THE APPLICATION OF POLITENESS THEORY INTO ENGLISH EDUCATION IN JAPAN

by

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Introduction

In Japan, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) revised the Course of Study in English education twice in the last decade (in 2002 and in 2011), and the drastic changes have been made especially in the section of communicative skills: introduction of English study in elementary school, teaching English in English in high school, requirement of the subject ‘Oral Communication I’ in high school, etc. The aim of the revisions is to produce international individuals, who have high English proficiency not only in input-skills but also in output-skills, especially in speaking (MEXT 2004: 90, MEXT 2011). Despite the revisions of the Course of Study, Japan is still ranked low in English proficiency not only among the developed countries but also among the Asian countries (Sakamoto 2012: 409; Sullivan and Schatz 2009: 586; Educational Testing Service 2012).

Inputs on different cultures and languages take an important role in language learning especially in the modern society where students have high chances to encounter cross-cultural communication. The politeness strategy is one of those factors that the social actors must learn for the sound relationships with others. Each culture has its own politeness strategy; therefore, miscommunication is observed more often in intercultural conversations due to the various conceptualization of politeness in different cultures (Sifianou 1992: 216). That is, comprehending the diversity in politeness strategy seems to be a clue of smooth communication and better apprehension of different cultures in cross-culture conversations. The Course of Study for foreign languages and English language also refers to the significance of comprehending various cultures and languages (MEXT 2009); however, as previous studies represent the Japanese students studying abroad or the Japanese businessman in intercultural communications seem to lack the understanding of the western politeness strategy (cf. Fujio 2004, Nakane 2006). Besides, it is vague what ‘different cultures’ refers to in the Course of Study for English. Based on the attitudes of the Japanese students towards cross-cultural communication and ambiguous explanation on ‘cultural learning’ by the Course of the Study, I assume that one of the reasons why Japan cannot achieve the communication-focused curriculum might be attributed to the lack of politeness theory perspective in English learning. Taking differences in politeness strategies between the western societies and the Japanese ones into consideration, it seems to be unfeasible and insufficient to only increase the number of communicative lessons and compel students into speaking English. The differences in politeness strategy should be applied into English learning in order to boost the English proficiency of Japanese students and produce globalized students.

The present paper focuses on the following two aspects of English learning in Japan in order to test the hypothesis:

- The Course of Study in English learning in Japan does not specify what is ‘cultural learning’, which triggers the lack of politeness perspective
- The lack of politeness learning obstruct Japanese students to successful cross-cultural communication

In the present paper, in order to observe the application of the politeness theory in English learning, firstly English textbooks used in Japan are analyzed in terms of the politeness theory by focusing on the following four aspects: silence, speech style, ambiguity, and hierarchical relationship. Previous studies have shown that extinctive differences between the western politeness and the Japanese politeness in communication are obviously revealed in those four points (cf. Fujio 2004; Kameda
In addition to the analysis of the English textbooks, an interview on the correlation between English learning and politeness theory is conducted on international Japanese in order to observe how they acquire the western politeness strategy, how English learning at school functioned to learn the western politeness strategy, etc. (cf. see 3. for details). To contextualize this paper, the politeness theory and the previous studies on the relation between the Japanese politeness and cross-culture communication will be presented first, and a brief overview of English education in Japan and tendencies in Japanese schooling will follow.

1. Theoretical Background

1.1. Politeness Theory

Language and linguistic practices have the significant function of enacting and constructing our understanding of our society and ourselves (Janson 2012: 101; Foley 1997: 284). Politeness theory describes the conventionalized rules in human interactions in different languages and cultures. Politeness has been given a great deal of attention in various fields: anthropology, linguistics, pedagogy, psychology, etc. (e.g. Goffman 1967; Lakoff 1973; Leech 1983). In linguistics, the politeness theory by Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson (1987) is the most widely applied structure of the relations between politeness and cultures.

It is Erving Goffman who evolves the idea of personhood and elaborates a further comprehension of the correlation between linguistics behavior and a personhood perception. Goffman argues that individuals have self-esteem, so-called ‘face’, and people’s life are constantly engaged in protection and defense of faces (Goffman 1967: 6). Goffman defines face as “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). In addition to the definition of face, he theorizes how people avoid face damages in accordance with social norms, which differ from culture to culture. Also, Kenneth J. Gergen (1990) claims that “the individual’s well-being cannot be extricated from the web of relationship in which he/she is engaged. The character of the relationship depends, in turn, on the process of adjusting and readjusting actions” (Gergen 1990: 584). That is, the construction of personhood is learned and established through everyday interactions with others.

Brown and Levinson modify the previous research and delineate the linguistic and cultural schemes. They develop a rich understanding of Goffman’s concept of face and split it into two categorizations: positive face and negative face. Positive face is “the positive consistent of self-image or ‘personality’ claimed by interactants” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). They define that negative face is “the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. the freedom of action and freedom from imposition” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). ‘Positive face’ includes desires to be comprehended and accepted by other social actors whereas ‘negative face’ comprises self-independence. In every interaction, the social actors try to minimize affronts both to positive and negative face. Face can be impaired by ordinal conducts such as requests, denial, advices and so on. These detrimental conducts are considered as Face Threatening Act (FTA) and politeness strategy is employed in order to downsize FTA as much as possible.

Brown and Levinson present the politeness theory as universal strategies. However, there are a number of serious objections on the universality of the formulation (cf. Ide 1989; Matsumoto 1988; Gu 1990). For instance, Matsumoto and Gu claim respectively that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is formulated based on personhood in the western culture; thus, the division of face is not applicable
in Japanese and Chinese cultures (cf. 2.2.). My focus in this paper is on the significance of the application of politeness strategies into the English education. Therefore, further discussion on the universality of politeness theory by Brown and Levinson will not be addressed here. However, it should be noted here that there are different norms of politeness in various cultures. In some cultures, such as in Bali, negative politeness strategy, which attempts to minimize the affronts to the addressee’s negative face is observed more frequently, while other cultures, like the Ilongot tribe in the Philippines, prefer employing positive politeness strategy, which is oriented to the addressee’s positive face (Foley 1997: 273). In order to assimilate into the society and convey the smooth conversation, social actors must learn the cultural conventions in interactions with others in different situations – i.e. family conversation, hierarchical relationship, business occasions, etc.

