Pragmatic competence in a foreign language: Teaching and learning of speech acts in Japanese

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要旨

外国における語用論的能力：日本語のスピーチアクトの教授と習得

本研究は、外国語教育の場において、意思伝達能力の一要素である語用論的側面がどのように教えられているか、また、学習者がそれをどのように言語使用に用いているかを大学の初級日本語のコースを使って調査した。教授面に関しては教科書と教案を調べ、学習者の言語使用の面に関しては学習者のロールプレイを録音し、分析した。その結果、教授面においてはスピーチアクトに関する説明が不十分であることがわかった。また、学習者が既習の言語表現を駆使して積極的にスピーチアクトを行うという面は見られなかった。

1. Introduction

From the viewpoint of second/foreign language teaching and learning, it is important to recognize what communicative competence consists of. In other words, what can a fluent speaker of a language do with that language? It is now widely accepted that communicative competence consists of several different components. According to Bachman (1990), communicative competence consists of organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Further, organizational competence consists of grammatical and textual competence, while pragmatic competence consists of illocutionary and sociolinguistic competence. However, it seems that the aspects of pragmatic competence have often been neglected in second/foreign language instruction. This study examines teaching and learning of pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects in a foreign language classroom. More specifically, it focuses on input and output of speech acts and their realization.

A speech act can be defined briefly as a functional unit in communication such as assertion, request, and apology. Each speech act can be realized in many different forms. For example, if you want to make a request of turning on the heater in a room, you can say, "Turn on the heater", "Could you turn on the heater?", or "It's cold in here." As there are many ways to perform a speech act, one utterance may also have many speech acts depending on the speaker's intention. For example, an utterance, "It's cold in here", may function as a request to turn on the heater, as an assertion about the physical condition of a room, or as a complaint. Therefore, a speaker needs to select a form among many in order to realize a speech act. At the same time, an addressee has to interpret an utterance according to the speaker's intention.

During the processes of forming a speech act and of interpreting it, a speaker of a language needs to make use of his/her knowledge of real world, grammar of the language, the context, and so forth. Therefore, language learners also need to have these different kinds of knowledge in order to form an appropriate utterance and to interpret an utterance properly. This is the area where even a fluent speaker of a second language makes inappropriate choices, because it requires not only language knowledge but also sociocultural knowledge. This study examines how explicitly or implicitly certain speech acts of Japanese are taught and how learners utilize them. Regarding teaching, the textbook and lesson plans used are examined. Learning aspect is investigated through learners' performance in role plays.

First, communicative competence is briefly reviewed. Second, the theory of speech act is summarized and reviewed. Third, literature review on interlanguage pragmatics and sociolinguistic aspects of language learning is presented. Fourth, the design of this study is described, and the results are summarized. Finally, a discussion of the study and study findings is presented.

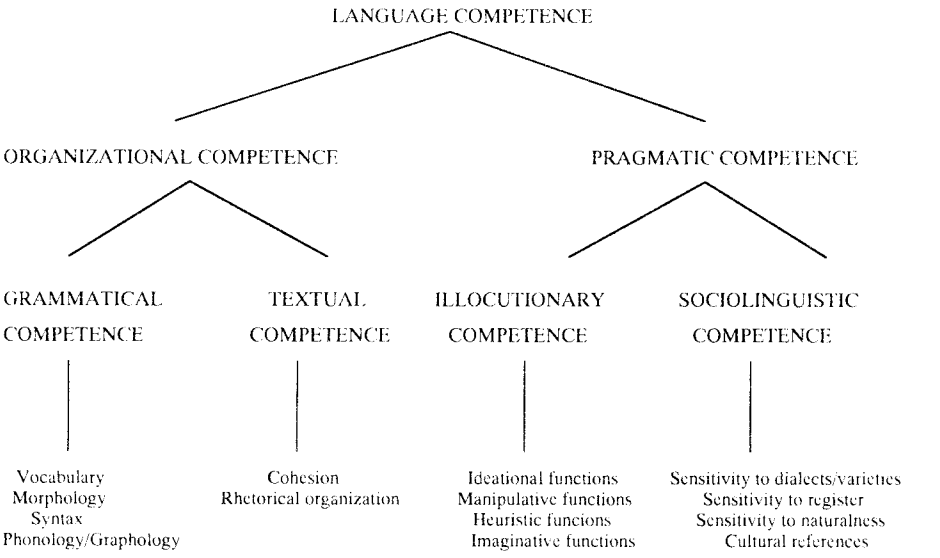
2. Communicative competence

From a point of view of language testing, Bachman (1990) describes communicative language ability. He states that this description is consistent with earlier work in communicative competence, e.g., Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Savignon (1983). At the same time, his framework extends earlier models by attempting to characterize how the various components interact with each other and the context of language use. Bachman describes communicative language ability as "consisting of both knowledge, or competence, and the capacity for implementing, or executing that competence in appropriate, contextualized communicative language use" (pp. 84).

