presented, Kelly takes longer monologic turns. As can be seen below, Kelly's mother neither facilitates frequent turn exchanges nor gives frequent verbal acknowledgment.

Example 8. Kelly and her mother's interaction

MOT:	Why don't you tell me about the time you fell down on the Decker's driveway?
CHI:	I was in my backyard playing.
	And I heard this fighting noise.
	And I thought that someone was badly hurt.
	So I ran into the Decker's driveway.
	I had, I had a big cut.
	And it was my biggest cut I ever had.
MOT:	Oh, that must have really hurt eh?
CHI:	Uh huh.

Coding

Transcripts of all parents' speech were scored according to Dickinson's (1991) system, which was previously used to analyze how speech acts are mapped onto dialogic narrative discourse in English (Dickinson, 1991; McCabe & Peterson, 1991). By using Dickinson's coding scheme as a basis, Minami and McCabe (1991b, 1993, in press) have devised appropriate coding rules that are also applicable cross-linguistically, particularly to Japanese data.

Figure 1. Coding System

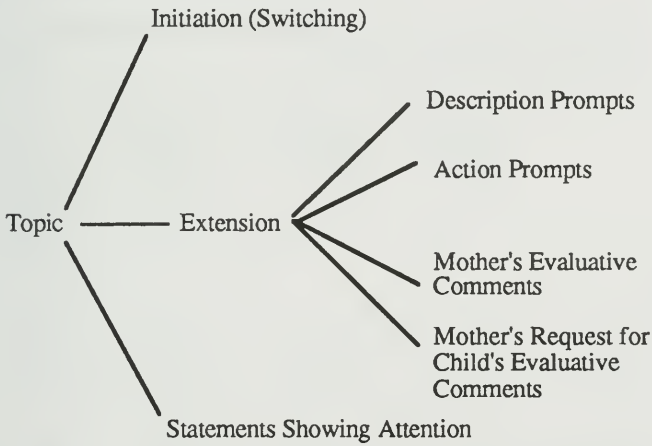

Figure 1 gives a visual representation of coding rules for parental speech; transcripts of all parents' speech were scored according to these coding rules. Parental utterances were coded as one of three types: (I) topic-initiation (or topic-switch), (II) topic-extension, and (III) other conversational strategies, which show attention, such as 'uh huh' and 'well.' Speech patterns categorized as topic-extension were further categorized into: (A) descriptive statements that describe a scene, a condition, or a state, (B) statements about actions that, accompanied by an action verb, describe a specific action, (C) mother's evaluative comments, and (D) mother's request for child's evaluative comments. Detailed guidelines for these categorizations are explained in the Appendix.[6]

RESULTS

First, I analyzed frequencies, which represent the impact that loquaciousness might have on children's narration (e.g., McCabe & Peterson, 1991; Reese, Haden, & Fivush, 1992). In addition, I used proportions because they correct for differences in length and allow us to see differing relative emphasis on components of narration. To test for the effect of group and gender, I conducted multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVA) for the major coding categories: 1) maternal requests for the child's descriptions, actions, and evaluations, 2) maternal evaluations, 3) statements showing attention, and 4) initiation (see Table 1).

Table 1. Mean frequencies and percentages of mothers' prompts to children about past events

		Japanese Mothers in Japan	Japanese Mothers in U.S.	English-speaking Mothers	F^a values for main effect of GROUP
		M	*M*	*M*	
Requests for descriptions					
	Frequency	15.00	14.00	17.63	0.25
	Percentage	14.72%	20.81%	18.90%	3.82*
Requests for actions					
	Frequency	23.50	15.50	17.88	0.95
	Percentage	24.30%	22.68%	19.84%	0.37
Requests for evaluations					
	Frequency	16.50	8.75	21.38	2.04
	Percentage	17.18%	14.24%	21.44%	1.40
Evaluation by mother herself					
	Frequency	15.40	7.75	28.25	2.98
	Percentage	14.69%	8.85%	28.01%	9.13**
Statements showing attention					
	Frequency	27.10	17.50	7.50	4.29*
	Percentage	26.18%	28.31%	8.46%	6.32**

