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<Research Note>

Pragmalinguistic Differences in Responses to Indirect Complaints: Comparing Japanese and Australian Parents and Children

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[1] Aim of the Research

The main objective of this study is to investigate the linguistic and pragmatic behaviour of middle class speakers with an average (annual income of annual $36,000 per year): Japanese (living in Osaka, Japan) and Australians (living in Sydney, Australia)—specifically, parents reacting to Indirect Complaints (IC) from Year 3 children.

Indirect Complaints (IC) can be considered a component of 'trouble-telling' (Jefferson 1981, 1984) or 'trouble-talk' (Tannen, 1990) which is often the initiating speech act leading to the core of child's problems.

Indirect Complaints (IC) will be defined here as the expression of dissatisfaction to an interlocutor about a speaker himself/herself or someone/something that is not present.

This study will specifically explore different responses with respect to both the Japanese and Australian groups of speakers and the sex of the subjects, the possible effects of social and contextual factors (role-relationship between participants and severity of interaction) on the realization patterns of reactions to indirect complaints. The effects of the above factors will be measured in terms of types of linguistic strategies utilized and their intensity. The goal of these descriptions is to contribute to cross-cultural, cross-linguistic research on speech acts, and to facilitate a comparison between speech act behavior in two different languages by native speakers, with a view to possible application to the development of pragmatic competence by learners of Japanese as a Second Language (JSL).

[2] Definition of Complaints

Complaints have been defined as "utterances or sets of utterances that identify a problem or trouble source and seek a remedy either from the person directly responsible for the problem or from a third person who has the power to affect the

situation" (Rader: 1977). This definition has been further refined to include a distinction between "gripes" and "complaints" (Giddens, 1981; Schaefer, 1982). When people gripe, they are expressing their dissatisfaction to someone who has no power to repair or remedy the situation in some way. In a sense, a grip is a complaint that serves only to let people vent some of their frustrations. When people complain, however, they are expressing their sentiments about a situation to a party who does have the ability to remedy the problem. This remedy can take many different forms, ranging from someone in a situation offering to replace a damaged good to someone in a situation among intimates offering an apology for his/her behavior.

George (1988) reexamined early speech act theory and distinguished between the contributions of Austin (1962) and Searle (1979), arguing that Searle provides a description of performing acts in discourse. She used Searle's rules of action in order to distinguish between acts and then show how speakers and hearers make use of such rules in order to attempt to perform acts. By adopting a Searlean perspective, George discussed two main types of complaints—expressive complaints, where a speaker expresses his attitude to a proposition, and directive complaints, where a speaker attempts to influence a hearer's action. George (ibid; 60-61) describes how the two complaints have different propositional content and necessary conditions in Searlean terms, and then how terms, and then how they set up different constraints upon their hearer as follows.

Complaint 1:	an expressive
• *propositional content*:	past, present state of affairs which has caused, is causing S (speaker) displeasure
• *preparatory condition*:	H (hearer) is able to listen to S
• *sincerity condition*:	S wants recognition of wronged state
• *essential condition*:	counts, as an attempt to get sympathy or at least a (willing) ear and has the function of being therapeutic
Complaint 2:	a directive via an assertive
• *propositional content*:	past or present A (act) of H or someone for whom H is responsible which is at a cost to S
• *preparatory condition*:	H is able to correct A, apologize for A, promise it will not happen again
• *sincerity condition*:	S wants redress or apology for A
• *essential condition*:	counts as an attempt to get H to do something

The expressive complaint has a simpler internal structure than the directive

complaint because it requires little from the hearer except a willing ear or comments of sympathy. The directive complaint instead requires that the hearer 1) accept the truth value of the assertive, and 2) satisfy the directive. There are, therefore, two moments in the negotiation of a directive complaint-the negotiation of the acceptance of the assertive and the negotiation of compliance with the directive.

