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A Cross-Cultural Study of Indirectness[1]

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When compared to other ethnic groups, the Japanese are often said to communicate using indirect speech patterns. This characterization, however, is mostly based on casual observation and there have not been many empirical studies.

This study investigates whether or not the Japanese are more indirect than Americans in conversations between same status interlocutors and whether the use of indirectness is influenced by in-group and out-group distinctions for speech acts of requests and complaints , as determined by a questionnaire study.

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis that Japanese students are more indirect than American students in complaint and request situations. Americans tended to behave similarly in all situations studied, while Japanese responded and acted differently in different situations. However, Japanese students are not more indirect toward out-group members. These results suggest that Japanese may be more direct than assumed, at least when there is no apparent status difference. Although it may be true that Japanese traditionally value indirectness more than speakers of other languages, this does not mean that Japanese speakers are necessarily more indirect than others.

INTRODUCTION

The topic of indirect speech acts has recently attracted considerable attention. The study of the differences between American and Japanese speech acts in terms of the level of directness is especially interesting. Although it is widely assumed that Japanese speakers are more indirect in their speech than Americans, this is not always true. One must look at the sociolinguistic factors which affect the level of indirectness. The most commonly accepted factor is a perceived difference of status among the participants. Takahashi (1987) shows that, as a general rule, a person of lower status would use an indirect speech act when, for example, making a request of someone who is perceived to have higher status. However, another important factor that determines the linguistic behaviors of the Japanese but which has received little attention in research on

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indirect speech acts is group affiliation. The purpose of this study is to compare requests and complaints made by Americans and Japanese and to investigate the role of group affiliation as it influences the level of directness of these speech acts.

Speech Acts

Austin (1962) is usually credited with being the first to note that some sentences are not used with the intention of making true or false statements but rather to actively do things, that is, to perform speech acts (e.g., declaring war or raising an objection). Since Austin's development of speech act theory, a variety of empirical studies concerning different speech acts have been conducted (Cohen and Olshtain, 1981; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Wolfson, 1983). Currently, there are two large research areas related to speech acts: cross-cultural pragmatics (i.e., comparing the usage of languages in different cultures) and interlanguage pragmatics (i.e., assessing the sociocultural competence of second language learners). In the area of cross-cultural pragmatics, for example, Olshtain (1989) compares Hebrew, French, Australian English, and Canadian French speakers in apology situations and finds no significant differences in style. To study speech acts within interlanguage, Faerch and Kasper (1989) compare native speakers of Danish, German, and British English with Danes who are intermediate and advanced level speakers of both German and English. They find that non-native speakers approximate native speakers of the target culture both in their request procedures and in the degree of face work involved in sociopragmatically different situations.

Indirect Speech Acts

One interesting aspect of speech acts is their apparent indirectness. This has been debated extensively by Sadock (1974), Searle (1975), Morgan (1978), and others. According to Searle, "in indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information." (p. 60).

Among different ethnic groups, the Japanese are often associated with indirect speech patterns. For example, the indirectness of Japanese speakers is partially blamed for miscommunication between Japanese and Americans in business and political negotiations. Linguists such as Kindaichi (1978) and Suzuki (1978) interpret ellipsis in Japanese as systematic evidence of indirectness. The particles *ga* or *keredo* are usually translated as 'but' or 'though' in English. In natural conversation, however, many utterances are incomplete sentences ending with the particles *ga* or *kedo* (McGloin, 1984). The effect is to leave it up to the listener to make a reasonable assumption as to what might follow, as in (1).

(1) [3]*Kono hon ga hosii n desu ga...*
this book SUB want SE but
'I would like to have this book, but...'

Placing this utterance into a hypothetical context, a store clerk (listener) could safely assume upon hearing it that the customer (speaker) is expressing a desire to buy the book and expects the clerk to act accordingly. Kindaichi maintains that Japanese speakers use the particle *ga* and *kedo* to soften the sentence because without these particles the sentence is felt to be too abrupt or direct. Matsumoto (1985) refers to a similar phenomenon in her analysis of the use of the hedge marker *tyotto*. Taken out of context, *tyotto* literally means 'a little.' However, in conversation, *tyotto* is often used in expressions of polite refusal or hesitation, as in (2).

(2) A: *Goruhu simasen ka.*
golf do-NEG Q
'How about playing golf?'
B: *Goruhu wa tyotto...*
golf TOP HEDGE
'Golf, well...'

Matsumoto states that the reason Japanese use *tyotto* and fail to complete their sentence is that saying 'no' is too direct and hence impolite.

Level of Indirectness

One of the issues concerning speech acts is the various levels of indirectness. These levels of indirectness are often divided into three broad categories: direct, conventionally indirect, and very indirect (hints). According to this division, imperatives are direct, and questions and embedded subjunctive phrases are conventionally indirect. Hints such as "this room is very hot," which is intended as a request to open a window, can be considered to be very indirect. However, in order to compare levels of directness in speech acts, it is necessary to have a scale with a more detailed rating. Ervin-Tripp (1976), Blum-Kulka (1987), and Takahashi (1987) proposed different levels of directness. Among these studies, only Takahashi's scale of directness levels includes both Japanese and English speech acts and is described here.