1.2. Previous studies on Japanese politeness and cross-cultural communication

According to Brown and Levinson’s politeness formulation, Japanese culture is orientated in negative politeness. Japanese tend to use negative strategies more often in order to avoid commanding others (FTA). For instance, they prefer interrogative expressions to imperative expressions. However, as mentioned above, several counterarguments are observed on face orientation of Japanese culture. Among all, Matsumoto’s critical perspective is often referred to on this matter. She claims that differing from the western cultures in which positive face is associated with intimacy, positive politeness has a close relationship with respect in Japanese culture. She continues that the following common expression exemplifies this difference: ‘Dozo yoroshiku onegaishimasu’ meaning ‘I ask you to please treat me well’ (Matsumoto 409). This is often heard in a vertical relationship: from the subordinate to the superior. By asking for a good relationship the subordinate confers social status to the superior. That is, this expression enhances the addressee’s positive face by presenting respect, at the same time, the addresser also maintains his/her positive face “by putting himself/herself in a positively valued relationship of interdependence” (Foley 1997: 275).

As Matsumoto’s example represents, some cultural conventions in communication clarifies the existence of different politeness strategies between western cultures and Japanese culture. The following four crucial aspects of communicative differences will be explained here with references to previous studies: silence, thought-organization, ambiguity and hierarchical relationship.

First, silence during communication transmits completely diverse messages in western cultures and in Japanese culture. Ikuko Nakane (2005, 2006) focuses on silence in cross-cultural conversation in classrooms and discusses how silence functions in these two cultures. According to her studies, Japanese students remain silent in classroom conversations due to the following three reasons: (1) defending own positive face, (2) avoiding FTA and (3) off record strategy. Nakane explains that Japanese students employ silence when they are afraid of making mistakes in the class. This originates in the tendency in Japanese schooling that correctness has extremely significant value in learning. Finding correct answers seems to be more important than the learning process in Japanese schooling (Nakane 2006: 1819). Avoidance of FTA is deeply associated with a hierarchical relationship. Japanese students tend to remain silent when there is a disagreement between them and teachers. Traditions or conventions that students must respect teachers and express it through behaviors discourage students to refute teachers’ opinions. More explanation on a hierarchical relationship in Japanese culture will be provided later on. Also,
silence as an off record strategy is utilized when students transmit messages to addressees such as ‘I do not follow the discussion. Do not ask me a further question.’ Contrary to those behaviors by Japanese students, Nakane reports that western students (Australian students participated in this study) do not hesitate to make mistakes or to discuss with teachers. They consider discussion with teachers an important process of learning. A similar difference on silence between western cultures and Japanese culture is observed in Fujio (2004) as well. She concludes that silence during cross-cultural conversations seem to be uncomfortable and frustrating for westerners (American students participated here) (2004: 336). Those studies distinctly indicate that westerners and the Japanese have opposite attitudes towards silence in accordance with their politeness strategy.

A second critical difference on communication is about euphemisms versus straightforwardness. One of the widely accepted differences between western culture and that of Japanese is “the way of thought-organization” (Fujio 2004: 331). The thought-organization in English is described as a ‘linear’ pattern since westerners incline towards straightforwardness. On the other hand, that in Japanese is represented as ‘gyre’ pattern, which employ connotations and implications (Fujio 2004: 331) (cf. Barnlund 1975; Condon 1984; Hofstede 1991). Needless to say, this major difference on thought-organization influences the communication style. As for conversations, the Japanese often employ a roundabout manner while westerners tend to clarify the point first. In addition to this aspect, Naoki Kameda (2001) indicates that Japanese tend to explain an overall context first and then move to the crucial point of the topic. It is not too much to say that communication styles are systematically hugely different in western and Japanese culture.

Third, ambiguity is also a distinctive characteristic of Japanese communicative habits. Kameda claims that Japanese tend to omit minor premises as they do not promote specifying or detailing. As a consequence of this, addressees are required to comprehend the topic without being provided a whole context (Kameda 2001: 146). Kameda explains this phenomenon by giving an example. The addressees should modify a phrase “Our office has moved to Nara. I’m going to buy a Honda.” to “Our office has moved to Nara. It’s too far from the station to walk, so I’ll have to buy a car. I am thinking of getting a Honda.” in order to understand a whole context (Kameda 2001: 146). Besides, Fujio’s study depicts that ‘yes’ is not always equivalent with agreement when Japanese speak English (2004: 337). She argues that Japanese tend to use ‘yes’ as a sign of listening, which trigger miscommunication in cross-cultural discourse with the westerners.

Finally, a reference to a hierarchical relationship in Japanese culture is inevitable in order to comprehend Japanese politeness. As honorific structures in Japanese language describe, Japanese culture still consists of a hierarchical relationship to a certain extent. As mentioned above, it is considered a virtue to respect the superior and the elder in Japanese culture. Showing respect to the superior smoothens conversations because it elevates the positive face of both sides. As a result of changes in society, the hierarchical relationship and honorific languages have changed as well. Haugh Michael (2007) describes that the number of “the expressions of ‘upward’ respect” decreases while “the expression of ‘mutual’ respect” is more focused nowadays (661). However, ‘upward’ respect, in other words, respect from the subordinate to the superior still remains in classrooms and business occasions (cf. Nakane 2006). Also, Matthew Burdelski (2010) shows that Japanese children are exposed to politeness routine since preschool so that they learn various politeness strategies such as honorific languages and situational conversations (1618). It is
apparent that Japanese students opt to remain silent in discussions with teachers as a consequence of these cultural and societal factors. In comparison with this, considering Nakne’s study (2006), Westerners are not as attentive as Japanese to hierarchical relationships in classroom discourse.

Although opinions on orientation of Japanese politeness strategies are diverse, the previous studies present that there are conspicuous differences on communication styles between westerners and Japanese. Moreover, as stated in Fujio some social actors feel frustrated with these differences in cross-cultural communications (Fujio 2004: 336). Politeness strategies are correlated with languages and cultures so deeply that social actors in society utilize it without being aware of its uniqueness. However, as stated by the above-mentioned studies, the distinctiveness of politeness strategy in various cultures stands out in relief especially in cross-cultural communication. Also, these differences sometimes happen to be a major cause of miscommunications.

1.3. English Education in Japan

Nowadays, the average Japanese student receives six years of English education in junior high and high schools. Furthermore university students are required to have a minimum of two years of English studies (Lee 2004: 2). Besides, due to the revision of the Course of Study in 2011, English is required of all elementary students (Grade 5 and 6) from April 2011. Elementary and secondary education in Japan is compulsory, in addition to this; the percentage of students enrolling in high schools is more than 97% and that of in universities is 53.6% (MEXT n.d.c.; MEXT n.d.d). Therefore, it is not too much to say that today almost all Japanese students receive English education as their second language (cf. Kubota 2002).