Initiation				
Frequency	2.80	2.75	2.38	0.65
Percentage	2.93%	5.11%	3.35%	2.71

$^{*}p < 0.05$
$^{**}p < 0.01$

[a] **Degrees of freedom = 2, 20**

With regard to frequencies, the results of MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA and other related tests suggest that mothers of both Japanese groups gave more verbal acknowledgment (i.e., statements showing attention) than did English-speaking mothers (see Figure 2).[7]

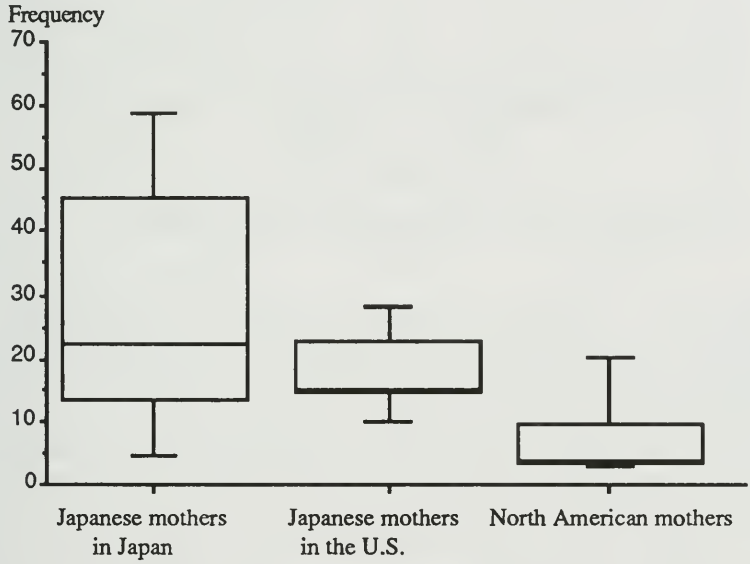

Figure 2: Maternal Statements Showing Attention (Frequency)

In terms of proportions, the results of MANOVA and a series of a subsequent ANOVA and other related tests suggest the following:[8] (1) In comparison to English-speaking mothers, Japanese-speaking mothers in both groups gave proportionately less evaluation (see Figure 3). (2) Mothers of both Japanese groups gave proportionately more verbal acknowledgment (i.e., statements showing attention) than did English-speaking mothers (see Figure 4). (3) However, Japanese mothers living in the United States requested proportionately more description from their children than did Japanese mothers living in Japan. Moreover, there was no statistically significant difference

observed between Japanese mothers living in the United States and English-speaking mothers (see Figure 5).

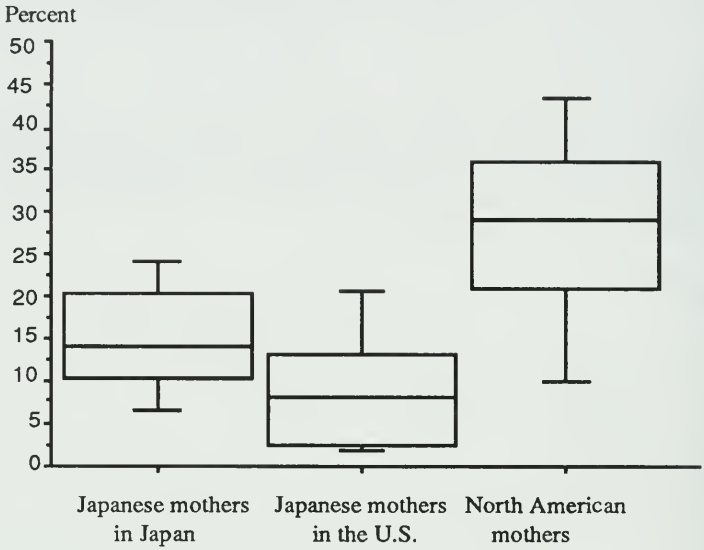

Figure 3: Mother's Evaluative Comments (Percentage)