Takahashi's sources of various types of directives are (i) data obtained through her role-playing research and (ii) literature concerned with English and Japanese directives. According to Takahashi, realization of indirectness is achieved by means of "the speaker's tact in giving the hearer certain options" (p. 66) and "the types of options [which] determine the degree of indirectness" (p. 66). In particular, her indirectness scale is constructed (i) from the speaker's

point of view (not the hearer's perception) and (ii) by excluding the notion of deference and politeness. Although indirectness is often associated with politeness, it is important to note that indirect speech acts are not necessarily polite. Takahashi cites Leech's (1980) example "Would you mind leaving the room?" to make the point. While this utterance disguises a directive as a question and is thus indirect, it can also be extremely impolite on certain occasions.

Takahashi classifies directives into three general levels of directness:

level 0 (direct directives, in which the speaker does not give any response option to the hearer, except direct compliance or refusal.)
level 1 (indirect directives which specify the desired action with an explicit agent, action, object, and often beneficiary.)
level 2 (indirect directives which only implicitly refer to the desired action).

In Japanese, both "V-te kudasai" and "V-te kure" are examples of imperative forms and are considered as direct directives, although the former is more polite (honorific) than the latter. Indirect directives in level 1 are subdivided into several types according to the degree of indirectness:

Level	
1.1	Sentences stating S's wish or desire that H will do A.
1.2	Sentences stating S's expectation of H's doing A.
1.3	Sentences asking H's will, desire, or willingness to do A.
1.4	Sentences asking H's ability to do A.
1.5	Sentences asking reasons for H's not doing A.
1.6	Sentences asking H's permission for S's requesting to do A.
1.7	Interrogative sentences embedding one of the clauses/gerunds concerning H's doing A.
1.8	Declarative sentences questioning H's doing A.
1.9	Sentences concerning S's expectation of H's doing A in hypothetical situations.

(H = hearer, S = speaker, A = act/action)

Indirect level 2, which consists of indirect directives with implicit reference to the desired action is further divided into two subcategories:

Level

2.1 **Interrogative sentences:**
The directives in this category include every interrogative sentence which fails to specify the desired action on the part of the hearer.

2.2 **Declarative sentences:**
The directives covering every declarative sentence which implicitly refers to the desired action on the part of the hearer. There are two subtypes:

Level

2.2.1 Sentences manifesting S's literal implication: Speaker implicates his/her intent by saying what he/she perceives to be literally true (e.g. ,"My throat is dry" Intent: "Give me something to drink").

2.2.2 Sentences manifesting S's non-literal implication:
Speaker implies his/her intent through irony, sarcasm or some other statement containing the meaning opposite to what he/she literally says (e.g., "I'm sure the cat likes having its tail pulled." Intent: "Stop pulling the cat's tail"). (From Bach and Harnish (1979:72)).

Takahashi subdivides all the above directives into thirteen ranks of increasing indirectness and associates these ranks with English and Japanese forms of directness. The summary of her scale of indirectness is given in (3) below:

(3) Levels of Indirectness by Takahashi (1987)

Rank	Level	English	Japanese
1	0.0	Imperatives	*V-nasai, V-ro, V-te kudasai*
2	1.1	Statement of want	*V-te moraitai, V-tai no desu.*
3	1.2	You + Modal Aux + Uninflected verb	*V-re/rare masu, V-beki desu*
4	1.3	Will/won't you VP?	*V-te kuremasu ka.*
		Would you mind VP-ing?	*V-te itadakemasen ka.*
5	1.4	Can/Can't you VP?	*V-rare masu-ka.*
6	1.5	Why don't you VP?	*Naze V-nai no desu ka.*
7	1.6	Can I ask you to VP?	*V-te kudasaru yoo onegai dekimasu ka.*
8	1.7	Do you think that you can VP?	*-to omoimasen ka*
		How about VP-ing?	*-wa ikaga desu ka.*
9	1.8	I wonder if you could VP.	*-ka doo ka to omoimasite.*

10	1	I would appreciate it if you would VP.	*-to arigatai no desu ga---*
11	2.1	Interrogative sentence, implicit reference to the action	
		Are we out of coffee?	*Onegai dekimasen*
		May I VP?	*desyoo ka.*
	2.2	Declarative sentences with implicit reference to the action	
12	2.2.1	Sentences manifesting S's literal implication	
		Need statement	*-ga iru no desu.*
		Declarative sentences other than the above	*Onegai itasimasu.*
13	2.2.2	Sentence manifesting S's non-literal implication -ironic expressions	

There are some questions whether these English and Japanese expressions are parallel in terms of indirectness. For example, 'How about VP-ing' and 'May I VP?' in English may sound more direct than their Japanese counterparts in her scale, *-wa ikaga desu ka* and *Onegai dekimasen deshoo ka*, respectively. However, it is not easy to make a comparative indirect scale between two languages, (particularly when comparing languages like English and Japanese which are very different syntactically, as well as pragmatically) and in any case, perfect parallelism may be impossible.