English has been a predominant language in Japan since many decades ago and its significant position in foreign language learning in Japan can be traced back to the post-Second World War. After the Second World War, English was implemented as a school subject starting in middle school in Japan. In 2002 foreign language adopted as a mandatory subject in high schools (MEXT n.d.a.). High schools were entitled to choose a foreign language for the subject; however, the government did not provide a definite proposal. As a result of it, many high schools selected English as a subject language (Sakamoto 2012: 412). The English curriculum focused mainly on reading and grammar (Sakamoto 2012; 412, Yamada 2010: 492); Sakamoto claims that the inclination towards the direct grammar method is “due to the washback effect, that is, the influence of testing on teaching and learning deriving from the entrance examinations required in pursuing studies in high school and university” (Sakamoto 2012: 412). In order to extricate from the biased learning methodology and obtain a balanced language competence, the 1989 Course of Study put weight on communicative skills (MEXT n.d.b.). The revisions of Course of Study in 2002 and 2011 also emphasized communicative skills.

Among all implementations, there are two drastic changes, which evoke criticism on the revision in 2011: the introduction of English learning in elementary school and the teaching of English in English in high school (cf. Yamamoto 2009; Benesse 2006a; Benesse 2006b). The introduction of English learning in elementary school aims to have pupils exposed to English at early age and to cultivate communicative skills (MEXT 2011). Notable here is that English in elementary school is not delineated as a subject but as an activity, which means that pupils get exposed to English through recreation such as singing an English song; therefore, pupils do not receive grades. Moreover, the Course of Study for English in elementary schools is designed with a focus on communicative skills such as greetings, occasional
conversations, etc. since grammar is not instructed in the class. As for the revision for higher education, the new Course of Study includes that fundamentally all English classes should be conducted in English from the first grade of high school (MEXT 2009: 5). After a period of effectiveness, from April 2013 the new Course of Study has been brought into operation in all high schools. There are arguments for and against these major changes; however, the number shows that the difficulties ahead of them are quite conceivable. 68.1% of elementary school teachers are not confident in giving English classes (Benesse 2010). As for high school English, the concern lies on how much English will be employed during class. According to the investigation results by MEXT in 2010, only 21.5% of English teachers conducted the subject ‘Oral Communication I’ mainly in English (Benesse 2011). Although ‘Oral Communication I’ is a subject focused on communicative skills, English is barely employed during the lessons.


1.4. Tendencies in Japanese schooling

The Course of Study for English aims to globalize students, and in order to achieve it, it claims that students’ spontaneous participation in lessons is required (MEXT 2009: 4). However, the volunteering participation in the class is incompatible with the tendencies in Japanese schooling that will be described below. It embodies several aspects to discourage spontaneous participation.

In Japanese schooling emphasis is often placed on the correctness of answers. Japanese schooling tends to favor correctness of answers, with second place going to procedure of learning (cf. Nakane 2006). Due to this tendency, making mistakes is associated with threatening the positive face (cf. 2.2.). Students in classrooms are unnerved by this tendency and avoid participating spontaneously.

Next schooling tendency is an explicit hierarchical relationship between teachers and students. Due to the significance of a vertical relationship in Japanese politeness, students are reluctant to oppose teachers (cf. 2.2.). Another reason why students rarely disagree with teachers is associated with other-orientated politeness. In other-orientated politeness, a Japanese respects the other’s position and avoids hurting their feelings with negative counterarguments (Kameda 2001: 146) (c.f. Burdelski 2008; Haugh 2007). Disagreement is considered an FTA in Japanese politeness and it leads students to remain silent during the lesson.

The allowance of using the off-record strategy during lessons also promotes fewer participants. Japanese students employ the off-record strategy extensively in order to protect their positive face from making mistakes in the class (Nakane 2006: 1826).

Besides, in Japanese culture silence is considered a virtue, while volubility is condemned. Moreover, silence is associated with humility and modest persons are more preferred and respected (Kameda 2001: 146). This cultural mentality is depicted clearly in proverbs: ‘ishin denshin’ [mind-communication], ‘hisureba hana’ [remaining silent is a flower], ‘kuchi ha wazawai no moto’ [talking is a cause of troubles] and so on. As for humility, Japanese proverbs admonishes by saying ‘nou aru taka ha tsume wo kakusu’ [a talented person remains silent and rarely shows
his/her competence]. Needless to say, this mentality differs from the western cultures”, in which volubility is transmitted as value (e.g. the squeaking wheel gets the grease). George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (2003) claim that human beings often use conceptual metaphors to explain complex phenomena (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2003). As proverbs have similar features with metaphors, it is anticipated that proverbs reflect national/societal mentality and social actors share them as commonsense in a same manner with the politeness strategy (cf. Lakoff & Johnson 2003: 42, 268). This mentality, silence as virtue, might be observed in schooling as well.

The above-mentioned aspects of schooling in Japan describe that it has repressive dimensions, which suppress students’ spontaneous participation. Remarkable here is that all of these tendencies are ascribed to cultural factors.

2. Methodology

The hypothesis of this paper is that one of the reasons why Japan cannot achieve the communication-focused curriculum might be attributed to the lack of politeness strategy learning in English lessons. In order to test this hypothesis the present paper approaches it from two aspects: textbook analysis and interviews with former students. English textbooks from junior high school, currently utilized in Japan are analyzed, and interviews with former students are conducted to examine how they deal with cross-cultural communication.

2.1. Textbook Analysis

To examine if the politeness theory is applied to the English language textbooks in Japan, Japan’s junior high schools English textbooks are analyzed by focusing on four aspects, which are distinctively different between western cultures and Japanese culture proven by the previous studies (cf. Fujio 2004; Kameda 2001; Nakane 2006; 2.2.): (1) silence, (2) speech style, (3) ambiguity, and (4) hierarchical relationship.