[3] Research Method

3.1 Procedures and Materials

The corpus of data for this study was collected through Discourse Completion Questionnaires for parents of Year 3. The data for Discourse Completion Questionnaires were collected from 80 subjects, 40 Japanese parents of Year 3 pupils and 40 Australians parents of Year 3 pupils in 1998 and 1999. The subjects' ages ranged from twenty-five to forty three years of age. The Japanese subjects responded in Japanese and the Australian subjects responded in English. Discourse Completion Questionnaire was administered to all potential subjects to ensure the selection of those who satisfied the necessary requirements of age, education and family. The context of discourse completion situation dealt with everyday circumstances.

The questionnaire was designed so as to elicit complaints from respondent without actually using the word "complain". In order to control status and familiarity and his/her parents. The main Research Questions were as follows.

Question 1: Will the male (father) and female (mother) speakers of the two language groups behave differently in reacting to children's complaints?

Question 2: Will the male (father) and female (mother) speakers of the two language groups behave differently in reacting to a male child or a female?

Question 3: Will native speakers of Japanese and native speakers of English show differences when reacting to children's complaints?

Question 4: Will possible differences be the result of social and contextual variables?

The data for the present study were elicited from male (father) female (mother). Previous cross-cultural studies did not investigate gender differences based on the parents in the performance of complaint.

The date, stimuli have been either presented in written form, together with the

text of the situation, or they have been enacted by the investigators. Neither of the two approaches is satisfactory. The first approach, by asking the subjects to react verbally to a written stimulus, increases even more the artificiality of the instrument: the second, although re-creating the phases of a real verbal exchange, presents a serious problem of reliability. For comparability steadiness of rendition for the same stimulus from one discourse to the other is important. For present study it was deemed essential to design the discourse completion questionnaire instrument in such a way so as to overcome this problem. Furthermore since we are dealing with a comparative study equivalence in the two languages is necessary in order to make valid observation in relation to the for the above four research questions.

3.2 Texts of the Discourse Completion Questionnaires

The discourse shows the reaction of the parents to the child's indirect complaints. The first situation involves a child who is unhappy because his/her close friend suddenly stopped visiting the house. In the second situation a child is unhappy because he cannot get good marks in mathematics. (In the test, he/she got 0 out of 10.) In the third situation a child is unhappy because his/her things are often missing. The fourth situation consists of a child being unhappy because his/her friend doesn't let her use the friend's things (such as TV game, or the like). As an example SITUATION 2 is shown here:

Your child is unhappy because his/her close friend suddenly stopping your house. He (She) complains.

You (father/mother):(Name) doesn't come to our house these days. What's happened to him (her)?

Your child: He (She) doesn't want to play with me anymore. I don't know why. What shall I do?

You (father/mother):

The purpose of keeping the imaginary interlocutors' responses brief and nearly identical was to avoid unduly influencing subjects' responses. As is evident from the example, at no time are subjects actually instructed to give a complaining reaction: subjects are induced to produce this speech act by the nature of the situations.

[4] Analysis of Parents Responses to Children's Indirect Complaints

4.1 Semantic Response Categories in the Situations

The data have been categorized along the 10 point directness continuum for complaints into types of semantic component for the five situations in this section.

One of the original questions in this study was whether or not subjects would use specific semantic components in a certain order, that is, "semantic formulas", (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981) in the complaint situations: and if so, how they would use these semantic components, to what extent they would be used then, how important or necessary they would be, and how these semantic formulas would similar or different, as between the two groups of subjects.

As the data were examined on the discourse completion questionnaires in this study and in earlier ones (DeCapus, 1988; DeCapus & El-Dib, 1985; 1986; 1987), it became apparent that all the data essentially fit into thirteen semantic categories. These thirteen semantic categories seem to describe the types of responses produced within the complaint speech act, or at least those produced in these studies. Each questionnaire was subsequently analyzed, coded and the results tabulated. This section will look at some of the results of this process, but first we shall briefly define the seven most important semantic response categories. All examples are taken directly from the data produced by the subject of this study.