His framework includes three components: language competence, strategic competence, and psychophysiological mechanisms. Language competence comprises a set of specific knowledge components that are utilized in communication through language. Strategic competence refers to the mental capacity for implementing the components of language competence in communicative language use. It thus provides the means for relating language competencies to features of the context and to the language user's knowledge structures such as sociocultural knowledge and real-world knowledge. Psychophysiological mechanisms refer to the neurological and psychophysical phenomenon. In this section, however, only language competence is described in detail, because this is what is relevant in the current study.

Language competence can be classified into organizational competence and pragmatic competence. Each of these, in turn, consists of several categories. In the following section, organizational competence is briefly summarized. Then, pragmatic competence is described.

Figure 1. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (From Bachman 1990, p. 87)



2.1. Organizational competence

Organizational competence involves knowledge of formal structure of language, which can be classified into two types: grammatical competence and textual competence. Grammatical competence consists of a number of relatively independent competencies such as the knowledge of phonology, vocabulary, morphology, and syntax. This type of knowledge is necessary in order to produce or recognize grammatically correct sentences.

Textual competence includes the knowledge of the conventions for joining sentences together to form a text, which is a unit of language, either spoken or written, consisting of two or more sentences that are structured according to rules of cohesion and rhetorical organization. Cohesion refers to ways of explicitly marking semantic relationships such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Conventions of rhetorical organization include common methods of development such as narration, description, comparison, classification, and process analysis

(McCrimman 1984). Textual competence is also involved in conversational language use. Much of the work in discourse analysis deals with components of textual competence, which reveals a rich variety of devices for marking cohesive relationships in oral discourse (Bachman 1990).

2.2. Pragmatic competence

Another type of abilities in communicative competence is pragmatic competence. This refers to abilities to use conventional rules of language and manifestations of these in production and interpretation of utterances. This category can be subdivided into illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. The notion of illocutionary competence has to do with the theory of speech acts, which is described in detail later. In brief, utterances have three kinds of meaning: the propositional or locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning, and perlocutionary force. Illocutionary meaning refers to the social function that an utterance has, such as a request, an assertion, or a complaint, which was briefly mentioned above. Illocutionary competence is used both in expressing language to be taken with certain illocutionary force and in interpreting the illocutionary force of language.

While illocutionary competence enables us to use language to express and to interpret the illocutionary force of utterances, the appropriateness of these functions and how they are performed varies depending on the language use context. Sociolinguistic competence is the control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the sociocultural and discoursal features. Bachman (1990) further discusses the following abilities under this category: sensitivity to differences in variety, to differences in register, and to naturalness, and the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech.

In every language, there are variations in use that may be associated with language uses in different regions or different social groups. The appropriateness of the use of these varieties varies depending on the context. Therefore, ability to code-switch between varieties depending on the context, or sensitivity to differences in variety, is an important part of sociolinguistic competence.

Similar to the differences in variety are the differences in register. Register refers to variation in language use within a single variety. Selection of a register depends on aspects of the language use context such as field of discourse, mode of discourse, and style of discourse. The field of discourse, or discourse domain, may consist simply of subject matter of the language use, or it may consist of discourse community such as that of drug dealers. The mode of discourse refers to spoken and written discourse. The third

aspect, style of discourse, refers to variations whose use depends on the formality of the language use context.

Sensitivity to naturalness is an aspect of sociolinguistic competence that allows a speaker to formulate or interpret an utterance which is not only linguistically accurate, but also phrased in a nativelike way. Without this competence, a speaker might produce an utterance that sounds strange or that affects interpretability.

The final aspect of sociolinguistic competence described in Bachman (1990) is the ability to interpret cultural references and figures of speech. Knowledge of extended meanings given by a specific culture to particular events, places, institutions, or people is required whenever these meanings are referred to in language use. Although speakers from different cultural backgrounds may be able to attach meaning to figures of speech, the rules of the use of figurative language, as well as the meanings and images that are associated with it are deeply rooted in the culture of a given speech community.