In general, junior high schools in Japan use English textbooks authorized by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology - i.e. those textbooks conform to the Course of Study by MEXT. In order to examine how and how much students are exposed to the different politeness strategies through textbooks during their studies in junior high school, textbooks from grade 1st to grade 3rd are analyzed chronologically. According to Yamada’s (2010) data, 48% of public school districts employ English textbooks by Tokyo Shoseki, New Horizon, followed by New Crown English by Sanseido (20%). However, since selection of textbooks is left entirely to each school district, they do not always employ the same line of textbooks through three grades. Therefore, in order to conduct a practical survey, the present paper focuses on one public junior high school in Yokkaichi city, Mie, and analyzes textbooks which the 2012-graduated junior high school students used during their study from grade 1st to 3rd: New Horizon 1 (2010), New Horizon 2 (2011) and New Crown 3 (2012), New Horizon 1 (2010) and New Horizon 2 (2011) consists of 125 pages and New Crown 3 contains 143 pages. In order to observe if the above mentioned four aspects of politeness strategy differences exist in the textbooks, the following three points were examined in all textbooks: first the frequency of cultural topics (since politeness strategy has an intimate relationship with culture), second the frequency of the above-mentioned four politeness strategies, and third the way these strategies are presented.
2.2. Interview

The aim of the interview is to investigate how former-students evaluate English education in Japan from the politeness perspective and how they deal with communicative difficulties in cross-cultural communications in their lives. The participants are former students who have learnt English with the communication-focused Course of Study: secondary education between 2001 and 2003 and higher education between 2004 and 2006. The present paper adopts a qualitative survey and interviewed 6 Japanese; all of them have different study backgrounds after higher education and different professions (cf. Table 1). The interview consists of 9 questions including some profile questions about the participants (cf. Appendix A). All participants were provided a fundamental instruction on the politeness theory before the interview since they were not familiar with the concept of this theory. As for English level in profile questions, the participants were evaluated based on scores of International English Language Testing System (cf. Educational Testing Service 2010).

Table 1: Profiles of interview participants.
All participants studied English with the communication-focused curriculum both in junior high and in high school and continued to different academic fields and professions after that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participant A</th>
<th>Participant B</th>
<th>Participant C</th>
<th>Participant D</th>
<th>Participant E</th>
<th>Participant F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English level</td>
<td>Good User</td>
<td>Good User</td>
<td>Expert User</td>
<td>Expert User</td>
<td>Good User</td>
<td>Modest user</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Office worker</td>
<td>University student</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>English teacher</td>
<td>Banker</td>
<td>Public servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of English use</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Almost everyday</td>
<td>Everyday</td>
<td>Some hours per week</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience abroad</td>
<td>10 months in Uppsala, 8 months in Germany</td>
<td>One year in Toronto, 18 months in Montreal</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>One month in Edinburgh</td>
<td>High school in U.S.A.</td>
<td>One month in York</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Results

3.1. Textbook Analysis

Fifteen cultural topics are observed throughout three textbooks: seven on Japanese culture and eight on foreign countries’ cultures such as American, Finnish, and Canadian (cf. Table 2 for the detailed contexts). Table 2 presents the titles of the chapters where cultural topics are mentioned. Some chapters mention both Japanese culture and foreign ones; therefore, the same titles can be found in both columns, e.g. ‘Green ke no hitobito [The Green family]. Reference to the above-mentioned four aspects of the politeness strategy is barely observed in the three English textbooks analyzed in this paper (cf. Table 3). Table 3 presents summaries of the politeness strategies found in the three textbooks. Throughout the three books, the difference on speech style is mentioned 4 times in New Horizon 1 and New Crown 3. As for ambiguity and hierarchical relationships, only New Horizon 1 refers to them once, and no reference on silence is observed in the textbooks. The details of findings on each textbook will follow.

Table 2: Cultural topics in the textbooks.
Titles of the chapters where cultural topics are mentioned in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics about Japanese culture</th>
<th>Topics about foreign cultures</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Green ke no hitobito [The Green family] (ibid: 52)</td>
<td>- Kanada no gakko [Schools in Canada] (ibid: 62-63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Sorezore no Oshogatsu [New Years for everyone] (ibid: 94)</td>
<td>- Kurisumasu ga yattekita [Christmas is coming] (ibid: 72-75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- E-pals in Asia [E-pals in Asia] (New Horizon 2: 24-25)</td>
<td>- Niagara no taki [The Niagara Falls] (ibid: 82-86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Story of Sadako (ibid: 36, 37, 40-41)</td>
<td>- Finland – Living with Forests (New Crown 3 2012: 16-17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Houses and Lives (ibid: 54,56)</td>
<td>- Houses and Lives (ibid: 58-59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- I Have a Dream (ibid: 66, 68, 70-73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: The politeness strategies in the textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silence</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech style</td>
<td>- Looking into eyes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>- Constructional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on greeting (10)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>differences between English and Japanese (112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Looking up and</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>speaking up (39)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity</td>
<td>- Explain a reason</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on denial (91)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical relationship</td>
<td>- Calling with first names (11)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

New Horizon 1 (2010) utilizes tips about English communication on the corner of some pages, the so called ‘Taiwa no Mana [Manners of communication]’ and ‘Taiwa no technic [Technics for communication]’. References on speech style and ambiguity are found in ‘Taiwa no Mana’ while differences on relationships in English speaking countries is taught in the text. Regarding speech style differences, on the very first page of Unit 1, the textbook offers advice to students to look into eyes as they greet or introduce themselves: “Aisatsu ya jikoshokai no tokiniha, aite no me wo kichinto mite iima shou [on greeting and introducing, you should look into eyes]” (New Horizon 1 2010: 10). In addition to this point, it also recommends students to raise one’s head from paper and deliver a speech clearly: “Kao wo age, ookina koe de happyou shima shou. Dekirudake genbun wo minaide ieru you ni ganbari mashou [You should look up and present in a loud voice. Try not to check a manuscript as much as possible]” (New Horizon 1 2010: 39). The textbook refers to ambiguity once in ‘Taiwa no Mana’: “Kotowaru toki ni ha riyu wo iuyou ni shima shou [Refer to a reason when you decline an offer]” (New Horizon 1 2010: 91). New Horizon 1 (2010) refers to a difference on relationship between students and teachers in the English speaking countries. It explains that teachers usually call students with their first names and it is frequently observed that English speakers introduce themselves only with first names (New Horizon 1 2010: 11).

No reference on the difference of the politeness strategy between Japanese culture and western ones is observed in New Horizon 2 (2011).

New Crown 3 provides a clue on differences on speech style between Japanese and English language as an appendix of the textbook (2012: 112). The difference is presented in the appendix as a tip on English learning; therefore, no relevant context or detailed explanation is attached. It describes that, as opposed to Japanese, detailed explanations follow a conclusion in English communication. An example contributes to students’ better understanding of the difference (cf. Figure 1). Figure 1 presents the same sentence in both languages in order to make the difference visible; on the first line it shows in Japanese, “sono hon ga omoshiroi toha watashi ha omoi masen”, and on the second line in English, “I don’t think that the book is interesting” (New Crown 3 2012: 112). It explains the different speech style by highlighting the conclusions: the conclusion is presented at the end of the sentence in the case of Japanese while it is opposite in English. Also, a picture of a dolphin saying “ketsuron wo iu ichi ni chui shiyou [be aware of the position of conclusion]” is depicted in order to draw students’ attention (New Crown 3 2012: 112).
Figure 1: An example of different thought-organization in Japanese and in English (New Crown 3 2012: 112).
This example illustrates the fact that in Japanese conclusions come in the end of the sentence, while in English conclusions come first.