THE SEVEN MOST IMPORTANT SEMANTIC RESPONSE CATEGORIES

(1) Criticism: A statement in which the speaker criticizes something the hearer has done, or criticizes the hearer him/herself.
(2) Demand for Repair: A statement whereby the speaker demands that the hearer remedy the situation.
(3) Justification: A statement where by speakers vindicate their utterances.
(4) Opt Out: Subjects were told skip, that is not respond to any situation they encountered if it was one where in real life they normally would not do anything.
(5) Request for Repair: A statement whereby the speaker asks the hearer to remedy the situation.
(6) Statement of Problem: A statement of fact that lets the hearer know what the complaint is about.
(7) Threat/Pressure: A statement that lets the hearer know that the speaker is expecting some remedial action and that if it does not occur, the speaker will take other measures.

4.2 Result by Semantic Response Categories

The data resulted in 7 semantic response of Japanese categories Table 1 and Table 2 show the results for the seven semantic responses of Japanese parents and Australian parents of Children's Indirect Complaints for each of the five situations.

Table 1: Percentage of Responses by Japanese Parents by S.R.C.

		S.R.C.						
S	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
#1	64	12	18	12	0	34	16	8
#2	64	9	45	2	0	32	4	8
#3	64	2	60	4	0	13	18	3
#4	64	0	61	0	0	25	12	2
#5	64	0	74	13	0	11	2	0
Average Percentage	320	5%	52%	6%	0%	23%	10%	4%

S.R.C.: 1=Criticism, 2=Demand for repair, 3=Justification, 4=Opt out, 5=Request for repair, 6=Statement of problem, 7=Threat/Pressure, S=Situation, n=Total number of responses

Table 2: Percentage of Responses by Australian Parents by S.R.C.

		S.R.C.						
S	n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
#1	82	1	20	12	0	48	18	1
#2	82	5	27	20	0	38	8	2
#3	82	2	46	4	0	19	15	14
#4	82	0	60	2	0	13	25	0
#5	82	0	68	10	0	17	5	0
Average Percentage	82	2%	44%	10%	0%	27%	14%	3%

In looking at the results, the majority of the responses across all the data included two important semantic components: demand for repair which was frequently coupled with either a request or a demand for repair was by far more common than a request for repair in Indirect Complaints. Given the nature of the speech act of Indirect Complaints it is no surprise that the demand for repair and request for repair should appear most frequently. After all, in order to seek remediation or redress from the hearer, the hearer needs to advise the speaker how to

respond in this situation. Speakers must find out the problem from their hearers. The results show semantic differences in demand for repair between Japanese parents to their children and Australian parents to their children. We will turn to a detailed discussion of this in the following section.

4.3 Semantic Difference in Demand for Repair

Demands for repair in both languages can be phrases that entrust the speaker's interlocutor to take care of the problem. Generally such phrases are characterized by the command form of a verb as in:

Australian Parents:
Try and study harder next time. (Situation #2)
Bring your own. (Situation #4)
Just *ignore* them and they will stop upsetting you. (Situation #5)
Japanese Parents:
Leave him alone. (Situation #1)
Ask your teacher the part you can't understand. (Situation #2)
Search for it everywhere. (Situation #3)
Play with something else. (Situation #4)

In addition, a demand for repair can be a question that specifically solicits the hearer for a solution to the problem, e.g.:

Australian Parents:
Can you show me the test so we can find out what you don't know? (Situation #2)
Well, what do you think has happened to your things? (Situation #5)
Japanese Parents:
What part can't you understand? Bring your textbook. (Situation #2)
Do you always put it away carefully? (Situation #3)
Why don't you play with something else, then? (Situation #4)

As can be seen from Table 3, parents made relatively few demands for repair. On the one hand this was somewhat surprising since we tend to think of complaints as involving confrontational behavior. Yet upon further consideration it is not surprising when we take into account the general purpose of a complaint speech act. The speaker wants remediation of the problem, and generally this is best accomplished by maintaining an equitable balance between interlocutors.