3. Speech acts

3.1. Definition of speech act

According to Austin's (1962) theory of speech acts, utterances have three kinds of meaning, i.e., locutionary meaning, illocutionary meaning, and perlocutionary force. The locutionary or propositional meaning is the literal meaning of the utterance. The locutionary meaning of an utterance such as, "It's cold in here", is that the temperature of the room where the speaker is, is low.

The second kind of meaning, illocutionary meaning, is the social function that an utterance has. The utterance, "It's cold in here", may have the illocutionary meaning or function of a request to turn on the heater. If the utterance is repeated, it would also function as a complaint. The interpretation of an utterance as to its illocutionary meaning depends heavily on the context and the interlocutors.

The third kind is perlocutionary force, which refers to the notion of the consequences or effects that utterances have on the actions, thoughts, or beliefs of hearers. If the utterance leads to the action of turning on the heater, the utterance had perlocutionary force. However, utterances do not always have perlocutionary force. For example, utterances such as, "Hello", and, "I promise", do not have any perlocutionary force. The hearer merely understands that he/she is being greeted or the hearer may or may not expect something from the speaker, respectively, but these utterances do not create any action or change on the hearer's part.

As described above, a speech act is a functional unit in communication. Searle (1969) claims that speaking a language is performing speech acts, acts such as making statements, giving commands, asking questions, making promises, and so forth. Although these definitions seem to make theoretical sense, assigning functions to utterances is actually problematic in that the apparent sentence meaning does not necessarily coincide with the intended pragmatic meaning, especially when a speech act is indirect. According to Cohen (1996), empirical research on the perception and production of speech acts by learners of a second or foreign language has helped to provide descriptions of speech acts.

3.2. Speech act sets

In studying the acquisition of speech acts by second or foreign language learners, researchers of second language acquisition (SLA) have been concerned with the set of realization patterns of each speech act typically used by native speakers of the target language. This set of realization is referred to as a speech act set. Studies have shown that even high-proficiency learners of a language often fail to master the whole range of speech act set (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1996; Cohen 1996).

Cohen (1996) draws an example of speech act set from Cohen, Olshtain, and Rosenstein (1986) which investigates the acquisition of a speech act, namely apology. The speech act set of apologizing consists of at least the following main strategies and formulas (Cohen, Olshtain, & Rosenstein 1986):

1) An expression of an apology, whereby teh speaker uses a word, expression, or sentence which contains a relevant performative verb such as apologize, forgive, excuse, be sorry.

2) An explanation or account of the situation which indirectly caused the apologizer to commit the offense and which is used by the speaker as an indirect speech act of apologizing.

3) Acknowledgement of responsibility, whereby the offender recognizes his or her fault in causing the infraction.

4) An offer of repair, whereby the apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage which resulted from the infraction.

5) A promise of nonrecurrence, whereby the apologizer commits himself or herself not to have the offense happen again.

Within each of these strategies, there are several ways of expressing the semantic formula. Therefore, learners need to know these possible ways of apologizing, as well as which context would be appropriate for each of them.

Using this speech act set of apology, the following are realizations of the speech act in Japanese:

(1) a Sumimasen. (Excuse me / I'm sorry.)
b. Gomennasai. (I'm sorry.)
c. Uso o tsuita koto o urushite kudasai. (Please forgive me of lying.)
(2) Basu ga okureta ndesu. (The bus was late.)
(3) Watashi no sekinin desu. (It's my responsibility.)
(4) Shuuridai wa watashi ga mochimasu. (I will pay for the repair.)
(5) a. Moo nido to chikoku shimasen. (I will never be late again.)
b. Korekara wa ki o tsukemasu. (I will be careful from now on.)

These examples show that there are two levels of choices, first choosing one of the five formulas, and second selecting the appropriate linguistic form within a category. Both levels of choices require sociocultural knowledge of Japanese speech community.

4. Literature review

This chapter presents a brief review of the studies on the acquisition of speech acts. Ellis (1992) conducted a longitudinal study of the acquisition of requests in a natural setting. The subjects were two boys, aged 10 and 11 years, and the production data were obtained through classroom observation by the researcher in England. He found that there were ample opportunities for natural language use, and that it enabled the learners to develop basic ability to perform requests using target language forms. However, the study also found that these learners failed to acquire a full range of request types and forms over the course of four to six school terms.