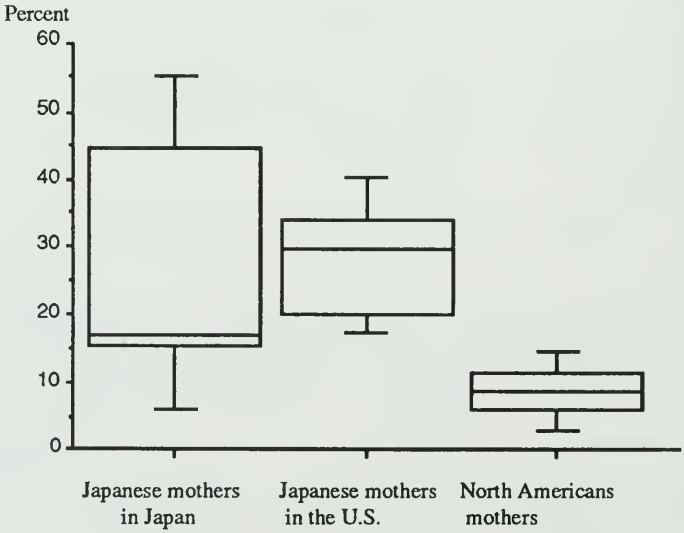

Figure 4: Maternal Statements Showing Attention

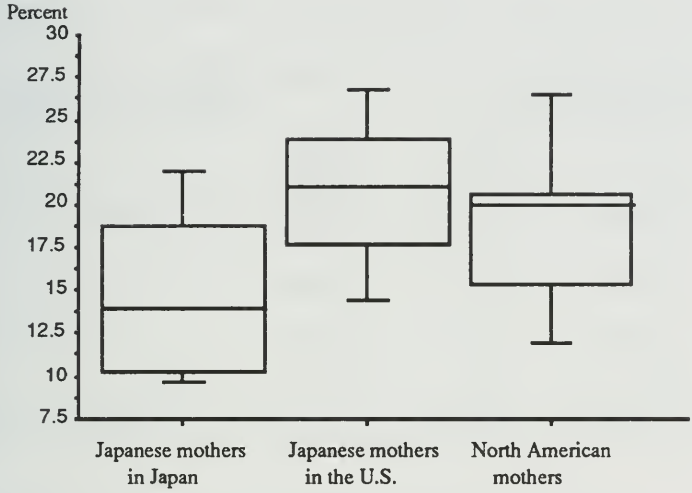

Figure 5: Maternal Requests for Descriptions (Percentage)

Child's Length of Turns

In addition to the frequencies of the coded behaviors, I examined the child's utterances over turns (UOT, or, the number of utterances produced by a speaker per turn). As Tables 2a, 2b, and 2c illustrate, around the age of 5 years, although males' utterances (2.33) are slightly longer than females' (1.90), English-speaking children produced 2.11 utterances per turn on the average. On the other hand, Japanese children living in Japan and the United States produced 1.19 and 1.24 utterances per turn respectively. Thus, Japanese-speaking children, whether living in Japan or the United States, produced about 1.22 utterances on the average.[9]

A 3 × 2 (group × gender) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed on the variable, UOT. This ANOVA and a subsequent series of related tests revealed that Japanese children, whether living in Japan or the United States, produced fewer utterances per turn than did English-speaking children (Figure 6).[10]