In-group/Out-group

Nakane (1970) divided the interpersonal world into three layers: a primary world of people to whom one is bound closely and affectionately, and to whom one is obligated (in-group); a second world of people with whom one interacts on the basis of roles and functional needs (out-group); and a third group consisting of strangers who are virtually ignored and who rarely become intimates. The members of an in-group can include family and co-workers in the same section or division of a company or in the same factory building. This 'in-groupness' may change according to the situation.

Lebra (1976) and Loveday (1986) claim that group affiliation as well as status is very important in defining an individual in Japanese society. Lebra states that the Japanese establish identity on the basis of group ties and that it is difficult to converse in Japanese without indicating to which group the interlocutors, or the persons being referred to, belong. However, I have not seen any studies which relate Japanese indirectness and group affiliation.

The problem with the claim that "Japanese are indirect" is that in general it is often based only on casual observation and there have not been many empirical studies on this subject. Beebe and Takahashi (1989), who conducted one of the few empirical studies, found that the Japanese are indirect when they express disagreement with a higher status person, but are more direct with lower status people. Beebe and Takahashi concluded that the Japanese are not always

indirect, and that the difference in status is only one of the variables affecting level of indirectness.

This paper seeks to determine whether or not Japanese are more indirect in conversations between same status interlocutors (including same sex and age) when compared with Americans and whether the use of indirectness is influenced by in-group and out-group distinctions. The study was designed to test the following hypotheses:

1. In general, Japanese students are more indirect than American students.
2. Japanese students, but not American students, are more indirect when interacting with an out-group member than with an in-group member.

METHOD

Subjects

30 American and 30 Japanese female students, both undergraduates and graduates ranging in age from 19 to 25 at the University of Hawaii, served as subjects for the questionnaire study. All of the Japanese students were in the New Intensive Course in English (NICE) program and had just arrived from Japan three months earlier. All of the American students, both undergraduate and graduate, were in ESL or linguistics classes. In addition, two pairs of Japanese and Americans (undergraduate and graduate) participated in a role play.

Instrument

Among a variety of speech acts, this study concentrated on requests and complaints, because they are common speech acts studied by previous researchers such as Blum-Kulka (1987) and Takahashi (1987), and thus allow for comparisons. These two speech acts are also relevant for Takahashi's (1987) indirectness scale, which can be used for both American and Japanese subjects. Takahashi calls both request and complaint speech acts 'directives' but I call the speech act a 'complaint' when the speaker believes that an addressee has imposed on him/her and a 'request' when the speaker does not.

In this study, indirectness is examined by questionnaire and by role play. The questionnaire, similar in style to the Discourse Completion Test (DCT)[4] used by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) has four situations: complaint and request for both the in-group and out-group (Appendix A). In the questionnaire as well as in the role play, an in-group person was described as a good friend and an out-group person as a neighbor. The subjects are asked to write down the exact words they are going to say after reading the description of the situations. The role play is used to supplement data from the questionnaire in order to make the process of negotiation visible. Only complaint situations are used for the role

play in both in-group and out-group, because a complaint situation is probably more face-threatening than a request situation (both for complainer and complainee) and therefore indirectness is likely to be used more often. The two party (Americans/American and Japanese/Japanese) face-to-face role play recordings were collected as follows. Volunteers were asked to participate and met one pair at a time in one classroom. The participants in pairs did not know each other beforehand. Before each role play, the participants were handed a card which explained the situation. The instruction was the same as the questionnaire (situations 3 and 4 in Appendix A) except that in the role play, each participant was given a name for each situation. When they read the instructions, they were told to take as much as time as they needed to play out the situation with their partner. Later, each participant was interviewed for clarification of their intentions.

Data Analysis

The level of indirectness is coded first by identifying a head act in the questionnaire, following Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989). According to Blum-Kulka et al., a head act for request is the minimal unit which can realize a request; it is the core of the request sequence (p. 275). For example, in the sentence, "John, get me a beer, please. I'm terribly thirsty," "get me a beer, please" is a head act and both "John" (alerter), and "I'm terribly thirsty" (supportive move) are not essential for realizing the request. The head act for each situation is then judged for its level of indirectness according to Takahashi's (1987) scale.

The role play recordings were analyzed qualitatively rather than quantitatively because it was not possible to identify a head act in some of the role play data. Originally it had been planned to compare head acts in the role play with those in the questionnaire, but this proved difficult without a framework for comparing hints with head acts.

RESULTS

Questionnaire

For the each of the four situations, the frequency of occurrence at the different levels on the indirectness scale are shown in corresponding tables (e.g., Table 1 for situation 1). With the exception of situation 3 (Table 3), the most frequent level used for Japanese was rank 4 of level 1. For situation 1, it was 13/30, situation 2, 22/30 and situation 3, 24/30. For situation 3, it was level 0 (direct). For all four situations, many of the 13 ranks were not chosen by any of the Japanese. On the other hand, many more ranks were chosen by the

Americans. With the exception of situation 4, level 2 (indirect) utterances are chosen by American rather than Japanese students. These results show that while Americans tended to use a wide variety of levels of directness, Japanese used fewer different ranks and Japanese seemed to be more direct than Americans.