Besides, the textbook provides a reason of the speech style difference by illustrating the different linguistic structure of expression, which Kameda (2001) claims: Japanese language tend to start from a full-length picture of a topic and narrow down to the details while English prefers expanding a topic from a point (cf. Figure 2). In the same manner with Figure 1, Figure 2 is also presented as a tip of English learning in the appendix. Therefore, there is no relevant context provided. Firstly, it states that Japanese and English construct a sentence/clause in different manners (see the part ‘(1) From the whole to the part, from the part to the whole’ in Figure 2). Then, it explains the positional relationship of vocabulary by presenting one simple clause, “books on the desk/ tsukue no ueno hon”, in both languages systematically with illustrations (New Crown 3 2012: 112). As one can observe, in the Japanese clause the word order is the following; tsukue no/ueno/hon [the desk/on/books], while the word order in the English sentence is books/on/the desk (New Crown 3 2012: 112). In this way, Figure 2 employs both text and illustration in order to help students comprehend the different linguistic structure of expression.
Figure 2: Illustrating a different positional relationship in Japanese and in English (New Crown 3 2012: 112).
The figure explains how Japanese and English construct a sentence/clause in different manners: from the whole to the part when it comes to Japanese and from the part to the whole when it comes to English.

Different perspectives.

3.2. Interview

The results show that the participants feel relatively insecure about their lack of knowledge about the politeness strategy in western cultures, which prevents them from participating in cross-cultural communication actively. The results of each question from the interviews follow.

Firstly, three participants answered negatively to question 2 if they have learnt the politeness strategy at school. Two of the participants stated that they learnt it through practice, for example while communicating with westerners (cf. question 3). As for question 4, if the politeness learning at school was sufficient enough to conduct conversations with westerners, two out of six answered that it was not sufficient enough. According to them, there should be more input on politeness strategies to communicate with westerners smoothly. Also, in question 4, two of the participants (participants A and B) claim the necessity of practical experiences. In question 5 the participants were asked if they have encountered any trouble or difficulty correlated with the differences of the politeness strategies. All participants have experienced some kind of difficulties. Four of them referred to the difficulty to express their opinions straightforwardly. One mentioned how the friendly attitude of westerners at work can sometimes be intimidating. At last, one participant mentioned that the different speech style of westerners (that conclusions come before detailed explanations) could be troubling. As for troubles related to silence, speech style, ambiguity, and hierarchical relationship (question 6), two participants have had trouble with ambiguity in relation with straightforwardness and one has had with
silence (she tends to remain silent in cross-cultural communications). All of the participants answered negatively to question 7, if they feel confident and comfortable in cross-cultural communication. They stated that they feel insecure in cross-cultural communication because of the lack of experience and knowledge of the politeness strategies. In question 8 all of the participants agreed that learning the politeness strategy in the western cultures is necessary. According to them, knowing about the different politeness strategies helps to convey smooth cross-cultural communication. However, two of them (participants A and B) emphasized the necessity of practical experiences as well. As for question 9 what they focus on the most in cross-cultural communication, two of them answered that they try to be straightforward. Two of them try to choose vocabulary that is not too straightforward or rude. The last two try to show that they are engaged in the conversation by looking into the eyes and expressing their opinion as much as possible.

A more detailed summary of the interviews is presented in Appendix B. The interviews were conducted via Skype, and the interview summary, which is presented here, is based on the notes from these Skype interviews.

4. Discussion

In order to test the hypothesis: that one of the reasons why Japan cannot achieve the communication-focused curriculum might be attributed to the lack of politeness strategy learning in English lessons, the present paper employs two types of methodology: textbook analysis and interviews to former students. The discussion is developed by presenting four major findings from 3. Results: cultural aspects in the textbooks, the politeness strategy in the textbooks, the relationship between rapport and voluntary students, and application of the politeness theory to the Course of Study.

4.1. Cultural aspects in the textbooks

At the outset of 4. Discussion, some cultural aspects of the textbooks are deliberated before elaborating on the politeness strategy in the textbooks. The objective of revision by MEXT is to produce international individuals, who have high input and output skills to convey smooth conversation with foreigners (MEXT 2004: 90, MEXT 2011). The revision lays emphasis upon several aspects of English learning such as high English proficiency, cultural comprehension, etc. (MEXT 2009). This disposition of English education can be sporadically observed in the textbooks as well. There are obviously more communicative tasks compared to previous textbooks. Moreover, MEXT’s aim to produce international students becomes more obvious by the fact that the textbook dedicates two pages (out of a total of 143 pages) to motivate students to learn English by presenting short paragraphs about why s/he studies English: making friends internationally, learning about others and cultures, thinking globally and differently, etc. (New Crown 3 2012: 94-95). It is conjectured that the purpose of this is to widen students’ intellectual horizon about the English language and produce more global individuals.

Nevertheless, even though the official guidelines of school teaching aim to produce more international individuals and advocates significance of cultural learning, not so many pages are devoted to cultural learning throughout the three textbooks: seven topics about Japanese culture and eight topics on foreign cultures such as Canadian, American, Finnish, etc. (cf. Table 2). Considering the size of the textbooks, this does not seem to be a significant amount of information. Besides, it is notable here that
there are as many references to Japanese culture as to foreign cultures. It is one of the important sectors for international individuals to express about his/her own cultures. However, as the Course of Study advocates, students are required to learn various foreign cultures in the English subject (MEXT 2009). It might be more appropriate and effective if the textbooks employed more foreign cultures as their topics. Thus, in opposition to the aims of the Course of Study, there are not many cultural aspects involved in the textbooks. As the politeness strategy is a part of culture, it is apparent that there are not many references to the politeness strategy in the textbooks, which reflects the lack of cultural aspects in the textbooks. A more detailed analysis about the politeness strategy in the textbooks follows next.

4.2. Politeness strategy in the textbooks

As the previous researches have shown, the Japanese politeness strategy has many distinctive differences from that of the western. This becomes even more obvious when one gets exposed to communication with westerners as the interview participants exemplified. Textbook analysis is conducted in the present paper in order to observe penetration of the politeness theory in the Course of Study for English subject. The previous researches have shown that comprehension of different politeness strategy reduces friction in cross-cultural communications. As MEXT has also advocated, comprehending cultures of the language may help students to cultivate better understanding of English, which leads to produce more international individuals (cf. MEXT 2004: 90, MEXT 2011; MEXT 2009). In order to achieve it, the Course of Study shifted from the grammar-focused curriculum to a communication-focused one. As a matter of consequence, many communicative tasks are observed in the three textbooks analyzed in the present paper as well. However, in the studied textbooks there are only five references to the politeness strategies. That is, the authorized textbooks seem to fulfill the requirements of adopting more communicative tasks; however, they do not get at the kernel of a subject, the politeness strategy, which promotes smooth communication with westerners.