Table 2a: Child's Ratio of Utterances Over Turns: English-speaking Group

English-speaking Male		English-speaking Female	
Child's Name Gender	UOT	Child's Name Gender	UOT
Carl	3.857	Cara	1.581
Gary	1.929	Harriet	1.274
Ned	1.550	Kelly	1.619
Paul	1.968	Leah	3.136
M	2.326 (*SD* 1.038)	*M*	1.903 (*SD* .837)

Table 2b: Child's Ratio of Utterances Over Turns: Japanese children in Japan

Japanese Male		Japanese Female	
Child's Name Gender	UOT	Child's Name Gender	UOT
Akio	1.203	Ayaka	1.019
Taka	1.102	Miki	1.197
Takato	1.027	Minori	1.786
Tomo	1.219	Sachi	1.157
Wakao	1.078	Yuka	1.135
M	1.126 (*SD* .083)	*M*	1.259 (*SD* .302)

Table 2c: Child's Ratio of Utterances Over Turns: Japanese children in U.S.

Japanese Males in U.S.		Japanese Females in U.S.	
Child's Name Gender	UOT	Child's Name Gender	UOT
Kotaro	1.433	Aya	1.192
Satoshi	1.294	Mari	1.176
Shintaro	1.147	Nori	1.283
Teru	1.162	Yukari	1.258
M	1.259 (*SD* .133)	*M*	1.227 (*SD* .051)

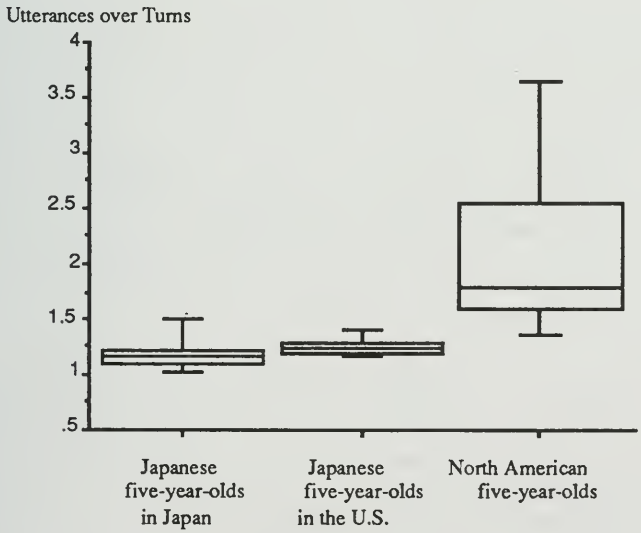

Figure 6:. Child's Ratio of Utterances over Turns

DISCUSSION

It has been claimed that in North America an individual should be verbally explicit, whereas in Japanese group-oriented society, an individual is allowed to be verbally implicit but should be empathetic (e.g., Lebra, 1976). For example, American elementary-school textbooks tend to "encourage the child to step away from the story, to analyze the situation and the actions of the characters, and to evaluate the effectiveness of their actions." Japanese elementary-school language textbooks, in contrast, tend to encourage "the child to imagine the feelings of another and merge his or her identity with that of the character, even if that character should happen to be an animal" (Gerbert, 1993, p. 161). Japanese teachers as well as textbooks ask their students to do some empathetic reading, such as "What do you think Character X really felt like at this point?" or "Let's understand Character X's feelings by putting ourselves in his or her position." Throughout all grade levels, Japanese education thus encourages children to empathize with others (and even personification is sometimes used for this empathy training).

I would argue that this "explicit vs. implicit but empathetic" contrast follows from early language socialization practices in the home. While North American mothers emphasize mastery of verbal skills, in contrast, Japanese mothers provide fewer evaluative comments in favor of a more implicit valuation. In other words, the Japanese school's emphasis on empathy parallels the strategy taken by Japanese mothers who, providing their young children with explicit training in empathy, appeal to the feelings of animals and even inanimate objects (Clancy, 1985, 1986). Recall that, rather than providing evaluative comments by themselves, mothers of both Japanese groups requested more evaluation from their children than did the North American mothers. Maternal elicitation strategies thus reflect mothers' culture-specific desire to develop particular narrative skills in their children.