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) conducted a study investigating rejections used by native and proficient nonnative speakers of English during academic advising sessions. They found that, although native speakers are able to reject an advisor's suggestion while maintaining the status balance, nonnative speakers are less able to do so. In another study by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996), the researchers investigated the sociolinguistic and pragmatic input available to nonnative speakers of English, and they conclude that the private nature of academic advising session makes it difficult for the nonnative speakers to access the possible input. They also concluded that nonnative speakers are often unable to utilize input from an advisor.

Fukushima and Iwata (1987) compared strategies used in requesting and offering among eighteen native Japanese speakers and fourteen native English speakers in the United States. The study found that the sequence of semantic formulas in request

utterances was generally similar in Japanese and English. In addition, similar strategies were used in the two languages with regard to understaters, grounders, cost minimization, and address terms. However, Japanese respondents made distinctions between sociocultural strategies and sociolinguistic expressions depending on the closeness of friendship, while English speakers did not.

In the study of refusals by Takahashi and Beebe (1987), they investigated written refusals by native speakers of English, native speakers of Japanese, Japanese ESL students in the United States, and Japanese EFL students in Japan. They found that transfer occurred in both ESL and EFL learners at both lower and higher proficiency levels. Native language influence was generally stronger in the EFL context, and negative transfer of native language speech act behavior occurred more at the higher proficiency level ESL students. The researchers interpret these phenomena as that the greater facility of the advanced students at speaking English allowed them to express notions that seemed typically Japanese.

5. The study

5.1. Research design

This study investigates teaching and learning of speech acts in Japanese as a foreign language by examining a fourth semester Japanese course at college level. This study is comprised of two main parts, an examination of input and an analysis of learner output. The first part looks at sociolinguistic and pragmatic input available to learners through an examination of the content of the textbooks and lesson plans used in this course.

The second part examines the learners' production of speech acts and their forms of realization. The output data come from a conversation test given to the learners as a part of course requirements. This test consisted of a Q&A part, a role play of telephone conversation with the interviewer, and a learner-learner role play of visiting a professor at home. Both of the roleplays were done as classroom activities. For the second role play, the learners were encouraged to practice before hand with their partner. Therefore, the output obtained from this test did not occur in spontaneous speech.

5.2. The hypotheses

Second/foreign language teaching, in general, often has focus on grammatical knowledge (in Bachman's model of communicative competence) and fails to recognize

the importance of sociolinguistic and pragmatic knowledge in language acquisition. Thus, the first hypothesis of the study is as follows.

Hypothesis 1) Sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language are not well incorporated into language instruction.

This hypothesis can be interpreted as lack or insufficiency of sociolinguistic and pragmatic input in classroom. When there is not enough input, its natural outcome is lack of output, which predicts the second hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2) Language learners can not produce speech acts appropriately in Japanese.

These are the hypoptheses, or research questions, that motivated this study. In addition to these questions, there are some more research questions that are related.

Question 1) If speech acts are taught, how explicitly or implicity are they taught?

Question 2) How do learners who succeed in using appropriate speech acts actually use them?

5.3. Subjects

The subjects for the second part of this study were 12 students taking a fourth semester Japanese course at an American university. Three of them had Asian background, and the rest were all native speakers of American English. Although some of them had taken Japanese in high school, most of them started learning Japanese in this institution. None of them had lived in Japan. Most of their source of Japanese was the Japanese classroom, and none of them were using Japanese for real communication outside of the classroom, which is a typical foreign language learning situation.

6. Results

6.1. Results: Input

The textbook utilizes notional/functional syllabus, and the content is organized according to topics, such as introducing people, at a hospita, and inviting a friend. There are two books that cover every chater. One called "Notes" is the main textbook and has "Model Conversation", "Grammar Notes" (grammar explanation), and "Conversation Notes" (communication rules and description). The other is called "Drills", and it has new vocabulary lists, "Structure Drills" (pattern drills), "Conversation Drills" (pattern drills of longer conversations), and "Tasks and Activities" (listening, reading, writing, and other activities related to each topic). In the following description of teaching material, I

will refer to the "Notes" textbook as "textbook" and the "Drills" textbook as "workbook". For the purpose of this study, two chapters are examined, namely Chapter 18 "Phoning (3): Ones professor's home" and Chapter 19 "Visiting".