Tables 5, 6, 7, and 8 below show Takahashi's three levels of directness, here called Direct, Conventional Direct, and Indirect. The chi-square test for significance of the differences between Americans and Japanese yields $X^2 = 5.296$ ($p < 0.025$) for situation 1 (request to an in-group member), $X^2 = 20.44$ ($P < 0.005$) for situation 2 (request to an out-group member), $X^2 = 5.84$ ($P < 0.025$) for situation 3 (complaint to an in-group member) and $X^2=2.07$ ($P < 0.1$) for situation 4 (complaint to an out-group member). Only in situation 2 are Japanese significantly more direct than Americans, although situations 1 and 3 show the same tendency. Comparisons of the mean value of indirectness (within 13 ranks) using a t-test are shown in Table 9; Japanese were significantly more direct than Americans in situations 1, 2, and 4.

Thus hypothesis 1, "Japanese students are more indirect than American students" was not supported; rather, there was a tendency in the opposite direction except with out-group complaints. The Japanese students may be more direct than the Americans in the out-group request situation, at least when the status of the interlocutor is the same. This result is surprising, especially in light of the generalized image of the Japanese and the claims made by both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars reviewed above.

In this study some of the Japanese indirect speech acts took the form of explicit suggestions, such as *Atokatazuke toobansei ni simasyoo,* 'Let's take turns in cleaning up afterwards', or *zibun no koto wa zibun de simasyoo,* 'Let's each take care of our own things', responding to situation 3 (unwashed dishes). Although these responses were not included in Takahashi's rating scale, it may not be an unusual response for Japanese speakers. Since they are not direct requests which use 'you,' such as 'can you' or 'I,' such as 'may I,' I consider them as a form of an explicit suggestion such as 'let's do' and rate them as rank 8 (an embedded interrogative sentence), with other suggestions[5]. As a result, Japanese responses in situation 3 were more indirect than in other situations, in spite of the fact that the addressee was an in-group member, as shown in Table 9 below.

Table 1: Frequencies of Requests in Situation 1 (In-group, Request)

Level	Rank	American		Japanese	
		Freq.	Level Freq.	Freq.	Level Freq.
0	1	2	2	8	8
	2	2		5	
	3	0		0	
	4	2		13	

1	5	4		0	
	6	0	20	1	19
	7	5		0	
	8	2		0	
	9	4		0	
	10	1		0	
	11	5		3	
2	12	3	8	0	3
	13	0		0	
Total		30		30	

Table 2: Frequencies of Request in Situation 2 (Out-group, Request)

Level	Rank	American		Japanese	
		Freq.	Level Freq.	Freq.	Level Freq.
0	1	0	0	3	3
	2	0		0	
	3	0		0	
	4	4		22	
	5	7		4	
1	6	0	22	0	26
	7	4		0	
	8	3		0	
	9	3		0	
	10	1		0	
	11	8		1	
2	12	0	8	0	1
	13	0		0	
Total		30		30	

Table 3: Frequencies of Requests in Situation 3 (in-group, complaint)

Level	Rank	American		Japanese	
		Freq.	Level Freq.	Freq.	Level Freq.
0	1	4	40	12	12
	2	0		0	
	3	1		1	
	4	4		4	
	5	5		1	

1	6	0	18	0	14
	7	0		0	
	8	4		8	
	9	1		0	
	10	3		0	
	11	3		3	
2	12	4	8	1	4
	13	1		0	
Total		30		30	

Table 4: Frequencies of Request in Situation 4 (Out-group, Complaint)

Level	Rank	American		Japanese	
		Freq.	Level Freq.	Freq.	Level Freq.
0	1	0	0	2	2
	2	0		3	
	3	0		0	
	4	6		24	
	5	7		0	
1	6	0	29	0	27
	7	0		0	
	8	2		0	
	9	11		0	
	10	3		0	
	11	1		1	
2	12	0	1	0	1
	13	0		0	
Total		30		30	

Table 5: Frequencies of Indirectness in Each Level for Situation 1

(the number in parentheses shows % in each group)

	American	Japanese	Total
Direct	2 (6)	8 (27)	10
Conventional	20 (67)	19 (63)	39
Very Indirect	8 (27)	3 (10)	11
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	60

Table 6: Frequencies of Indirectness in Each Level for Situation 2

	American	Japanese	Total
Direct	0 (0)	3 (10)	3
Conventional	22 (73)	26 (87)	48
Very Indirect	8 (27)	1 (3)	9
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	60

Table 7: Frequencies of Indirectness in Each Level for Situation 3

	American	Japanese	Total
Direct	4 (13)	12 (40)	16
Conventional	18 (60)	14 (47)	32
Very Indirect	8 (27)	4 (13)	12
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	60

Table 8: Frequencies of Indirectness in Each Level for Situation 4

	American	Japanese	Total
Direct	0 (0)	2 (7)	2
Conventional	29 (97)	27 (90)	56
Very Indirect	1 (3)	1 (3)	2
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	60

Table 9: Comparison of the Mean Values by Situation
(The number in parentheses shows S.D.)