Likewise, Japanese mothers' frequent use of verbal acknowledgment (e.g., the rapport/interactional particle *ne*) seems to support the claim that Japanese adults teach children the form of communication based upon empathy, which they believe is necessary to maintain the Japanese way of life (Clancy, 1986; Doi, 1973; Lebra, 1976). Following this line of interpretation, therefore, from early childhood on, children are accustomed to using these culturally valued narrative discourse skills due to interactions with their mothers.

The two studies reported in this paper, however, presented a rather complicated picture. Recall that in Study One, although both Japanese parental groups used *huun* ('well') as a discourse device, Japanese mothers living in the United States were more likely to use this device as prefacing of topic-extension. Similarly, in Study Two, Japanese mothers in the United States were found to behave more like North American mothers, who requested a substantial amount of description from their children. We should keep in mind, however, that even

if they behaved like North American mothers, those Japanese mothers did behave differently from North American mothers in other respects. That is, while North American mothers allow their children to take long monologic turns, and give many evaluative comments, Japanese mothers, whether living in Japan or the United States, simultaneously pay considerable attention to their children's narratives and facilitate frequent turn exchanges. Thus, the present study has revealed that Japanese mothers living in the United States were influenced by American culture in some limited aspects (e.g., more topic-extension prompts right after uttering *huun* and more requests for description in eliciting narratives), while they retained other features that are considered to belong to Japanese culture.

To explain these differences and similarities in maternal patterns of narrative elicitation, we can think of environmental factors, or a larger framework of "culture" based on the social interaction paradigm (Bruner, 1977; Vygotsky, 1978). Since all the Japanese five-year-olds living in the United States were in local preschools, through interaction with American mothers, the Japanese mothers were likely to emulate how to interact with young children. Socialized into the behavioral patterns of the new group of people (i.e., American mothers), therefore, these Japanese mothers living in the United States might have learned the importance of verbalization.

At the same time, the Japanese mothers living in the United States retained some typically Japanese features because of the nature of the language they speak. Recall that, based on *omoiyari* ('empathy'), the Japanese language allows interlocutors to co-construct narrative tellings through specific mechanisms--the narrator's habitual use of pause-bounded phrasal unit markers (e.g., *ne*) and the listener's verbal acknowledgment (e.g., *un*) to them (Maynard, 1989). Moreover, Japanese mothers' frequent verbal acknowledgment contributed to their children's saying less per turn (lower UOT) than North American children of the same age. Thus, I assume that some typical Japanese features are kept by Japanese mothers living in the United States, due not only to the nature of the language itself, but also to underlying cultural beliefs.

Also, we should not forget that children's attitudes might have influenced their mothers' narrative elicitation strategies. The Japanese children in the United States were in a different social environment from that of the Japanese five-year-olds living in Japan. In addition to other environmental factors, possible attitude differences between the two Japanese children's groups might have caused parents' attitude changes. The attitudinal differences of parents are in turn reflected in their language practices, such as the more frequent use of *huun* to preface topic extension and the more frequent requests for topic description from their children. As these examples suggest, we should not simply conclude that since they are socially directed, children passively internalize the values of society. Instead, children and their environments (e.g., peers and mothers) should be viewed as parts of a dynamic system within which they actively interact with and influence each other. Individuals--children and

adults alike--should therefore be considered active sense makers, who view alternatives and exercise choice, participating in the creation of their social circumstances (Mehan, 1992).

Overall, therefore, this paper suggests that the differences and similarities in language practices among these three groups can be explained in terms of a larger framework of "culture" based on the social interactional paradigm. Kagitcibasi (1989) argues that non-Western urban families often evolve a hybrid structure in which certain values and practices consonant with Western views coexist with traditional non-Western values. This explanation seems to hold true of Japanese mothers, particularly those living in the United States. While inducting their children into a communicative style that is reflective of their native culture, Japanese mothers living in the United States are, at the same time, subject to the influence of Western culture. It is thus important to highlight the finding that people from other cultures are influenced by Western culture in some ways but maintain certain original cultural traits.