6.1.1. Input: Phone conversation

First, Chapter 18 is examined as to sociolingusitic and pragmatic explanation given on the topic of calling. Although this is the third chapter with the topic of phone call, many of the expressions associated with calling someone at home are new, because the other two topics were calling a hospital and a taxi. In the section of "Model Conversation", the expressions used in the conversation are translated and explained. Certain fixed expressions in phone conversation, such as *moshimoshi* (hello) and [name] *to mooshimasu ga* (this is [name] calling), are identified as customary expressions in phone conversation. Formal expressions are marked as F, while casual expressions are marked as C.

Although the grammar explanation section does not usually have much sociolinguistic explanation, the subsection on humble form (which is one of the formal styles) has descriptions as to when it is used. The "Conversation Notes" section first gives some detailed descriptions of contexts where honorific (which is another form of the formal styles) and humble forms are used. It then gives detailed rules and strategies for calling someone at home. Phone calls, especially in Japanese, are structured in a certain way, and this section identifies six steps in calling someone at home: (1) how to ring someone at home, (2) how to ask to speak to the person you want, (3) how to arrange to ring again, (4) how to leave a message, (5) how to end a conversation on the phone, and (6) how to pass on a message. Along with sample conversations, each step describes what needs to be said and what can be said. For example, in step (2) how to ask to speak to the person you want, three expressions to ask for someone are first introduced along with comments of "polite" and "very polite":

(6) [name] *san, onegai shimasu.*
irasshai masu ka. (polite)
irasshai masu de shoo ka. (very polite)
(Is [name] there?)

It gives expressions used in different contexts such as asking for a friend, a professor at home, someone at the office, and a family member at work. It also gives what one cannot say. For example:

(7) *Note* Generally in Japan, it is not polite to leave a message

asking your teacher to return your call.

In the workbook of this chapter, the conversation drill section gives parts of phone conversations according to their functions, such as ringing a professor at home, leaving a message for someone to ring back, and leaving a message. This section follows the steps shown in the textbook. It gives indications of styles (formality) such as regular polite (no marking), very polite or formal (with F), and casual (with C), as well as markings for female and male speech. However, this section does not present any explanation or description of the conversations given, and it merely states the context of each conversation.

The lesson plans for this chapter did not list any specific directions as to what and how material should be presented or described in terms of sociolinguistic or pragmatic information. In general, this chapter of the textbook contained good description of expressions and their social meanings.

6.1.2. Input: Visiting

The model conversation in the textbook has four steps of conversation flow that might take place when someone visits another's home: at the entrance, in the livingroom, at dinner, and leave-taking. In the following section of the model conversation, expressions in the conversation are explained along with translation. An expression with many functions is introduced with several examples:

(8) *Ojama shimasu.*

a. *Ojama shite mo iidesu ka.* (May I disturb you?)

b. *Ojama shimashi ta.* (Excuse me for having disturbed you.)

c. *Taihen ojama shimasi ta.* (I'm afraid I stayed rather too long.)

d. *Ojama ja nakatta ra, ashita ukagai tai n desu ga.*

(If it's not inconvenient, I'd like to visit you tomorrow.)

The conversation notes section first presents information related to visiting someone's home: some descriptions of a traditional Japanese house, bowing, giving a present, meals, and the Japanese style bath. In the section of giving a present, the Japanese custom of taking a present when invited is described, as well as the expressions that accompany when giving it are shown.

(9) a. (X) Sensee, kore o sashiage tai n desu ga. (I would like to give this to you.)

b. Tsumaranai mono desu ga, doozo.

(It's something worthless, but please (accept it).)

c. Honno sukoshi desu ga, doozo. (It's nothing much, but please (accept it).)

d. Honno kimochi desu kara, doozo.

(It's a token of my gratitude, so please (accept it).)

e. Kore kuni no omiyage desu. Doozo.

(This is a present from my country. Please (accept it).)

The example (9a) is shown as an inappropriate expression although it uses a formal style. This subsection also explains that Japanese often hesitate before accepting a present as an expression of modesty. In the subsection of meals, the expressions used before and after a meal are given.

(10) Host: Nani mo gozaimasen ga. (We have nothing much, but...)

Guest: Waa, oishisoo desu ne. Itadaki masu.

(Wow! This looks delicious. Thank you.)