Situation	Americans	Japanese	
1 In-group, Request	7.40 (3.89)	3.63 (2.87)	< 0.001
2 Out-group, Request	7.63 (2.70)	4.07 (1.66)	< 0.001
3 In-group, Complaint	7.10 (3.87)	4.83 (3.84)	< 0.027
4 Out-group, Complaint	7.50 (2.78)	3.83 (1.64)	<0.001

In order to ascertain whether there was any relationship between indirectness and in-group or out-group membership, correlation coefficients were obtained. For the Americans, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the in-group and

out-group was r = 0.32 (P < 0.02 not significant), but for the Japanese, it was r = 0.003. Thus, American students tend to respond similarly, regardless of whether the addressee was an in-group or out-group member, but the Japanese responses were largely dependent on in-group or out-group membership. However, contrary to expectation, the Japanese did not indicate that they would respond more indirectly toward the out-group. As described above, the Japanese students used more suggestions toward an in-group member, especially in situation 3, the in-group complaint situation (unwashed dishes). Since these suggestions are ranked 8 out of 13, they are more indirect than most of the other responses. For request and complaint situations, the Japanese were not significantly more direct to the in-group than to the out-group. Thus hypothesis 2, "Japanese students are more direct when interacting with an out-group member than with an in-group member," was not supported.

Role Play

1. American pair #1 (in-group, unwashed dishes situation):[6]

In this role play recording there were no clear (direct or conventional) head acts. Instead, the complainer used all of the expressions given in (9) and added many hesitations, such as "ummm," "you know," etc.

(9) Preparators: "Could I talk to you about something?"
Hints: "I know you are really busy."
Suggested alternatives: "I'll go out and get food."
Downgraders: "I wouldn't worry so much...., but.."
Grounders to justify requests: "You know how cockroaches are."

Also once the complainee began to apologize, the complainer primarily became a listener. All speech acts used by the complainer appeared to attempt to soften the force of the complaint. (The full transcript of this role play appears in Appendix B.)

2. Japanese pair #1 (in-group, unwashed dishes situation):

Compared with the American pairs, the Japanese pairs expressed their intentions more directly. (Therefore, their role plays were much shorter). This can be seen from the more obvious head acts in Japanese role play. The head act in the first role play was a suggestive complaint following a preparatory remark (a grounder), that is, *Watasi yattoita n da kedo yappari sono gurai wa taisita tema ja nai kara otagai ni koohei ni yaritai no yo ne. Ikaga ka sira.* 'I did (your dishes) for you, but wasn't much trouble. It's just that I want to do things on an equal basis between us. How about that?' Although this was an indirect complaint, the intention was very clear and the force of the imposition was felt by the complainee; so she took the responsibility and asked the complainer to do her dishes for her for a week, and in return she agreed to do them for both later.

However, the complainer did not accept the offer, insisting that the complainee do them now, because *kibuntenkan ni narusi* 'it would be a break for you' (imposition minimizer) and *zibun no koto wa zibun de sita hoo ga iisi* 'and it is better to do your things by yourself.' When the complainee agreed to do them herself, the complainer minimized the problem saying, *iya watasi mo sonnani kini site inai n dakedo* 'No, I am not concerned so much but...'

3. American pair #2 (in-group, unwashed dishes situation):

In this unwashed dishes situation, there were no apparent head acts, only a mild hint, "You must be very busy" and an appealer, "You're not usually like that, right?" Even after the roommate showed some embarrassment and offered reparations, such as "I can, you know, take over yours for a while..." the complainer declined the offer and downplayed the "problem" saying, "That's all right. It's no big deal." Her only "complaint" was that in the future the roommate should let her know if she thought she couldn't do the dishes for some reason. (The American subject who played the role of the complainer stated, during a later interview, that for her there was no option but to do the dishes as she could not stand them being left.)

4. Japanese pair #2 (in-group, unwashed dishes situation):

The complainer first asked her roommate a number of questions (grounders) such as, *Aa, doo datta, kyoo. Bekyoo hakadotta?* 'How was your day? Did your studying go well?' *Yoru mo osoku made okite iru no ka naa* 'I'm wondering if it's that you are studying so late?,' and *yoohan wa tyanto tabeteiru no* 'Are you eating dinner properly?,' thus gradually approaching the topic, until finally coming to the most relevant utterance, *Anoo, osara to ka hon no sukosi sika dete nai kara amari tabete nai n zya nai ka to omotte tan da kedo, issyo ni arattyau kara ki niwa site nai n da kedo yappari nokotteru to kitanai desyoo, dakara doo syooka* (laugh) 'Um, I was wondering if you were not eating much, because only a few plates are left...I washed them with mine, because only a few plates are left out....I washed them with mine, so it does not bother me, but after all when (they' re) left out it's a mess, isn't it? So what shall we do?' By asking for a suggestion, the complainer imposed on the complainee to offer some kind of solution. The result was the complainee's apologizing and promising forbearance. At the end, the complainer made a conventional indirect request, *zyaa, onegai ne* 'Well, then, I ask you.'