As for the references to the politeness strategy in the textbooks, there is enough ground for controversy. First, the references on the politeness strategy found in the textbooks are not highlighted as extinctive ‘difference’ from Japanese politeness strategy. For instance, the following reference exhibits it apparently. Looking into the eyes during conversation does not take hold in Japanese culture; moreover, there are some people considering it impolite. Since Japanese people think that one might feel intimidated by being stared at during conversation, they are taught or unconsciously tend to look at around the mouth or the middle of the forehead of the other’s (cf. Honna 1994). Despite this cultural etiquette, New Horizon 1 (2010) does not explain thoroughly that it differs from the Japanese culture, but it merely recommends students to look into the eyes during conversations (cf. Table 3)(New Horizon 2010: 10). Awareness and attention have received an extreme amount of attention in cognitive science, and the widely accepted theory in psychology and cognitive science is that “there is no learning without attention” (cf. Allport 1989: 631; Schmidt 1995: 1, 9). Also, as for second language acquisition, Schmidt argues that learners are required to direct their attention to the learning objects (1995: 45). Emphasizing the differences of the politeness strategies between Japanese culture and western ones may trigger students’ awareness and help them to establish a firm knowledge about different politeness strategies. Presenting it as a difference from the Japanese politeness strategy, students may become sensible to it and put it into practice smoothly.
Secondary, communicative tasks require students to share their opinions with others, and they are advised to speak up and deliver a speech (New Horizon 2010: 39). As mentioned above, silence is considered a virtue in the Japanese culture traditionally; besides, there is a tendency to restrain volubility. The norm in the western society is opposite of it, and extreme alignment with others is evaluated as lack of competence in the western academic context (Nakane 2006: 1821). In other words, having an opinion and expressing it is emphasized in the western culture. Moreover, having an opinion and expressing it is emphasized in the western culture. In addition to this cultural difference on expression, the Japanese and westerners have different approaches towards mistakes: for the Japanese, making a mistake in the class is regarded as damage to the positive face while the westerners do not consider it as harm (Nakane 2006: 1818). Ignoring the cultural attitudes towards volubility and adherence to correct responses of Japanese students, the textbook directs students to speak up confidently in the class. Considering the western academic norm, it is indispensable for Japanese students to habituate themselves to these differences on speech style. Nevertheless, it would be more evident and reasonable for students to put into practice if there are explanations on these differences. A simple tip about speech style could cause confusion and dilemma about the two cultures to students, which would not lead the Course of Study to success.

Thirdly, as for a reference to a hierarchical relationship, New Horizon 1 alludes that in English-speaking countries teachers call students with their first names (cf. Table 3) (2010: 11). Differing from the Japanese hierarchical society, the western relationship between superior and subordinate is less vertical; however, there are some cases when s/he must prefix a title; e.g. sending e-mail to a professor. As an introduction of the difference on a relationship between students and teachers in two cultures, the reference to calling with first names on page 11 in New Horizon 1 seems to be worthwhile (cf. Table 3); however, it would be more practical if there were a follow-up reference about exceptional cases later such as in notes or appendix since space is limited in textbooks.

Last but not least, as Fujio describes that the thought-organization in English is a linear line while that of in Japanese is depicted as gyre pattern, the difference on the way of thought-organization in two cultures is distinctive (2004: 331). This significant constructional difference is well described with figures in an appendix of New Crown 3 (cf. Figures 1 and 2) (2012: 112). However, it is doubtful if teachers spare time to go through the appendix extensively in third grade during which students must take entrance exams for high schools. In fact, the inclination towards the entrance exam is observed within the textbook as well; New Crown 3 reserves more pages for grammar teaching, which is extremely emphasized in the entrance exam.

In this way, there are some references to the politeness strategy in the textbooks; however, judging from the amount of references and their contents, it is not too much to say that the politeness strategies are barely penetrated in the Course of Study for English in Japan. As to New Horizon 2 (2011), no reference to the politeness strategy is observed. The textbooks do not mention the politeness strategy as 'difference', which do not exert an influence upon students. Also, the references lack cultural explanations behind the politeness strategy in the western societies. Based on these analyses, one can claim that the politeness theory is missing in the Course of Study for English.
4.3. Relationship between rapport and voluntary individuals

The Course of Study for English claims that students’ voluntary participation in lessons is required to achieve the aim of producing international individuals, which reflects the western cultures, where expressing opinions is attached importance (MEXT 2009: 4). However, according to the previous researches, the Japanese find it demanding to speak and share opinions in front of people because it is contrary to the Japanese politeness strategy (cf. 2.2.). The interview participants show the same tendency towards cross-cultural communication (cf. question 5 and 7). They feel uncomfortable and unconfident in cross-cultural communication because of the different politeness strategy. The answer of the participant D, E and F exemplifies this clearly (cf. question 5 and 6). The participant D becomes puzzled when the westerners clearly express the negation since disagreement is regarded as an FTA in the Japanese politeness. As for the participant E, although she has high English proficiency, she is reluctant to have a cross-cultural communication because she is afraid of being rude by responding too straightforwardly. She continues that she knows that she needs to express directly in cross-cultural communication; however, it is still difficult to put it into practice because it is very different from the Japanese politeness strategy and she does not know how to adjust to frankness. The participant F explains that the reason why she tends to remain silent on communication with the westerners is attributable to the cultural differences such as direct expressions. She sometimes finds it uncomfortable to be talked to straightforwardly and this prevents her from being an active participant in conversation.

Rapport, “defined as a harmonious interaction between teachers and students or a relationship with a mutual understanding and satisfactory communication”, is indispensable in order to deliver himself or herself an opinion in company (Murphy&Rodriguez-Manzanares 2012: 168). Needless to say, the rapport differs from culture to culture, and it has a close connection with the politeness strategy. As been observed in Nakane (2006), Australian students actively participate in the discussion while Japanese students tend to remain silent for politeness strategy reasons (cf. 2.2) (Nakane 2006: 1817). Nakane also claims that Japanese students sense a rapport when teachers show an unprejudiced attitude (2006: 1831). The above-mentioned example indicates that there are cases when the Japanese feel intimidated in cross-cultural communication due to a lack of knowledge about the politeness strategy of the western cultures although they have high English proficiency. In other words, in order to produce international individuals, it is not sufficient enough to have a numerous amount of output tasks but students need to learn the politeness strategy differences to feel comfortable and confident in cross-cultural communications. According to the interview participants, the lack of the politeness knowledge triggers hesitation to convey conversations with westerners. Looking at the matter from the opposite point of view, if they knew the strategy, rapport could develop and an exchange of opinions could be conveyed smoothly.