Table 3: Incidence of Demands for Repair as a % of Response of Parents

	Situation				
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
Australian parents					
Males (Fathers)	9%	29%	40%	59%	73%
Females (Mothers)	12%	26%	52%	61%	62%
Japanese parents					
Males (Fathers)	25%	33%	59%	68%	87%
Females (Mothers)	10%	57%	63%	55%	61%

Speakers usually try to avoid antagonizing their hearers by requesting. In this study subjects more frequently used very indirect requests for repair rather than actual demands. Table 3 also illustrates the incidence of the use of demands for repair by the different subjects along lines of gender and language in five situations. Although men are often thought of as using more demanding and aggressive language than women (see e.g. Eakins & Eakins, 1978; Henley, 1977; Kramere, 1981), we could not find evidence of this in this data. As Table 3, shows the average percentage of the use of demands for repair was not very different along gender lines. The incidence of demands for repair from the responses of males (fathers) both the Australians and Japanese, is high across the board in Situation #5. Suppose your child was allergic to something and has spots on his/her skin, his/her school friend teased his/her saying skin-problems. Your child complains, saying 'I don't want to go to school anymore!' The incidence of demands for repair is also high from the responses of females (mothers) both the Australian and Japanese is high in the Situation #3. Your son/daughter is unhappy because his/her things are often missing. None of the three sets of data showed much similarities by gender of respondents in Situation #3 and #5. An interesting question arises here as to whether the sex of the hearer (the child) in these two situations, Situation #3 and #5, is influencing the choice of demands for repair. This factor will be discussed in the following section.

4.4 Semantic Differences of Demand for Repair by Gender of the Child

There was a noticeable difference in the results between Japanese fathers and Australian fathers. The latter made noticeably fewer demands in Situation #1 where "your child is unhappy because his/her class friend suddenly stopped visiting your house." In fact they made demands for repair less frequently here than in any of the situations. This lower frequency is what we might be led to expect giv-

Table 4: Incidence of Demands for Repair as a % of Response of the Child

Informants	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
ABF	25	33	33	63	86
ABM	12	33	50	71	50
AGF	10	25	40	55	60
AGM	33	29	53	50	74
JBF	33	24	34	60	90
JBM	13	53	53	60	54
JGF	37	42	83	75	83
JGM	7	60	72	50	67

ABF: Australian Boy's Father
ABM:Australian Boy's Mother
AGF: Australian Girl's Father
AGM:Australian Girl's Mother
JBF: Japanese Boy's Father
JBM: Japanese Boy's Mother
JGF: Japanese Girl's Father
JGM: Japanese Girl's Mother

en much of the literature on the gender factor in language which indicates that women tend to make fewer demands and make more requests than do men. It is difficult to draw any conclusions with respect to the use of demands for repair by gender of the speaker. It does not appear from the data here that the male subjects made noticeably more demands for repair than did the female subjects.

Table 4 illustrates the incidence of the use of demands for repair in the responses of the child by gender. In Situation #3 both the Australian mothers and Japanese mothers of the boy child used demands more strongly than both Australian fathers and Japanese fathers. As Table 4 shows, however, the percentage of the use of demands for repair of Australian parents and Japanese parents of the girl child is different. Australian mothers made a few more demands than did Australian fathers to the girl child. On the other hand, fathers appear to use more demanding and aggressive language than Japanese mothers with a girl child.

Australian mother to a boy child in Situation #3:

1. You *have to* find your things and look after them better.
2. You really *must* start taking care of your possessions. I can't keep buying new ones.
3. This time you will *have to* buy it with your own money.

Japanese mother to a boy child in Situation #3:

1. When did you realize it was missing? If it got lost at school, you had better ask your friends or consult your teacher.
2. Do you know where you put it?
3. I wonder why it got lost. Let's consult with your teacher.