5. American pair #1 (out-group, noise situation):

The most interesting aspect of this role play was that the person who assumed the responsibility in this noise situation was not the complainee, the one who made the noise, but rather the complainer, the one who was supposed to come to complain about the noise. She first blamed herself, saying, "It's because of me...I 've just been under a lot of stress at work," and then expressed her embarrassment: " I feel really bad." Even after the complainee realized that

the problem was her music, the complainer continued to blame herself, saying, "I should have come sooner," to explain her situation. When leaving, the complainer offered yet another apology. The complainer also used mitigating utterances such as, "I feel better....I know it's my work ...," etc. It is also interesting that she started her complaint by stating that she would come right to the point, but never did. She made many efforts to soften the imposition, resulting in a very indirect way of making a complaint.

6. Japanese pair #1 (out-group, noise situation):

In this role play the complainer used a more direct means of making a complaint by asking the complainee to practice earlier, *Moo sukosi hayaku onegai dekimasu ka* 'May I, perhaps, request (that you do it) a little earlier?' The complainer also used an intensifier *kanari* '(I can hear it) pretty well.' Furthermore, when the complainee offered to shorten the time by half an hour, the complainer asked for more, *dekireba, zyuuzi gurai ni (*laugh) 'By ten o'clock, if possible.' She also emphasized the need for the request by saying that other neighbors are also bothered by the noise.

7. American pair #2 (out-group, noise situation):

In this role play again the complainer did not use conventional indirect or direct complaints. At the beginning, however, she gave a reason for her complaint (a grounder), "I have been having trouble sleeping at night because of your violin," making the complaint obvious to the complainee. So when the latter offered an alternative, practicing in the morning, there was no need to push further. The complainer also tried to downplay the complaint with an incomplete denial. When asked if the sound was really loud, she replied: "Yes. No. Umm...Well, I hear it."

8. Japanese pair #2 (out-group, noise situation):

In this role play the complainer immediately came to the point. The head act in this role play was in the form of a conventional indirect complaint, *Oto ga kanari kikoeru si, dekitara maa zyuiti-zi goro made ni site itadakereba to omou n desu kedo* 'I can really hear your violin and I would appreciate it if you could stop practicing by about eleven.' This was followed by the requestee's apologizing and seeking assurance, *zyuuichi-zi gurai made desitara yorosii desu ka* 'Is it all right if (I stop) by eleven?' The complainer accepted the apology and minimized the problem: *Ee, mondai nai desu* 'Yes, it shouldn't be any problem' and *tondemo arimasen* 'No problem.'

DISCUSSION

The results of this study did not support the hypothesis that Japanese students are more indirect than American students in complaint and request situations. Americans tended to behave similarly in all the situations studied, while Japanese responded and acted differently in the out-group and in-group situations. However, the reason for this is not necessarily that the Japanese students were more indirect toward out-group members; Japanese complaints and requests to out-group members were not more indirect than those to in-group members.

In light of previous research, these results are surprising. Of course we need more data to confirm the results, but it is possible that the Japanese may be more direct than has been assumed. For example, Barnlund (1989) notes that Americans value verbal expressions and the arts of argument and debate are encouraged throughout their lives, while the Japanese prefer avoidance and accommodation to solve problems. It is possible, then, that Japanese may avoid requests or complaints (i.e., they do not say anything), especially in face-threatening situations; however, when they think they should request or complain, they may do so in a simple and direct manner because they do not believe in arguing.

Japanese society also may be changing in terms of their linguistic behavior. It is said that young people have become more individualistic and straightforward than older people. Ogino (1989) shows that college students in his study did not use honorifics. Therefore, present day Japanese may be tending toward a more direct communicative style than before. In order to confirm this, we need comparisons of age groups and preferably longitudinal studies to show generational changes in Japanese society.

If, in fact, the Japanese are more direct than they are assumed to be, then the question is why are there so many claims about Japanese "indirectness?" This may be related to speech characteristics valued in Japanese society. If people talk directly, the Japanese may think the speakers are too abrupt and rude. Therefore, they may add softeners such as *tyooto* 'a bit' or *kedo* 'but' to weaken the illocutionary force of their utterances. However, a "head act" itself may be shown in the direct form instead of a conventional indirect form. Another reason for the claim for Japanese indirectness may be the Japanese use of hints. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) show that the Japanese use hints more frequently than Americans. A hint makes the speaker's intentions even less apparent than a conventional indirect form does. Therefore, people may get the impression that the Japanese are more indirect than they actually are.

It may be true, as many linguists claim, that the Japanese language has more grammatical ways to express indirectness than other languages, but this does not necessarily mean that Japanese speakers are more indirect than people of other cultures and languages. It may mean that Japanese speakers have a more

elaborate set of pragmatic conventions which guide their use of indirect expressions. The relationship between grammatical forms and pragmatic conventions with regard to directness has an analogy in the analysis of Japanese politeness: The fact that the Japanese language has a complicated set of honorific forms does not mean that Japanese speakers are necessarily more polite than other groups.