Giving consideration to the tension the Japanese students feel when they speak during lessons and the perplexity the interview participants feel in practical cross-cultural communications, there are two types of rapport that English education in Japan is required to deliberate on: Japanese rapport for students’ voluntary participation and western rapport for confident cross-cultural communications. English teachers are required to create a class atmosphere that students feel comfortable to speak up in company — i.e. a classroom environment where mistakes and procedure of learning are approved. Moreover, western rapport, the so-called politeness strategy of the western cultures, should be taught in English lessons as
well. Learning the politeness strategy in the western cultures helps students to be positive about cross-cultural communication. Four distinctive politeness strategy differences between the Japanese culture and that of western, which are focused in the present paper, might be practical as a first step: silence, speech style, ambiguity, and hierarchical relationship. As the interview participants expressed, an increase in communicative tasks seems to be insufficient to have a smooth and confident cross-cultural communication. The huge politeness strategy differences between two cultures and the results from the interviews indicate the significant necessity of the politeness strategy education in English learning in Japan.

4.4. Application of politeness theory to the Course of Study

As above, the English textbooks do not contain references to differences on politeness strategies between Japanese and western sufficiently; on the other hand, the Japanese feel a need of comprehension of the western politeness strategy in order to convey untroubled cross-cultural communication. Moreover, the lack of knowledge about the politeness strategy seems to prevent some Japanese from being voluntary participants in cross-cultural communication despite of their high English proficiency. It is assumed that introduction of the politeness strategy into the Course of Study for English might be a clue to extricate the Japanese from a negative attitude towards cross-cultural communications. The present paper suggests two potential applications of the politeness theory to the Course of Study, which employ the current English educational situation profitably. These suggestions are drawn from the interview answers: utilization of communication lessons and utilization of early English education in elementary education.

Three interview participants answered negatively to question 2 if they have learnt the politeness strategy. Two out of these three continued that they learnt it through practical experiences such as communication with westerners (cf. question 3). Also, judging from the interview answers, it is claimed that learning the politeness strategy in the class is not sufficient enough for the Japanese to put it into practice. The participant E explains that she learnt the politeness strategy differences during English lessons; however, it is demanding to apply them during the cross-cultural conversations (cf. question 4). Other interview participants, participant A, B and F, also claimed the necessity of practical experiences (cf. question 4 and 8).

In order to have enough practical experience of the western politeness strategy to communicate confidently in cross-cultural environment, English lessons can make efficient use of communication classes and Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs). As for the communicative classes, in secondary education a significant amount of communicative tasks are assigned and in high school the subject ‘Oral Communication I’ is a compulsory subject, after the revision of 2011. Thus, students have quite many opportunities to practice the politeness strategy during these communicative classes. Since the politeness strategy is related to communication manners, it is suitable and reasonable to teach the western politeness strategy there. Repeated practice helps students to inure themselves to the different politeness strategies. In order to habituate students to cross-cultural communications with westerners, it is effectual to utilize ALTs. The Japan Exchange and Teaching Program (JET Program) commenced in 1987 and have hired a significant number of native speakers of English as ALTs, and as a result of successful diffusion of ALTs, 1680 municipalities out of 1719 utilize them (MEXT 2010). By utilizing ALTs effectively, students can have more practical communicative exercises and comprehend the differences on the politeness theory through experience.
Secondary, the utilization of early English education in elementary school gives the potential to Japanese students to assimilate the politeness strategy in the western culture readily. English language instruction has started in April 2011 in all Japanese elementary schools. There have been arguments for and against the measure; however, early English instruction might take effect for the politeness strategy learning. The interview participants mentioned that they sometimes get tired of expressing opinions all the time (cf. question 5 and 7). As telepathic communication, without many detailed explanations, is appreciated in the Japanese culture, they feel stressed to express their opinions constantly or describe minutely. The attitude towards expression is something cultivated since early age and one can assume that s/he is required to endeavor to get accustomed to the difference. The politeness strategy including the attitude towards expression is an important social norm to adapt to the society or the environment. The politeness strategy is manners that social actors master through experience and over many years. In Japan the Japanese politeness strategies have started being taught since preschools (Burdelski 2010: 1618). Also, teaching the politeness theory corresponds with the purpose of introduction of early stage English learning – i.e. to get children exposed to English communication. By being exposed to the different politeness strategies from an early age, it might become undemanding for the Japanese to assimilate the different politeness strategies. Early English education may help Japanese students to accept the politeness strategy differences smoothly, and encourage them to participate in cross-cultural communication.

Conclusion

This paper hypothesized that the lack of the politeness perspective in the Course of Study for English diminished the English proficiency of Japanese students. In order to examine the hypothesis, two methods were employed: textbooks analysis and interviews of former students. The English textbooks for junior high schools were analyzed by focusing on four major politeness differences between Japanese culture and the western ones: (1) silence, (2) speech style, (3) ambiguity, and (4) hierarchical relationship. The interviews were conducted to observe how the Japanese deal with the different politeness strategy in their relationships with the westerners. The main results showed that there were extremely few references to the differences in the politeness strategy through out three textbooks while the former students felt the need for the politeness learning for smooth communication with westerners.

Judging from the results in this paper, it is simplistic to conclude that the low English proficiency of the Japanese has arisen from the lack of a politeness theory perspective; however, the results from the textbooks analysis and the interview answers gave a glimpse of a correlation between the lack of a politeness theory and hesitation in having cross-cultural communications. The purpose of the revision by MEXT is to produce international individuals – i.e. those who have high English proficiency enough to communicate with foreigners and get actively involved in the front lines of a global society. However, Japan is still ranked low in English proficiency. The interview answers suggested that this was due to the lack of the politeness strategies learning. In order to solve the imbalance of supply and demand, the present paper suggested the following: penetration of two types of rapport, Japanese rapport and western rapport (the western politeness strategy), utilization of communicative lessons and ALTs, and utilization of early English education at elementary schools. Repeated practice and practical experiences from an early age
may crack the politeness barrier, and encourage the Japanese to participate in cross-cultural communication confidently.