(11) Guest: Doomo gochisoo sama deshi ta. (Thank you for a wonderful meal.)

Host: Iie, osomatsu sama deshi ta. (Not at all).

The section of strategies in the conversation notes describes how to start a conversation (visiting), how to express praise, and how to end a conversation (visiting). Under the first and third contexts, conversations that are likely to take place at the entrance and when taking a leave, respectively, areintroduced. The second topic, how to express praise, illustrates four contexts of compliment and the ways to deflect them. It briefly mentions that praising and expressing modesty when praised are social conventions that are given much importance in Japan. However, it does not describe when and in what context a compliment can be accepted.

In the workbook, again as the previous chapter of phone call, there is no description or explanation of sociolinguistic or pragmatic information other than formality and male/female speech distinction. Lesson plans for this chapter did not suggest any kind of sociolinguistic input either. It basically depends on the instructor's decision. The sociolinguistic and pragmatic input available to learners in this chapter of the textbook seemed less integrated compared to the previous chapter. However, it had covered the basic speech events that would occur when visiting someone's home.

6.2. Results: Output

This section examines the production of speech acts and their realization taken from the role plays performed in the conversation test. Both appropriate and inappropriate speech events are given, and later in the section of discussion, possible reasons for the success or inappropriateness of speech events are discussed. Most of the

grammatically incorrect utterances are "cleaned up" for the purpose of sociolinguistic and pragmatic focus of the utterances.

6.2.1. Output: Phone conversation

Successful phone conversations followed the structure of phone conversation introduced in the conversation notes of the textbook, while unsuccessful ones started with an inappropriate step. The role play was to call a friend, Midori Tanaka, and leave a message for her. The person A is the student and B is the interviewer.

(12) a. A: Moshimoshi, Tanaka-san no otaku desu ka.
(Hello, is this the Tanaka residence?)
B: Hai, soodesu ga. (Yes, that's right.)
A: Ano, Padyuu daigaku no XX to mooshimasu ga,
(Uhm, this is XX of Purdue University speaking, but)
Midori-san irasshaimasu ka.
(Is Midori there?)

b. A: Moshimoshi, Tanaka Midori wa irasshaimasu ka.
(Hello, is Midori Tanaka there?)
B: Iie, Midori wa mada kaette imasen ga. (No, Midori is not back yet.)

The example (12a) follows the phone conversation rules of Japanese. On the other hand, (12b) fails to follow the conventions. Although A's utterance functions as asking for the person, it sounds much less proficient because of the deletion of *-san* (Mr./Ms.) when honorific form is used, i.e., *irasshaimasu* (honorific form of *to go*).

In the speech act of request, many learners failed to use follow-up expressions. While successful learners followed the steps for leaving a message, i.e., asking if it is OK to leave a message, leaving a message, and saying *yoshoshiku onegaishimasu* (equivalent of *thank you* in English with a different literal meaning). An inappropriate conversation was as follows.

(13) B: Midori wa mada kaette imasen ga.
A: Ashita no kurasu no koto nan desu ga, yasumi desu to otsutae kudasai.
(It's about tomorrow's class, but it's cancelled.)
B: Hai, wakarimashita. (Yes, I got the message.)
A: Arigatoo gozaimasu. Sayoonara. (Thank you very much. Bye.)

In this conversation the learner used *arigatoo gozaimasu* which is most likely transfer from English. In Japanese speech act of request, such expressions as *yoroshiku* and *yoroshiku onegaishimasu* are almost obrigatory as closing of the speech event.

6.2.2. Output: Visiting

This role play was done by pairs of learners, and they had been given the topic and had been encouraged to practice beforehand. Therefore, most of the learners had made a dialogue and had memorized it. Therefore, inappropriateness mainly came from the insufficient understanding of the conversation pieces presented in the conversation drills of the workbook. For example:

(14) A: Gomen kudasai. (Excuse me.)
B: Hai. Donata desu ka. (Yes, who is it?)
A: Konbanwa. A desu. (Good evening. It's A.)
B: A, A-san, konbanwa. (Oh, Hi, A.)
A-san, yoku irasshaimashi ta. (Welcome.)
A: Konbanwa. (Good evening.)
B: Doozo oagari kudasai. (Please come in.)
A: Hai, shitsureishimasu.

This pair misunderstood the two pieces of conversation presented in the workbook as succeeding ones, and therefore, this conversation became redundant in that person A says *konbanwa* twice. Another inappropriate utterance or action comes from the same pair.