This finding also has pedagogical implications. If teachers over-emphasize the aspect of Japanese indirectness, they may mislead students. Americans who expect that Japanese speakers are indirect may feel confused in situations where Japanese are actually not indirect. Thus it is important that teachers be able to describe a more accurate picture of Japanese, not a stereotype.

While the results of this study are quite revealing, some methodological problems still exist. The concept of group affiliation should be more clearly defined and adequately represented. However, it was very difficult to choose situations which were at the same time realistic and similar in significance to both Japanese and American students. For example, the out-group is represented as a neighbor in this study; however, it is possible that the concept of "neighbor" may be different between young people who live temporarily in an apartment (like in the situation of this study) and married couples who own a house and live there permanently. For the latter, a neighbor may be a member of the out-group, but for the former, a neighbor may not be perceived as an out-group member in Nakane's terms but closer to a stranger, or a person of no significance to their interactions. If so, this could possibly account for why the subjects in this study behaved directly. Also, a typical example of in-group membership is a family member. However, since the subject pairs were all intended to be of equal status, it is impossible to use family members as in-group representatives because each family member's status in Japanese society is clearly different. Some Japanese students commented on the indirectness of in-group situations, explaining that it is sometimes difficult to complain to a best friend because they are afraid of negatively influencing the relationship with that friend. Therefore the relationship between indirectness and in-group/out-group difference is complicated by a diversity of variables.

One of the problems for any cross-linguistic study is the creation of rating scales. While Takahashi's rating scale is quite comprehensive, it needs further testing with additional data, as well as validation of inter-rater reliability. For example, the English modal 'can' and the Japanese *dekiru* may appear to be near equivalents in meaning, but it is unlikely that they carry the same level of indirectness in each language, especially since 'can' is used far more frequently for requests than Japanese *dekiru*.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I have demonstrated that when the status between the subjects is equal, Japanese students are not necessarily more indirect than American students, and that the in-group and out-group distinction may not be related in a simple fashion to the level of indirectness used. The results are interesting because they demonstrate that instead of saying simply that "the Japanese are indirect," we must investigate precisely when and in what contexts they use indirectness and when they do not. There is no doubt that the Japanese are indirect in certain circumstances and are concerned about when they should be indirect. This contributes to miscommunication between Japanese and Americans and to the belief for both Japanese and Americans that "Japanese are indirect." However, as Beebe and Takahashi (1989) have shown, a Japanese person with higher status is not indirect to a person with a lower status. It is even possible that Japanese speakers of higher status are actually more direct to their subordinates than are their American counterparts. And when there is no status difference, as in this study, the Japanese may be more direct than it is often assumed. One of the reasons the Japanese sometimes are more direct than assumed may be related to the Japanese attitude toward speech. The Japanese tend to value silence and regard eloquent speech with suspicion. The verbal skills of debating, arguing, or persuading are not considered important. Therefore, they either tend not to say anything, or if they do decide to speak out, they may do so directly. Current changes in Japanese society may also be contributing factors to the increased use of direct speech; it is entirely possible that the Japanese speech of today is becoming more direct than before. In order to more clearly understand the dynamics, mechanisms, and motivations of directness and indirectness in Japanese society, we need to collect more data from actual interactive contexts and conduct further studies in clearly defined situations.

NOTES

[1] Part of this article was presented at the Southern Conference on Linguistics (SECOL) in March, 1992. This is a revised version of a paper on which I received very helpful comments from Dr. Polly Szatrowski, Dr. Gabriel Kasper and Susan J. Weaver.

[2] The romanization and word division used in the Japanese transcription in this paper follows Jorden (1987), except for diacritics and special symbols which express stress, intonation, etc.

[3] The following symbols and abbreviations are used.

(.)	short pause
(( ))	comments
COP	copulative verb, be
NEG	negative

EXT	sentence extender
SUB	subject marker
TOP	topic marker
QUEST	question particle
HEDGE	hedge, softener

[4] The main difference between the DCT by Blum-Kulka et al., (1989) and my questionnaire is that mine does not include the last turn in which the addressee responds to the speaker. This is illustrated in the following example (Blum-Kulka et al. (1989, p. 14))
(a) At the University
Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.
Ann: _____
Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.
My reason for not having the last turn, such as Judith's is that the indicated speaker style may influence the subject's response.

[5] I consulted with Takahashi, and we both agreed on the level of this sentence.

[6] The participants of group 1 are graduate students; participants in group 2 are undergraduates.

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APPENDIX A

The description of the following four situations was presented in random order in the subject's native language (either English or Japanese) with the instructions, but without a title such as in situation 1(in-group, request) as seen below.

Instructions: Please read the following situations carefully. Assuming the person you are going to talk to is of the same sex and about the same age as you, please write what you would say in these situations. Please give your exact words, just as you would say to them.

Situation 1 (Request, in-group)
You lend your expensive outfit to your best friend for her party. Although she phones to thank you after the party, it has been a month and she has not yet returned it. You really want it back now. When you go to see her about your outfit , you say:..."

Situation 2 (Request, out-group)
You are waiting at a bus stop. Finally, the bus comes and you realize that you only have a $20 bill for the bus fare of 60 cents. You know that the bus driver does not carry any change. If you miss the bus, you will be late for an important exam. At that moment, you recognize a neighbor you see every morning. When you approach her, you say:..."