Although in both instances the utterances are demands for repair, the pragmatic force differs. Australian mothers made much stronger demands for repair from a boy child than did Japanese mothers. Part of the reason for this greater directness or intensity of the demands for repair is that Australian mothers use "must" and "have to" in their demands. In English "must" and "have to" when used in the sense of obligation are very strong verbs which convey the idea of an order or law. These verbs in English imply that there is no alternative possible or permissible (Frank, 1972).

Upon analyzing the utterances of Japanese mothers, responses are used in interrogative sentences for a boy child like examples No. 1 and No. 2. Part of the reason for such interrogative sentences appears to be that the hearer solicits and the speaker maintains an equitable balance between interlocutors, for a solution to the problem.

Japanese mothers tend to use more face-saving demands from a boy child. They would rather consult with the teacher to get the real picture than blame the child. By contrast Australian mothers seem to prefer to hold the child responsible than involve the teacher.

Next, we will consider the result of the responses to a girl child. As Table 4 illustrates, the responses show variation according to gender.

Australian mother to a girl child in Situation #3:

1. You *must be* more careful.
2. You *had better* find it and quick.
3. We'll *have to* work harder at keeping track of your English book.
4. We'll *have to* make sure that your name is on everything.

Japanese father to a girl child in Situation #3:

1. Be sure to *check* your thing.
2. *Keep* your things careful.
3. *Consider* the cause first
4. *Do you* always put your things in order?
5. *Do you* always put it back carefully?
6. *Let's* consult your teacher.

Australian mothers use obligation expressions like "have to" to a boy child. And also, strong advice expressions like "had better" is often used to a girl child. This result shows that Australian mothers appear to try to solve with the problem together with a girl child, using sentences like No. 3 and 4. Similarly, Japanese fathers use strong order verbs like "Check" and "Consider" to a girl child. Japanese fathers try to teach their daughters communication etiquette through such language. By contrast, there are interrogative sentences such as like 'Do you know?', which Japanese mothers use to a boy child. The percentage of Japanese fathers responses to a girl child for face-saving, like sentence 'Let's consult your teacher.' is also high. This result shows that both Japanese mother and fathers responses to children tend to merely convey the idea of an order without trying to solve the problems together.

Now, I will survey the incidence of the use of demands for repair in the different responses of the child is Situation #5 in Table 4.

In contrast to the response to the boy child in Situation #3, in Situation #5 both the Australian fathers and Japanese fathers of a boy child demand more strongly than both Australian mothers and Japanese mothers.

Australian father to a boy child in Situation #5:

1. *Ignore* them.
2. *Just ignore* them and they will stop upsetting you.
3. Children can be very cruel. I know you get upset but *ignore* them.
4. Some kids are nasty, just *ignore* them.
5. Why don't you tell the teacher?

Japanese father to a boy child in Situation #5:

1. *Don't take* any notice.
2. *Don't worry* about such a thing.
3. *Tell* your teacher that you are sad, like you do at home.
4. *Consult* your teacher.
5. You *don't have to* go to school so you won't have to hear insulting things.

Australian fathers strongly demand that a boy child solve the problem, using verbs like "ignore", unlike Japanese fathers. Although the percentage of the use of the verb "to ignore" as such was not present in the responses of Japanese fathers to a boy child, they do advocate solving the problem positively, using verbs such as 'Don't take any notice.' and 'Don't worry about.'

In addition, Australian fathers advise a boy child while explaining the nature of children in general. It makes a boy child feel more confident to solve the prob-

lem. In the Japanese fathers data it was very common to find demands for repair that ask the child to consult the teacher rather than solving the problem with the child through discussion.

When we examine the data in Situation #5 regarding the response to a girl child, we note some differences between fathers' and mother' demands. Australian mothers made more demands of a girl child for repair than did Australian father. By contrast, Japanese fathers made demands for repair to a girl child more than Japanese mothers. Compared to Japanese mothers, the Australian mothers used demands for repair in 74% of the case of a girl child in this situation. The Japanese mothers produced demands for repair in 67% of the cases.