However, it should be noted here that the present paper had many limitations and there is room for further study. First of all, the present paper dealt with western politeness strategies as a homogeneous thing, in order to discuss the matter in a wide perspective. This approach was adopted for the following reason: although English has established its status as a multicultural language, English textbooks in Japan still tend to consider English as a language of the United Kingdom, the United Nations of America, Canada, etc. and these countries are dealt with as main subjects of learning; since 1980s around 50 percent of the cultural topics featured in the English textbooks in Japan refer to these countries (cf. Yamada 2010: 498). However, there are various cultures in the western world and English is today a universal language; therefore it is not sufficient to master only the politeness strategies that are applicable in the English native speaking countries. Besides, even these countries do not share uniform politeness strategies. Students should be required to learn English as a multicultural language in accordance with the politeness strategies in various countries. Also, this paper analyzed only English textbooks for junior high schools; however, the ones for high schools may have unlike results. More participants for the interview can be employed in the future. It would be useful to discover English teachers’ attitude towards the politeness strategy learning as some interview participants learnt it from idle talk with teachers (cf. question 3).

There are countless politeness differences between western cultures and Japanese culture; however, as a matter of fact, English is currently the most employed language in the academic field and students tend to be evaluated in accordance with the western politeness values outside Japan. Considering the dramatically globalized world, a necessity of western politeness learning is indisputable. However, as one interview participant mentions, smoother communication would be conveyed if westerners had an opportunity to apprehend the Japanese politeness strategy as well (cf. question 8).
Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Profile
   A. Name
   B. Age
   C. English level
   D. Profession
   E. How often do you use English at work?
   F. Any experience abroad (business, study, etc.)

2. Did you learn any differences on the politeness strategy between the western cultures and the Japanese culture at school?

3. How did you learn them? (E.g. textbooks, teachers, etc.)

4. Do you think it was sufficient enough in order to conduct conversations with westerners? Why/why not?

5. Do you encounter any troubles or difficulties correlated with differences of the politeness strategy at work or personal life? Please describe.

6. Have the following aspects ever triggered miscommunication with westerners: silence, speech style, ambiguity and different attitudes towards the superior such as your boss or teacher?

7. Do you feel confident/comfortable in cross-cultural communication? Why/why not?

8. Do you feel the necessity of learning the politeness strategy in the western cultures?

9. On what do you focus the most in case of cross-cultural communication?
### Appendix B

**Summary of the answers from the interview**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q. 3 How did you learn the western politeness strategy?</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) Through communication. Learned by myself by noticing the differences on expression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Through communication with my husband (French Canadian)</td>
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<tr>
<td>C) English textbook: Reading lesson and oral communicative lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D) ---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) Learned during English class (in America).</td>
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<tr>
<td>F) No reference on the textbooks. English teacher taught us during the class.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Q. 4 Do you think it was sufficient enough to conduct conversations with the westerners? Why/why not?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A) No. Not sufficient enough but experience is also demanded to communicate smoothly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Yes. The Japanese can get accustomed to these differences easily because we do not want to be different from the others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C) Yes. It was enough for me since I have had no trouble so far. However, the others (the westerns) may feel uncomfortable or strange with my Japanese-like behaviors (nodding etc.).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D) No. Not sufficient. Difficult to feel confident with my communication skills because of the lack of understanding the politeness strategy and cultural differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E) No. I know the differences but not enough to utilize them during communication practically.</td>
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<td>F) No. It is necessary to convey the smooth communication.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Q. 5 Do you encounter any trouble or difficulty correlated with differences of the politeness strategy at work or personal life?</th>
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<tr>
<td>A) Personal life: experienced uncomfortable situations many times: difficult to express opinions / At work: prefer using English because I can be straightforward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B) Difficult to express opinions. I need to explain every single thing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C) Sometimes feel strange because the westerners are too friendly even at work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>D) I cannot convey open communication: difficult to express opinions. I get stressed because the westerners show the negation directly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>E) I do not know how much straightforward I should be (I don't understand from which point it is considered as ‘rude’).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F) It is sometimes difficult for me to follow the conversation because of the speech style: e.g.) the detailed explanations follow the conclusion.</td>
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Q. 6 Have the four aspects focused in this paper ever triggered miscommunication with westerners?

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<tr>
<td>A)</td>
<td>Not a big problem so far because I tend to avoid people whom I may have a trouble with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B)</td>
<td>Ambiguity: I sometimes become too straightforward and offend the others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C)</td>
<td>I feel these differences but they have not triggered miscommunication yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D)</td>
<td>Ambiguity: difficult to be straightforward.</td>
</tr>
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<td>E)</td>
<td>I have not faced them so far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F)</td>
<td>I tend to remain silent during conversation because of the cultural differences. I know there are differences but do not know exactly which ones.</td>
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Q. 7 Do you feel confident/comfortable in cross-cultural communication? Why/why not?

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<tr>
<td>A)</td>
<td>No. I get tired of expressing myself. I am not sure if I have no confidence about my knowledge on the politeness strategy or about my English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B)</td>
<td>No. French Canadian is very different from what I have been exposed to so far. Therefore, it takes a lot of time to get accustomed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>C)</td>
<td>No. I am not sure if I choose the correct vocabulary or speech style (I sometimes feel rude to be straightforward).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D)</td>
<td>No. I need more experiences to feel comfortable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E)</td>
<td>No. I need to understand cultural differences and the politeness strategy more. I feel insecure to talk with westerners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F)</td>
<td>No. I find it difficult to communicate with westerns because of the different cultures.</td>
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Q. 8 Do you feel the necessity of learning the politeness strategy in the western cultures?

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<tr>
<td>A)</td>
<td>Yes but I am not sure if one can utilize them practically even if s/he has knowledge about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B)</td>
<td>Yes/No. It is not something to learn but it is something to get accustomed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C)</td>
<td>Yes because being polite to the others can carry smooth conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E)</td>
<td>Yes. I do not have an urgent necessity of learning but it would be helpful to convey smooth communication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F)</td>
<td>Yes. It is important to learn grammar but having more detailed communication class is also necessary to speak up in the intercultural communication. It would also be nice if westerns learned about our politeness strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q. 9 On what do you focus the most in case of cross-cultural communication?

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A)</td>
<td>Try to be as straightforward as I can be. However, it is very difficult to achieve it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B)</td>
<td>The choice of vocabulary. Not to mention about religions and races because I do not have enough knowledge on them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C)</td>
<td>Try to express my opinions. By showing this attitude, they also try to listen to and understand me even if sentences are incorrect grammatically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D)</td>
<td>Try to understand the cultural differences and to be straightforward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E)</td>
<td>The choice of vocabulary so that I do not become impolite. The differences on the politeness strategy as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F)</td>
<td>Try to look into eyes during the conversation in order to show that I am interested in conversation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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