Situation 3 (Complaint, in-group)
You and your roommate, who is also your friend, have been getting along pretty well. But recently she has been leaving her dishes unwashed until the following day. You have already finished your mid-term exam, but she is still working on her paper. Although you know she is busy, you feel she is inconsiderate to you. Again, this morning you found a big mess in the kitchen and had to clean up for your breakfast. When you come home, you see your roommate. You decide to talk with her about it, you say:..."
you:"

Situation 4 (Complaint, out-group)
You work for a big security company. Recently you have been doing a lot of overtime, and feel exhausted when you get to your apartment. However, you have a neighbor who lives upstairs and practices the violin every night until well after 11 p.m. Because of the "noise," you suffer from insomnia. Finally, you decide to go and talk with her about it. You knock on her door and she opens it. You say:

APPENDIX B

The following are transcripts of role plays by American pair #1 and Japanese pair #1 in an in-group situation.

Role play 1 (American, in-group, unwashed dishes)

1 Julie:	Uh, Karen.
2 Karen:	Yeah.
3 Julie:	Umm (.) could I talk to you about something?
4 Karen:	Sure.
5 Julie:	Umm (.) I know you're really busy, writing a paper and you know, I just finished my mid-term, so I know what it's like to be under stress.
6 Karen:	Yeah.
7 Julie:	Usually when I'm really busy writing a paper or studying for an exam or something, really busy, so, I'll go out and get food to go, because then I don't have to worry about washing dishes.
8 Karen:	Oh, it's the dishes, huh?
9 Julie:	Yeah ((laughing))
10 Karen:	Yeah (.) I'm really sorry. (.) ummm you know, it's gonna be over pretty soon (.) this, this crisis (.) but it's only

	I'm thinking about (.) just (.)
11 Julie:	Yeah(.)
12 Karen:	I guess that's it. I mean just (.) I wake up in the morning and just thinking about (.) just (.)
13 Julie:	Yeah.
14 Karen:	I guess I am getting very self-centered about routine
15 Julie:	I wouldn't worry so much about our place, but, but you know how cockroaches are.
16 Karen:	I know it's pretty gross.
17 Julie:	So.
18 Karen:	I know (.) I'm sorry. I know, I didn't think about it.
19 Julie:	I know .
20 Karen:	I'm sorry. I will pay more attention about it. Please remind me if I forget again.
21 Julie:	Okay, thanks a lot.
22 Karen:	Sure, no problem.

Role play 2: Japanese, Unwashed dishes

1 Yuki: *Tadaima.*
'I'm back.' (greeting when one comes home)

2 Keiko: *Okaerinasai.*
'Welcome back.'
(response to that greeting by the person already at home)

3 Yuki: *Aa Keiko-san, ioo to omotte ita n dakedo ne, anoo, kesa syokki ga aratte nakatta desyoo. Watasi yattoita n dakedo yappari sono gurai wa taisita tema zyanaikara, otagai ni koohei ni yaritai no yo ne, ikaga kasira?.*

'Oh, Keiko, I was thinking of saying (this), but..this morning you didn't wash the dishes, did you? I did (them) for you but after all it (washing dishes) shouldn't be a big deal, so I want (us) to be fair to each other, how about it ?'

4 Keiko: *Uun, gomennasai ne. Itsumo warui to omotte ita n dakedo,ima tottemo isogasikute (.) ato issyuukan sitara kondo-wa watasi-ga araukara, ato issyuukan gaman site moraenai kasira.*

'Yeah, I'm sorry. I have always felt bad about it,but now I am very busy, so I'll do the dishes in a week, so I am wondering if you would do (them) for one more week (until then).'

5 Yuki: *Aaa, issyuukan to ittemo syokuzi wa mainiti no koto dakara, uun, arau no wa kibuntenkan ni narusi, anoo, dekiru dake yatte hosii no yo ne. Watasi wa ima made yatteta n dakedo otagain isogasikute mo syokkiarai gurai wa zibun de yatta hoo ga iisi .*

'Oh, even if it is one more week, we eat every day so, uuh doing dishes can be a break in your routine, so if possible I want you to do (them). I have been doing (them) for you until now, but we are both busy and at least we should do our own dishes.'

6 Keiko: *Soo ne. Gomennasai ne {laugh}. Tui yatte kureru kara tuitui amaete uun, moo sukoshi, moo sukosi to omotte {laugh}. hontoo ni gomennasai.*

'That's right. I'm sorry. Just because you do (them) for me. I depend on you doing dishes a little longer (then I am all right). 'I'm really sorry.'

7 Yuki: *Iya watasi mo hontoo wa sonna ni ki ni sitenai n dakedo, demo yappari otagai no koto wa zibun no koto wa zibun de sita hoo ga ii kara, (.) zya onegai simasu ne.*

'No, me too, don't worry so much, but we had better do our own things by ourselves. This is what I am asking you.'

8 Keiko: *Kore kara ki o tukemasu.*
'From now on, I will take care of myself.'