Australian mother to a girl in Situation #5:

1. *Don't worry.* If you don't pay attention, they're going to stop teasing you.
2. *Please don't worry* about it. Becky, the spots will clear up soon. Don't let them get to you.
3. Your allergy is going to be over pretty soon. *Don't worry.*
4. Well, we could tell them the story about the ugly ducking and they might not be so mean.
5. I will go and see the principal.

Japanese father to a girl child in Situation #5:

1. *Ignore* what he says?
2. *Don't worry* about what he/she says.
3. *Ignore* them.
4. You should be tough enough to retort if you are bullied.
5. Who said such a thing? I will give him a call.

Both Australian mothers and Japanese fathers do not demand so strongly as to a boy. They use verbs like 'Don't worry.' and 'Don't take any notice.' The percentage of use of strong demand like "Ignore" which is used to a boy is quite low. Compared to the analysis of the responses to a boy, it was very interesting that both Australian mothers and Japanese fathers used direct expressions to a girl like 'I will go and see the principal.' and 'I will give him a call.'

[5] Conclusion

After examining the responses in two situations; #3 and #5 it emerges that Japanese parents do not appear to use verbs of strong demand to either a boy child or a girl child as much as Australian parents do. I would like to suggest that the reason Japanese parents choose not to use strong demand verbs regardless of the

gender, is that there are face-threatening costs involved, costs that to some people may be more than the actual problem itself.

The question is, what kinds of face-threatening costs do Japanese parents find too high for the child regardless of gender, so that they do not make strong demands for repair from the child? Is it fear of personally losing face? Do such people fear that the reaction of the hearer might be such to cause themselves to lose face, such as if there is a refusal to do anything about the problem?

Sometimes the use of soft demand verbs may be due to factors such as a reluctance to put the hearer in a position of losing face. Some people may just not be willing to put another person in such a position. There may be times when Japanese parents do not view the situation as serious enough to warrant an indirect Complaint to the child. So the personality of an individual may be more important in the situations than the gender difference of the child, in the two situations.

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語用論的立場から見た間接不満の比較研究
―日本人とオーストラリア人との親子関係の比較から―

廣内　裕子

本研究は、日本語を母国語とする日本人と、英語を母国語とするオーストラリア人との二つのグループを被験者として、それぞれのグループにおける子供の間接不満を両親が社会的なコンテキストの要因の中で、語用論的立場からどのように解決するかを比較研究したものである。研究の対象は日本人、オーストラリア人とも小学3年生の子供の間接不満を、それぞれの両親がどのように解決するかを比較考察した。研究方法は談話分析の形式のアンケートを、それぞれ40人の子供の両親に日本語と英語で配布し、また、小学校の子供達と関わりを持っている男性、女性それぞれ5人ずつに、社会における子供の不満の内容の実態を把握するためにインタビュー調査を実施した。調査はどちらも1998年から、1999年にかけて実施した。

研究の考察結果として、顕著に異なった点として、日本人の両親の方がオーストラリア人の両親より、聞き手である子供を擁護するために、非言語的手段で子供の間接不満を解決する度合いが高いのとは対照的に、オーストラリア人の両親の場合は、子供が自分で問題を解決できるように、言語的手段で子供の間接不満を解決する度合いが高いことが挙げられる。また、性差の違いとして、日本人の場合、父親と母親とでは、父親の方が子供に対して間接的な言語表現で解決する度合いが、母親より高いことが明白となった。さらに、日本人の両親の場合、オーストラリア人の両親の場合より、女の子の子供に対しては face-threatening を考慮した言語表現での解決方法が用いられる一方で、オーストラリア人の場合は子供の性差に関わりなく、子供に脅迫的な言語表現やプレッシャーを与える表現を用いることによって、子供の間接不満を解決することが考察できた。今後の課題として、本研究の結果が第二言語を習得する場合にどのように反映されるのかを研究していきたい。