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NOTES

[1] Audio-tapes were transcribed into computer files following the guidelines of Codes for the Human Analysis of Transcripts (CHAT) conventions for analysis by the Child Language Analysis (CLAN) software available through the Child Language Data Exchange System (CHILDES) (MacWhinney & Snow, 1985, 1990).

Also, using the categorization described above, all maternal *huun* utterances were categorized independently by two raters. Interrater agreement across the categories resulted in a Cohen's kappa statistic of .97, representing "almost perfect" agreement (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986; Landis & Koch, 1977).

[2] ANOVA revealed the following: (1) for Group, F (1, 14) = .203, $p > .05$, and (2) for Gender, F (1, 14) = .351, $p > .05$.

[3] The function of *huun* was categorized by examining the subsequent mother's or child's response. The categorization of topic-extension applies, if the mother extends the topic subsequent to *huun*. Likewise, simple acknowledgment applies, if the child still continues his or her talk right after *huun*. Finally, the topic-switch categorization applies, if the mother introduces an entirely new topic right after uttering *huun*. Thus, the function of *huun* was categorized backwards.

[4] There was a main effect for group with Wilks' Lambda = .47, approximate F (3, 12) = 4.467, $p < .05$. Univariate ANOVAs, which were run for each of the dependent variables, revealed that this effect was largely attributable to a significant univariate effect on active topic-extension, F (1, 14) = 5.26, $p < .05$.

[5] The reason that I report five-year-olds' narratives in this paper is due to age constraints that emerge from analysis of the development of children's narratives. Children begin telling personal narratives from the age of two (Sachs, 1979), but in any culture these early productions are quite short through the age of three and a half years (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Three-year-olds' narratives are often simple two-event narratives; four-year-olds' narratives are much more diverse, and five-year-olds tell lengthy, well-sequenced stories that end a little prematurely at the climax (McCabe & Peterson, 1990; Peterson & McCabe, 1983). In other words, preschool age represents the period of extremely rapid development in the child's acquisition of narrative capacity.

[6] All transcripts were coded by an individual who is bilingual in Japanese and English. Two full transcripts of Japanese and two full transcripts of English were independently coded by individuals fluent in each of those languages, respectively. Cohen's kappa, an estimate of reliability that corrects for chance rates of agreement, for the first level (topic-initiation, topic-extension, and statements showing attention) of the Japanese coding was 0.98; Cohen's kappa for the second level (descriptive statements, statements about actions, mother's evaluative comments, and mother's request for child's evaluative comments) was 0.83. Likewise, Cohen's kappa for the first level of the English coding was 1.00; and Cohen's kappa for the second level was 0.90. To describe the relative strength of agreement associated with kappa statistics, if the range is between 0.61 and 0.80, it is labeled as being "substantial"; further, if the range of kappa is over 0.81, it is considered to represent "almost perfect" agreement (Bakeman & Gottman, 1986; Landis & Koch, 1977). Thus, all estimates of reliability in our case fall into the range of "almost perfect" agreement.

[7] There was a multivariate effect of group, Wilks' Lambda = .18, approximate F (12, 30) = 3.39, $p < .01$. Univariate ANOVAs were run for each of the dependent variables. This effect was largely attributable to a significant univariate effect on maternal statements showing attention, F (2, 20) = 4.29, $p < .05$, and a marginal univariate effect on evaluations by mother herself, F (2, 20) = 2.98, $p < .08$. To pinpoint the locus of group differences, the results were further analyzed in Bonferroni Post Hoc tests.