(15) A: Anoo, kore, kukkii desu. Minasan de doozo.
(Uhm, these are cookies. Please have them with everyone.)
B: (After receiving them) Iya, sonna shinpai shinaide kudasai.
(Please don't worry about such a thing.)
A: Demo, honno kimochi desu kara.
(But it's a token of my gratitude, so please (accept it).)

In this case, the inappropriateness comes from the fact that B said her first line after accepting the present. The action of accepting it and the utterance of refusing it do not go together. A successful conversations was as follows:

(16) A: Kore, boku ga tsukutta buraunii desu. Minasan de doozo.
(These are the brownies I made. Please have these with everyone.)
B: Waa, arigatoo gozaimasu. Jaa, dezaato ni itadaki mashoo.
(Wow, thank you very much. Let's have them for dessert.)
A: Ee, zehi soo shite kudasai. (Yes, please do so.)

Accepting a present without hesitation does not result in inappropriateness. Perhaps in this case, it was even more appropriate to accept the present, since it was homemade.

7. Discussion

The examples given above show that inappropriateness of learners' utterances come from misunderstanding of dialogues presented in the textbook and workbook, as well as from native language transfer. The examples (14) and (15) show their misunderstanding of the conversations in the workbook, while examples (12b) and (13) seem to be caused by transfer of knowledge of English. Due to the nature of foreign language learning, input available to learners is from their instructor and the teaching material, and therefore, in order to fill in the gaps, it is very much likely that they transfer their language knowledge. However, in the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects, there is a big gap between the two languages, English and Japanese.

Regarding the first hypothesis, "Sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language are not well incorporated into language instruction", it seems that although the textbook used in this course does present sociolinguistic and pragmatic information to some extent, it is not utilized very well in the classroom. The textbook often list common fixed expressions, but it fails to explain their literal meaning and cultural background. Learners need to know both literal meaning and actual function of those expressions in order to be able to use them appropriately. Another problem is that teaching of these aspects are basically up to the instructor, and if he or she chooses not to teach them (or if it does not even occur to him or her), the learners do not get opportunities to learn them. This is the limitation foreign language instruction has, because the learners usually do not have chances to pick them up outside of the classroom.

The second hypothesis, "Language learners can not produce speech acts appropriately in Japanese", is difficult to determine, because some learners were very successful in the role plays, while some were merely copying the conversations in the textbook. Since almost all of the learners used expressions given in the textbook, it can safely be said that they are not beyond the level of memorizing speech patterns of each speech event.

Regarding the two research questions, only partial answers were found. As to the first question, "If speech acts are taught, how explicitly or implicity are they taught?", the textbook examined had a few examples of explicit description of speech acts, such as example (9) and the description of compliments and ways to deflect them in the conversation notes section of chapter 19. Although the examination of lesson plans showed no explicit direction to teach speech acts explicitly, the strategy employed in actual instruction needs to be investigated through classroom observation.

The second research question, "How do learners who succeed in using appropriate speech acts actually use them?", can not be answered very well from the study findings. The learners who succeeded in conversation still seem to utilize speech patterns introduced in the textbook, and it is not yet clear whether or not they have learned the speech acts and their realization forms. In order to answer to this question better, data from spontaneous speech of some speech events involving speech acts are necessary.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated sociolinguistic and pragmatic input available to learners and these aspects of their target language production. It revealed that although the textbook contained information on these aspects of language, whether or not actual language instruction presented this type of input is not clear, because this was basically left to each instructor. The sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of learner output were examined through the learners' role plays in the conversation test. These role plays were not "spontaneous speech", because the learners were encouraged to practice beforehand. Therefore, it was difficult to examine the learners' real communicative competence, and successful learners seemed to utilize speech patterns of from the textbook well. In order to examine acquisition of speech acts, it must be better to obtain data from spontaneous speech. In other words, the contexts of the role play should not be taken from a textbook and the learners should not be given time to practice in advance.

Based on these findings including research design problems, future research needs to investigate relationships between sociolinguistic input and acquisition of this aspect of language. Research on this topic may benefit the speech act theory, as findings of the acquisition of speech acts might be useful in shaping the speech act theory, as Cohen (1996) mentioned, while the development of speech act theory would enhance the studies in the acquisition of the sociolinguistic and pragmatic aspects of language.

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