

Why do Japanese Learners Choose *Not* to Use Indirect Speech? -A study on the use of implicatures by Japanese learners of English-

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Indirect speech, typified by implicatures, is often said to be “an absolutely unremarkable and mundane conversational strategy” (Green, 1996: 94) in our daily communications. However, despite its ubiquitous nature, previous studies indicate that comprehending and producing implicatures in a second language are not effortless tasks for the learners (e.g., Bouton, 1988; Roever, 2006; Taguchi, 2002; Yoshida, 2013).

This presentation will introduce a study that focuses on the second language learners’ use (or non-use) of implicatures and the reason behind their behavior, in situations where most native speakers feel that an implicated message is preferred. The study first selected pragmatic strategies that are often performed with implicatures by administering an online multiple-choice DCT (discourse completion task) to 34 native speakers of English from different cultural backgrounds. The strategies which the natives mostly agreed that the use of an implicature is appropriate (the “implicature-prone” strategies) were *Request Refusals*, *Negative Evaluations*, and *Criticisms*. Then, a test battery consisting an online questionnaire (open-ended and multiple-choice) and video clips that visually depict each scenario was administered to 31 native speakers and 46 Japanese intermediate learners of English. Participants were asked to watch the video clips that describe the “implicature-prone” strategies and write down what they would say in the same situation.

The results showed that most learners considered direct responses without implicatures as the most appropriate approach in conducting all of the strategies tested in the questionnaire. The post-survey interview with the participants revealed that 70% of the learners chose to speak without implicatures for believing the stereotype that “Everyone speaks directly in English”. Furthermore, many participants expressed that they would have been less direct if they were communicating in Japanese, and that unless they are quite straightforward, English speakers will not understand their intentions. Other cause of their excessively straightforward choice of words may be attributed to lack of implicature input, over-generalization, or transfer of training, which all seem related to the nurturing and nourishing of this stereotype.

Frequent use of blunt terms laden the risks of rifting social relationships, and learners should be given the chance to understand and choose the directness of their speech based on the realistic understanding of how English is spoken. The presentation will include some instructive suggestions on removing the stereotype and learning how implicatures are used in English conversations.