[8] There was a significant multivariate effect of group, Wilks' lambda = .24, approximate F (10, 32) = 3.36, $p < .01$. Univariate ANOVAs were run for each of the dependent variables. The effect of group was largely attributable to significant effects on maternal requests for descriptions, F (2, 20) = 3.82, $p < .05$, maternal evaluations, F (2, 20) = 9.13, $p < .01$, and statements showing attention, F (2, 20) = 6.32, $p < .01$. The results were further analyzed in Bonferroni Post Hoc tests.

[9] In order to resolve issues of equivalence between the two languages (Japanese and English), the information unit was used for transcribing the data. For example, *aruite aruite* ('[I] walked and walked') is simple repetition/emphasis of one particular action and thus one piece of information, while *te de totte aketa* ('[I] grabbed [it] by hand and opened [it]') consists of two separate actions and is thus considered two pieces of information. In other words, the definition of "utterance" in this study is based on the information unit. By doing so, the same phenomena observed in two different language groups were equated. Additionally, a turn was defined in both Japanese and English data as statements occurring before a listener responded.

[10] This ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of group, $F(2, 20) = 7.76$, $p < .01$. To pinpoint the locus of group differences, the ANOVA results were further analyzed in Bonferroni Post Hoc tests.

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APPENDIX: CODING SYSTEM

(I) Topic-Initiation (Switching)

1. Open-ended questions initiating a new topic (e.g., "*kyoo yoochien de nani shita no*?": "What did you do in preschool today?").
2. Closed-ended questions initiating a new topic (e.g., "*suuji awase yatta?*": "Did you play matching numbers?").
3. Statements initiating a new topic (e.g., "*kono mae Disneyland e itta de sho*.": "The other day we went to Disneyland.").

(II) Topic-Extension

4. Open-ended questions extending topics (e.g., "*nani ga ichiban suki datta?*": "What did you like best?").
5. Closed-ended questions extending topics (e.g., "*tanoshi katta*?": "Did you enjoy it?").
6. Statements extending a topic (e.g., "*nani ka itteta de sho*.": "You were saying something.").
7. Clarifying questions (e.g., "*nani?*": "what?").
8. Clarifying questions that were partial echoes (e.g., "*dare ga chu: shite kuretan*?": "Who gave you smacks?" after the child said, "*chu: chu: chutte yatte*.": "Smack, smack, smacked me.").
9. Echoes (e.g., "*shiranakatta no*.": "You didn't know" after the child said, "*shirana katta*.": "I didn't know.").

(III) Other Conversational Strategies

10. Statements showing attention, such as brief acknowledgment (e.g., "*un.*": "Yeah.") and prefacing utterances (e.g., "*huun.*": "Well.").

Speech patterns that are categorized into topic-extension are further categorized into:

A. Descriptive statements (which describe a scene, a condition, or a state)
"*ato Momotaro no hon mo atta de sho.*": "Besides there was a book about the Peach Boy."
"*denki ga tsuiteta ne.*": "There were electric lights, you know."
"*jibun de unten suru kuruma?*: "Is it a car that you drive on your own?"

B. Statements about actions (which, accompanied by an action verb, describe a specific action)
"*janken de saisho kimeta.*": "We tossed first by scissors, paper, and rock."
"*banana mo tabetan.*": "You also ate a banana."
"*umi ni ittetan?*": "Did you go to the sea?"
"*Yuki chan ga arattan.*": "Yuki washed."
"*nan te kaita no Yukari chan wa typewriter de?*": "what did you write with the typewriter?"

C. Mother's evaluative comments
"*sore ii ne.*": "That's good, you know."
"*Aki chan chiisa katta mon ne.*": "Because you were small, Aki, you know."
"*uso.*": "That's not true."

D. Mother's request for child's evaluative comments
"*sore doo omou?*": "What do you think about it?"
"*u chan no doko ga kawaii no*?": "What do you think makes the bunny cute?"
"*oishi kattan?*": "Did it taste good?"